



Media information
Pomegranates.
14 July 2005

The pomegranate could be regarded as a fruit with the ultimate in pr; regarded as the original 'love apple' it has risen from relative obscurity to become one of the world's most fashionable fruits with demand exceeding supply.

The Mediterranean fruit has been around for thousands of years but its newly discovered antioxidant properties are making it increasingly popular amongst Americans, with small quantities now reaching NZ and Australia.

Despite its heritage, it's still a little known fruit in the US; leading grower Paramount Farming has just expanded its trial block tenfold (to over 4,500 acres) and that's opened up a huge new opportunity for smart fruit sorting and packing technology from Compac Sorting Equipment.

The company that made its name in high speed sorting fruit and vegetables, going on to develop world-leading technology that can identify blemished fruit in less than the blink of an eye, has made another leap in innovation to cope with one of the world's oldest fruits.

Dave Buys, Compac's International Sales Director explains: "As plantings came into production, Paramount needed state of the art optical sorting technology to cope with the special needs of the crop. They looked at a couple of US options before choosing Compac's InVision 9000. The order was particularly significant both in revenue and in sheer size; it involved a huge shipment of equipment, 12 container loads in all, taking eight weeks to install.

"It's a significant sale for Compac and is our second largest project in California. Size is no problem for the company which secured the mega-deal of providing its InVision 9000 blemish grading technology to Sun Pacific's new 10 acre pack house in California (40 lanes of pre-grade blemish Machinery and 44 lanes of final grade sizer – 65 and 70 metres respectively).

"But optical sorting technology has never been used in pomegranates anywhere before, so we took our expertise in citrus blemish grading, which was designed to be generic, and easily adapted it to pomegranate sorting"

The crop has many uses, from processed (juicing and seed extracts) through to the fresh fruit product. Pomegranate sauce is used as a dipping sauce, whilst the juice is used on its own or mixed with others. This two-fold requirement meant special equipment in the packhouse to segregate the crop into processed and fresh market packing.

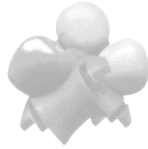
"We installed 18 lanes of pre-grader equipment to perform this separation, with the fresh market fruit going through a waxing process (to enhance its appearance) and then separated out according to a range of colour and defect gradations and eight different sizes."

Sorting is a time consuming process traditionally done manually with the risk of operator bias or failure. Now it has been replaced by cameras that capture each piece of fruit, check its dimensions and appearance for blemishes using software developed by Compac, and then sorts into destination in split seconds with absolute accuracy.

Dave Buys says the Paramount pomegranate installation has been designed with expansion in mind, as the crop shows promise of hitting boom times.

"At present, there are few commercial pomegranate growers but it's likely that will change in the future," he says.

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About Compac Sorting Equipment:

- *Manufacturers of high speed, accurate sorting systems for fruit and vegetables,*
- *Compac is a world leader in fruit sorting technology, through on-going commitment to research and development.*
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