

Compac marks 20 years with consistent growth

Millions of tonnes of fruit and vegetables have been weighed, graded, sorted and packed by smart NZ technology, sparked by an idea from Hamish Kennedy, then an electronics engineering student who didn't want a 'real' job.

Twenty years on and Hamish Kennedy has built Compac Sorting Equipment into an on-going NZ export success story. Twenty is a good number for the privately-owned company, which consistently reports 20% year on year growth.

Compac celebrates its 20th year with more record deals, including its first international joint venture partnerships to manufacture Compac machinery in Italy and Korea. In 2004 the company set up sales and service offices in California and Florida in the USA as well as Argentina, and expanded its Australian operations.

With technology installed in over 20 countries, places as diverse as the Canary Islands, Africa, Israel, Canada and South America, life is never dull for any of the 130 full time employees at Compac. The company has also just expanded its Auckland premises into a new factory, to cope with further growth.

Compac is the brains behind precision fruit weighing, carton weight optimisation, user-friendly colour sorting systems, high performing blemish grading and density sorting used on crops as diverse as avocados to potatoes, pomegranates, onions, peaches and citrus.

Mr Bob Shaw, Compac's General Manager, says the company has a long history of investment in continuing research and development. "This has contributed to our continual growth, and sits with our priorities of highly reliable machinery and constantly improving service. By providing leading technology to our home markets of NZ and Australia, we play a role in helping the produce industry compete effectively in the competitive world market."

Compac exports around 85% of its production, with this year's export highlights including further sales of its highly specialised fruit sizing and packing equipment to Californian packing giants Sun Pacific and Paramount Citrus as well as further sales for the Washington State apple crop.

More than 40% of Washington State (USA) apple crop (a quantity that is double New Zealand's total apple crop) is now sorted by Compac's electronics and software due to what the company says is its superior performance of its optical colour sorting.