

CASE STUDY

Fresno Produce Grows Its School Lunch Business with Faster Packaging Process

Fruit and vegetable supplier was first to use FAS SPrint SidePouch® bagger.

Fresno Produce Inc. of Fresno, California, solved a huge food packaging problem by being the first in line to use the FAS SPrint bagger to package individual servings of fruit and vegetables for the Fresno Unified School District. The FAS SPrint enables the company to package up to 30,000 bags per day and has improved Fresno's efficiency so much they have won contracts from two other school districts in the area.

Previous Packaging Method

Fresno Produce supplies the school district with pre-packaged fruit and vegetables for their school lunch programme. They originally bagged these items by hand using Ziploc® bags, an operation requiring up to 20 workers. Fresno knew that to maintain and possibly grow this business, they needed to automate the process, so they initially purchased an Autobag® H-100D bagger. However, since the unit didn't come with an operating manual, they called our northern California salesman, Bart Johnson, for help in learning how to run the machine.

New Packaging Method

Bart gladly supplied the needed help and got Fresno up and running. But when Bart reviewed Fresno's operations and requirements, he realised that even with the H-100D they would still have a tough time keeping up with the required volume. Only one operator could load the bagger, and the process was just too slow. He quickly concluded that the FAS SPrint bagger, which was just coming onto the market, would be a perfect fit for this application and suggested the unit to Fresno's owner, David Miller. Because of the great service and support Bart had already supplied, Miller agreed to buy an FAS SPrint as soon as one was available.

The unit was installed in May 2006, and it was an immediate success. After the initial trial, Fresno has been able to pack up to 30,000 bags per day for next day delivery. Only three people are needed to run the machine, two to load bags and one to box filled packages, compared to the 20 needed for hand bagging. Because of the increased volume, Fresno has gained contracts with two other school districts in the area and is bidding for more.

Products being bagged include oranges, cantaloupe and honeydew melon, grapes, strawberries, watermelon, tomatoes, cauliflower, broccoli, cucumber, jicama, courgette, carrots and celery. The bagger typically operates at 70 bags per minute, but it can pack up to 100 bags of orange slices per minute. In 2006, Fresno packaged over two million bags of fruit and vegetables.

Company Name

Fresno Produce Inc. - Supplies the school district with pre-packaged fruit and vegetables for their school lunch programme.

Products Being Packaged

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Equipment Used

FAS SPrint bagger

Custom Integration

The SPrint Revolution SidePouch did not require custom integration for this application.

Materials Used

SidePouch bags

Return on Investment

Fresno Produce has seen rapid market growth of its line of packaged fruit and vegetables and expects sales to grow significantly because of the improved productivity provided by the FAS SPrint bagger.



Success Story

'The school districts are really interested in providing healthy alternatives to snack foods,' said Fresno's owner, David Miller. 'The FAS SPrint bagger gives a great deal of flexibility to change quickly from fruit to vegetables to special mixes of dried fruit and nuts without hurting production.' According to Miller, it also helps that the FAS SPrint can be washed down at the end of a shift to meet the operation's sanitary requirements.

According to the production manager, Bon Phouthavong, 'The FAS SPrint bagger is very reliable, and Automated, especially Bart Johnson, has been very responsive. Bart quickly helped us solve an initial problem with belt breakage caused by sugar in the mechanism, and since then, we've had very little unscheduled downtime.'

Fresno Produce has seen rapid market growth of its line of packaged fruit and vegetables and expects sales to grow significantly because of the improved productivity provided by the FAS SPrint bagger. This application is just one more example of Automated's commitment to customer service and support, and to helping our customers grow their own businesses.

Automated Packaging Systems has been designing and manufacturing original Autobag[®], AirPouch[®] and SidePouch[®] systems and products for over 50 years. With more than 30,000 packaging systems in operation and a worldwide service organisation, Automated Packaging Systems has the experience and support to deliver the ultimate in customer satisfaction. Automated Packaging Systems offers a complete line of baggers, void-fill and protective packaging systems, thermal transfer imprinters, counters, scales, and specialty packaging materials. Complete information is available at the company's website. A video clip of this SPrint packaging application and several others are available at www.autobag.com/fresnoproduce

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