

BESPOKE LINE SUPPORTS READY-PREPARED SALAD GROWTH

Case Study
Fresh Servant

Facts and figures

- » The line is handling tray sizes between 220g and 370g at around 35-40 packs per minute.
- » Thanks to the speed and accuracy of the automated system, product giveaway is less than 1%.
- » The QX-775-Flex traysealer combines a compact design with high speeds for MAP (Modified Atmosphere Packaging) trays of up to 15 cycles per minute, along with maximum hygiene and high-quality product and pack presentation.

Economic and ergonomic benefits are the main reasons behind the success of an Ishida-designed weighing, filling and tray sealing line at Fresh Servant, Finland's leading supplier of fresh prepared salads. At the same time, the new line has provided the additional capacity the company needed.

Thanks to the speed and accuracy of the automated system, handling up to 40 trays per minute with product giveaway of less than 1%, Fresh Servant is achieving around 350 trays per employee per hour compared to 150 when the operation was carried out manually. Equally important, employees have been taken off repetitive tasks on the filling line that could lead to potential strains and been redeployed elsewhere in the factory, where they can make a more efficient contribution.

The Ishida line has enabled Fresh Servant to meet growing demand for complete salad ready meals for on-the-go consumption with added ingredients such as chicken, tuna and cheese. The line comprises tray denesters, feeding systems into three multihead weighers, special deposit systems to place ingredients into the trays, a tray sealer and combined metal detector and checkweigher. In addition, Fresh Servant has installed a robot for the placement of sachets, and a labeller and vision inspection system at the end of the line.

The first multihead weigher is used to weigh and place salad leaves into the tray. Plates then push down on the leaves to create a bed for the addition of the next ingredients, such as cucumber and sweetcorn, which are weighed on a split 16 head weigher which can handle two separate items simultaneously.





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Following this, the robot deposits sachets of product which could include parmesan cheese, croutons or dressing, as well as a fork. A second denester then places a special insert into the top of the tray, which is used to keep ingredients, such as chicken and tuna, separate from the salad until they are mixed at the time of eating. These items are handled on another split 16 head Ishida weigher. Trays are subsequently sealed in Ishida's QX-775 traysealer before undergoing final quality checks on the checkweigher and metal detector. The line is handling tray sizes between 220g and 370g at around 35-40 packs per minute. Although the weighers can operate at higher speeds, these are currently governed by the capabilities of the denester and robot.

The multihead weighers are from Ishida's application-specific Sector Solutions range. Based on the company's advanced top-of-the-range RV series, these models provide a standard cost-effective and high-performance solution, incorporating proven special features for each product type. The QX-775-Flex traysealer combines a compact design with high speeds for MAP (Modified Atmosphere Packaging) trays of up to 15 cycles per minute, along with maximum hygiene and high-quality product and pack presentation.

The line is in operation for two shifts per day, six days a week, typically handling three different salad varieties during each shift. Changeovers

can be carried out easily with new pack specifications called up at the touch of a button on the Remote Control Unit. The line undergoes a thorough clean at the end of each day, where the robust and open design of the Ishida equipment allows a fast and comprehensive wash down. In particular, contact parts of the weighers can be removed and cleaned using a purpose-built wash wall on the weigher gantry.

Fresh Servant first installed an Ishida multihead weigher for packing salads into bags in 2012, and its consistent high speed, accuracy and reliability made the company the natural choice when Fresh Servant sought to automate its tray packing lines to meet growing demand. "As well as the excellent performance of the equipment, Ishida is great company to work with," comments Sten Snellman, Fresh Servant's Technical Manager. "We enjoy a positive working partnership, and this helped to ensure a fast and smooth installation, with high levels of advice and support throughout."

As part of this, two groups of employees underwent special training at Ishida's Dutch facility in Best in both machine operation and servicing. "This has helped to ensure that we can operate the line to maximum efficiency and that any minor issues can be quickly dealt with in-house," explains Sten. "The Ishida line has made a major contribution to our ability to meet growing demand for our ranges of convenience salads," confirms Fresh Servant CEO Sami Haapasalmi. "As a result, we are now in discussion with the company for the installation of a second and even faster line."

Contact

Ishida Europe Limited

Tel: +44 121 607 7700
info@ishidaeurope.com

Kettles Wood Drive
Woodgate Business Park
Birmingham B32 3DB
United Kingdom



www.ishidaeurope.com