

ISHIDA HELPS UK SALAD PRODUCER MAINTAIN ITS ZENITH

Case Study
Zenith

Facts and figures

- » The 14 head 5 litre salad Salad weigher's contact parts are made with C4, Ishida's recently-developed 'easy-motion' material; designed to help keep salad leaves moving through the weigher.
- » Weighing accuracy is to within 1% of target weight across the different pack sizes.
- » Changeovers between products or pack sizes can be carried out at the touch of a button on the machines' remote control units.

The combination of Ishida's advanced weighing technology and project management skills have played a significant part in the recent growth of specialist UK salad producer Zenith Nurseries. Zenith has enjoyed major success over the past seven years, supplying a wide variety of baby leaf products including rocket, watercress and spinach primarily to foodservice outlets.

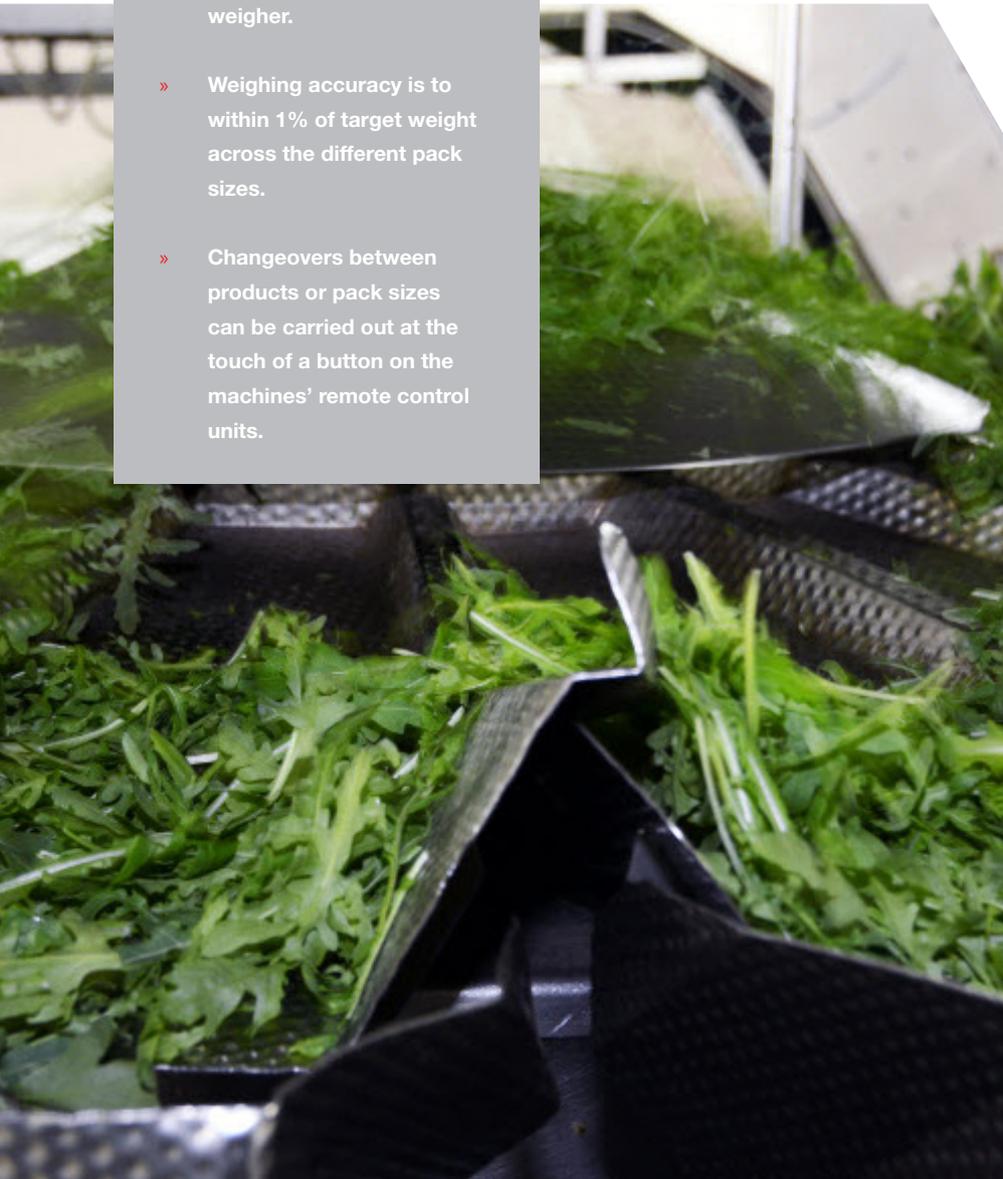
Challenge

A family-run business established by the Barone brothers nearly 40 years ago, the company originally traded as G & N Barone growing a variety of salad products.

When the current MD Franco Barone and his cousin came into the business, they spotted the opportunity to focus on baby leaf products. As this took off, to keep up with demand Zenith was employing around 20 people to manually weigh and pack rocket and red chard – and this very quickly underlined the need to find a solution to automate the process.

Solution

The original plan, says Franco, was to purchase a standalone linear weigher but when his father saw an Ishida multihead line being demonstrated, he bought the entire line instead! This proved to be a sound investment with the speed and accuracy of the Ishida enabling Zenith to expand the number of products and pack sizes it could offer. Today the company supplies around ten different products – single and mixed varieties – in both punnets (75g to 150g) and bags (75g to 500g).





“ There is no point buying the cheapest machine if its lack of reliability means it is not working for half the time. Service support and back-up in the event of a problem are also essential. ”

The purchase of the first Ishida established Zenith's long-standing partnership with Ishida Europe, one that has most recently seen Ishida not only supply a brand new weighing and packing line – Zenith's fourth – but also project manage the complete re-design of the company's pack house to accommodate the new line and make the entire operation more efficient.

This was a major undertaking with the Ishida project team emptying the pack house and re-installing the three existing lines, together with new steelwork and conveyors, alongside the new line. To maximise space and efficiency, the team introduced a workable product flow with all product entering the area from one end and leaving it packed at the other. To keep disruption to a minimum, nine days were originally allowed for the transformation of the pack house, utilising the quieter periods over two weekends. However, the Ishida team was able to complete the task in just five days with some production able to start up as early as the Thursday.

The latest Ishida weigher to be installed is a 14 head 5 litre salad specification model. The four models at Zenith also provide an excellent demonstration of how Ishida's salad weighers have evolved over the years. While the earlier models feature hex embossed surfaces, the latest Salad weigher's contact parts are made with C4, Ishida's recently-

developed 'easy-motion' material; both solutions designed to help keep salad leaves moving through the weigher. Franco reports that weighing accuracy is to within 1% of target weight across the different pack sizes. Speeds vary according to what is being packed but are well within the company's requirements.

The weighers are easy to set up, and changeovers between products or pack sizes can be carried out at the touch of a button on the machines' remote control units. Zenith also implements rigorous hygiene standards and the ease of cleaning of the weighers, with parts quickly removed for washing, helps helps to minimise the downtime for this operation.

“ The quality of the equipment and the high levels of service are the reasons why we continue to partner with Ishida. ”

With Zenith operating as much as 14 hours a day, and up to seven days a week, the reliability of the weighers is another important factor. "This is very important as we would certainly struggle if one line was out of commission for any length of time." The continuing growth of Zenith means that Franco is already planning to install another Ishida line next year. This also offers further evidence of the reliability and longevity of Ishida equipment.

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