OUTLINE

A processor of fresh, ready-to-eat fresh meals and salads needed to remove the risk of operator error and eliminate waste due to rework and potential recalls resulting from incorrect product labels.

They also wanted to improve barcode label quality for smooth flow of product through the supply chain.

SITUATION

Incorrect labelling and packaging had previously caused issues, so to comply with a large retail customer, the processor needed to improve its labelling quality control, and ensure the right product was put into the right package, which was then put into the right carton.

At the same time, the processor wanted to enhance barcode label quality, improving barcode ‘good read’ rates.

BUSINESS NEEDS

The processor wanted a turnkey solution that would easily integrate with various production lines across sites nationally. With space an issue (particularly at some sites), the solution needed to have a small footprint.

PROCESS NEEDS

The labelling solution needed to apply two labels to the adjacent sides of a carton (front and near), printing the product description, GS1 trade item barcode, along with use-by and batch codes at a maximum line speed of 15 cartons per minute.

They also wanted a simple-to-use, central point of control to further reduce the potential for errors.

The system needed to be able to validate primary and carton barcodes on each production line to reduce operator errors and eliminate rework or potential recalls due to incorrect packaging or unreadable barcodes.

APPLICATION |
CARTON LABELLING, INTEGRATING PRIMARY + SECONDARY LABEL VALIDATION + CHECKWEIGH

TECHNOLOGIES |
LABEL PRINT & APPLY + INTEGRATION SOFTWARE + CHECKWEIGH

INDUSTRY:
Fresh Produce

APPLICATION |
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SOLUTION

Matthews’ recommended a carton Label Print and Apply (LPA) unit with primary and secondary validation systems assimilated. iDSnet integration software manages all labelling and validation processes; it can be accessed remotely via the iDSnet Portal.

An integrated conveyor system, connected to each labelling station, fulfilled the need for a turnkey solution. Conveyors were specifically designed for the processor's tight spaces.

Primary label checks

To ensure operators have loaded the correct pre-printed primary film, Matthews installed production-line scanners integrated into the existing vertical form fill and seal machines. Once operators begin a run, scanners read the primary EAN13 barcode to verify the right film is being used for the right product. If the wrong pre-printed film is loaded, iDSnet alerts the operator via the iDSnet Portal.
OUTCOME

The space and needs-tailored turnkey solution has reduced labour costs and eliminated operator error with incorrect primary packaging, as well as enhanced barcode label reads. The result has been greatly improved product quality and delivery to the processor’s customers.

Production-line scanners verify that operators have loaded the correct primary film, by verifying against each SKU’s primary EAN13 barcode. This has avoided costly rework or recalls. Being omni-directional, the scanners can read different barcode orientations, catering for a variety of artwork and pre-printed barcodes.

The automatic primary and secondary integrated online scanning and validation solution has ensured each carton has the correct contents and correct primary packaging. Validating each carton before palletising provides peace of mind that the primary items and cartons leaving the processor’s warehouse are correct and will successfully scan through the supply chain.

Using adjacent near and side labels on cartons accommodates carton breathe holes, giving the processor more flexibility with label placement compared with wrap around (which has the potential to impede or cover breathe holes).

iDSnet integration software manages all labelling and validation processes, this has also contributed to increased efficiency, accuracy and reduced errors. Because operators can access iDSnet remotely via iDSnet Portal, using a smartphone or tablet, it also greatly streamlines processes. Staff use the portal to both access production line status and to start and stop runs. Product changeover is also fast, simplified into a single barcode-scan action with iDSnet.

With the solution working well, Matthews has since integrated iDSnet into the processor’s existing checkweigh-labelling systems. The solution has also vastly improved the processor’s data and production records, producing real-time reports. This is because iDSnet captures data from all coding, labelling and checkweigh units on the production line, recording every primary product, carton and pallet via the network. With the checkweigh-labelling systems now also integrated, the processor has live reports allowing them to immediately manage under and overweights.

Overall, the solution has vastly improved the quality of product leaving the processor’s doors, increasing customer satisfaction and decreasing its costs.