

20 Feb 2003

Compac Sorters Provide Options For Tomato Packhouses

Compac Sorting Equipment has provided tomato packhouses with efficient and cost-saving solutions since its inception in 1984. Using operator-friendly Windows-based software, companies throughout North America are using Compac's single lane (SLS) and multi-lane sorters.

This new SLS tomato repack system is a clever and practical improvement on the traditional color sorting technology that has been around for a number of years. Coupling this new technology with advancements in patented carrier design and fruit handling enables a system that demonstrates gentle handling, speed and accuracy - all in one machine.

The patented Compac carrier performs three separate functions:

- It operates as a roller conveyor for singulation and color grading.
- It rises independently from the chain clip to perform weighing of fruit.
- It tips fruit to the left or right hand side of the machine thereby reducing overall length required.

According to Compac's Phil Jones (USA/Canada Sales), the system is currently hard at work at many leading US and Canadian tomato packhouses.

Procacci Brothers Sales, considered the US industry leader in the tomato repack industry, employs this cutting edge technology in all phases of their tomato repack operation in both Philadelphia and New Jersey. They use a Compac four lane machine in New Jersey for sorting vine ripens, and in their Philadelphia plant they use three single lane Compac sorters and one two lane sorter for repacking.

The result has been increased capacity, and versatility across the total packhouse operation, where they mostly volume fill the fruit. The Compac system has lead to significant reductions in overtime and overall labor savings.

A large Canadian tomato repack group has also installed new Compac systems in the last two years.

This group, comprising three companies, (**Star Produce Ltd Sun Processing Ltd and Galaxy Processing Ltd**) traditionally employed hand packing in all its plants," said Jones.

They purchased two single lane machines for Vancouver and Saskatoon and have now ordered a third machine for their Calgary plant. "Since the installation of the Compac machines they report significant improvements in both quality and labor savings." says Jones.

Jones said "With Compac's sophisticated color grading and weight sizing, we know we improve quality and consistency, as well as being able to color sort into 16 user-defined colors."

The most practical benefit this system offers is the way the single lane machine handles fruit. There are no cross conveyors or other drops within the sorter itself, it displays little damage to fruit even when sorting at high speed, it displays exceptional weight accuracy, and will weigh and fill a 25 lb. box, automatically eliminating the need for scales at each outlet point.

Depending on the pack configuration and the count size being sorted, Compac's efficient operating speed sees single lane machines pushing through between 500 - 750 x 25lb boxes of tomatoes an hour, combining speed with gentleness from soft rubber rollers and padding on all fruit contact areas.

Jones said Compac's Single Lane Sorter above all has compactness – an apt term for a Compac system. For more information, call Phil Jones at (559) 280-3327 philj@compacsort.com or visit www.compacsort.com