

Media release

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LENSWOOD SIZES UP BETTER MARKET POTENTIAL WITH COMPAC UPGRADE

Lenswood Cold Stores Co-Op Society has just finished stage one of a five year upgrade plan to ensure that one of Australia's oldest apple packing and storage co-operatives continues to meet changing European standards, particularly for high demand Pink Lady and Sundowner varieties that are especially suited to the Lenswood area.

The project kicked off with a complete facelift of the packing shed, which handles around 10,000 – 14,000 bins of apples and pears per annum for the 20 members of the Co-op's fruit packing and marketing scheme.

According to marketing and packhouse manager James Walters, the decision to scrap its old grader and embark on a complete upgrade came at a good time. The resulting installation is a true co-operative effort fully supported by the directors of the company. They now believe that the re-developed packhouse puts Lenswood Co-op at the technological cutting edge of apple sorting and packing.

“We started talking to Compac Sorting Equipment and the discussions focussed on finding new ways to make packing more efficient. We wanted to develop the most innovative and flexible packhouse possible to meet the ever-changing market demands. Following a team effort involving Compac, the Co-op's directors and general manager, we believe we have achieved those objectives.”

Compac worked alongside GP Graders to develop a three-lane line for Lenswood, incorporating Compac's sizer, colour grader and tray fillers with GP Graders in-feed system and bin fillers.

The outcome was everything that Lenswood had anticipated and more. Production flows easily and logically, with significantly reduced forklift driving, lower cost and improved safety standards. Equally important was that the four-month project came in on time and within budget. James Walters stated, “unusual for such a large project there have been very few teething problems. The grader has worked extremely efficiently and staff quickly came to terms with the new equipment. This is a credit to Compac for having worked in so well with us, developing a real partnership, understanding our goals and providing support when we need it.”

James Walters believes that the Compac sizer is more fruit-friendly, particularly with more delicate varieties such as golden delicious and granny smith. The sizer has been tested with an impact ball which revealed that there was next to no bruising concerns, something that the consultant performing the test said was highly unusual for a newly installed sizer. According to James, “I believe that the gentle treatment of the fruit by the Compac sizer, coupled with the

excellent fruit appearance produced by the GP feeding system gives us a significant advantage in the market place.”

When running in Split Sizer mode, Compac’s sizer allows simultaneous packing of first and second grade fruit. Staff at the sorting table decide on the grading, diverting second grade fruit down an allocated lane of the Compac. Final inspection takes place at the tray pack tables. A dual recycle conveyor system allows for juice fruit to join juice fruit from the sorting table and second grade fruit to be run down the second grade lane of the sizer.

According to James Walters, this is one of the ‘unique pieces of technology’ that validated the decision to go with Compac. “Its efficiency and the reliability of Compac machinery and software contributes to cost savings for the co-op and that’s important to our growers.”

Mr Walters says packhouses are increasingly reliant on technology advances and the company is working with Compac on a blemish sorter, which he believes will put the co-op at the forefront and help it match cost savings with market differentiation.

More information:

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