

Plucky poultry company trims seasoning weight waste

When one of the leading British chicken, turkey and duck suppliers discovered it was wasting over half of the dry seasonings manually scattered on its oven-ready birds, it needed an automated solution fast. In stepped Sparc Systems, introducing the poultry company to Hera, the checkweighing specialist's flagship loss-in-weight depositer.

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Perfectly seasoning more than 250,000 poultry birds a week – 50 per minute – the supermarket and restaurant supplier now maintains a consistent and even 1g herb and spice dispensing rate. Starting with just one Hera system in 2018, the company was so impressed by the presentation improvements and waste reductions, it has since introduced three more machines. Including several on its ready meal production lines dispensing individually quick frozen (IQF) vegetables, herbs and grated cheese into dishes.

A British poultry supplier more than halved seasoning waste on its lines using Hera.



Providing layers of taste and texture to a variety of products, Hera scatters and weighs dry inclusions with accuracy and precision. From a consumer perspective, Hera ensures the best products, featuring exciting flavours and textures, are consistently presented to shoppers and restaurateurs.

Guaranteed to deliver an accurate spread, as each conveyorised product passes in front of the Hera sensor, the depositor feeder tray vibrates gently scattering the dry ingredients, for instance parsley or peri-peri spices, along the entire width of the product. Rather than a continuous stream, the dispensing slows and stops until a new product tray passes in front of the Hera sensor. This prevents high waste levels and addresses the issue of powder accumulating in and around the machinery and conveyor system.

Optimal waste management

This controlled dispensing is very important. We have regularly observed that sieving inclusions onto products manually or even the waterfall technique results in the majority ending up on the floor or conveyor. It is especially prevalent with fine powders like spices and dried herbs, which also becomes a health and safety issue for co-workers. Naturally, this wasted product cannot be reworked due to cross contamination and hygiene practices.

For many years, the poultry specialist performed the task manually. Seasoning 250,000 birds each week required a lot of labour. An issue further compounded by shortages in seasonal workers.

Looking back, every chicken used approximately 11g of herbs, yet only around 5g actually ended up on the chicken. Introducing Hera onto the company's poultry line instantly reduced the weight of herbs scattered on each chicken to 0.9g. Roughly equating to a saving of 225kg in spices and herbs every week.

Improving product throughput and optimising quality control using state of the art technology was also a key driver.

Eliminating labour intensive manual tasks like this plays a big role in workforce satisfaction. The consistency of presentation



A twin Hera system weighs and dispenses cheese and herbs onto ready meals at the production site.

with Hera means that fewer product trays are spoiled and each line is more productive. An additional benefit of automating processes like this is it opens up more opportunities for skilled roles too.

Satisfying demands for new flavours and fusions

As consumers seek more adventurous flavours, the food industry is increasingly turning towards inclusions to add new tastes and textures to products. Forecast to be worth US\$ 14.73 billion by 2026, Sparc's Hera loss-in-weight depositor streamlines the process and controls the concentration when adding dry ingredients to prepared foods.

Capable of programming and storing up to 500 different product codes, Hera calculates the weight dispensed to the exact milligram. Digital data of the volumetric deposits is captured and stored by the management control system.

Many of our customers are keen to streamline processes and cut down on unnecessary waste which can arise at all stages of the production process.

As is often the case, waste and giveaway can easily be avoided if a more diligent approach to prevention planning and checkweighing is taken. Intelligent automated systems like Hera tackle this drain on resources and profitability and transforms efficiency. ■