

Compac 'blemish' reputation crosses boundaries

Compac's clever technology is poised to take apple sorting to a whole new level, with development of the company's next-generation blemish grading system well advanced.

Hawkes Bay fruit packer Apollo Fruit, a long-time Compac customer, is one of two New Zealand sites chosen to trial Compac's apple blemish grader this coming season, with a further development site at Adelaide's Lenswood Co-op.

Together, these packhouses form part of a growing trend around the world to move grading up a notch and improve packhouse efficiency.

Ross Beaton, director of Apollo Fruit says the company chose to partner with Compac Sorting Equipment because 'we believe Compac's development team presents the best solution for developing apple blemish grading.'

Changing market requirements are forcing packhouses to become more reliant on technology advances just to keep pace with reduced margins for packed fruit. Compac's international reputation for citrus blemish grading has fast-tracked its move into apple blemish grading.

But whilst important, reputation is not enough. Compac's Managing Director, Hamish Kennedy, says choosing the right development partners is crucial in getting the best outcome for the demanding apple crop and ensuring that the resulting system measures up to the usual Compac mantra of 'the best technology for the job'.

"Pushing out a 'one size fits all' solution is doing a real disservice to packhouses," says Mr. Kennedy. "We're making many changes to our InVision 9000 blemish grading system which we have released for citrus to provide apple packers with a blemish grading system the incorporates the unique characteristics presented by apples."

Mr. Kennedy says that whilst Compac is clearly headed for successful commercialization of the apple blemish system, the company sees its on-going development and modification as crucial to create the best possible solution for the industry.

"We've been very deliberate about keeping the development close to home despite requests from packhouses further afield. We have a huge amount of confidence in the capabilities of Compac's vision development team, and that builds on our extensive experience from a huge range of fruit and vegetable work over the past 20 years. I'm positive that this background, and a healthy dose of kiwi ingenuity, will come up with the appropriate solution for the industry."

The company has just completed the installation of a 40 lane citrus blemish grader for a Californian company. The monster order, configured as four 10-lane graders operating in parallel, is yet another accolade for the company's supremacy in citrus grading.

Keen interest has been expressed by a number of large US apple packers, many of whom have chosen Compac for their packhouse upgrades (one Washington state packer, Broetje Orchards has installed the world's longest sizer and colour sorting machine- at 87 metres long, 12 lanes and 58 sorting destinations).

Compac's apple sizer is known as more fruit-friendly, particularly with delicate varieties such as golden delicious and pink lady. Australia's Lenswood Co-Op tested the sizer just after installation with an impact ball which revealed that there were only minimal bruising concerns (highly unusual for a newly installed sizer).

Come 2004, the addition of apple blemish grading capabilities carrying the Compac brand and InVision 9000 Blemish model number could raise the bar in fruit packing yet another notch.

