Apples or avocados -flexibility a plus for smaller pack houses

MANY companies struggle to reassure customers they are big enough to handle large projects, but for Compac Sorting Equipment, the challenge is to demonstrate its flexibility and cost-effectiveness for smaller pack houses.

Size is no problem for the company which secured the mega-deal of providing its InVision 9000 blemish grading technology to Sun Pacific's new 10 acre pack house in California (40 lanes of pre-grade blemish Machinery and 24 lanes of final grade sizer - 65 and 70 metres respectively).

But, according to Compac's Australian Market Manager - **Pari Padriveta**, the prevailing perception is that the product is excellent but suitable mainly for larger pack houses.

"This couldn't be further from the truth," he said. "What is important is that our software provides an excellent platform and is easily expandable as requirements grow."

"People see us as big in citrus, apples, potatoes and onions, but we are proving to add value to avocado pack houses where we can address the problem of time consuming place packing with efficient volume filling lines, saving labour without effecting tray presentation."

Mr Padriveta said Compac's volume filling and packing machines are very compact, and Compac single and dual line sizers are ideal for smaller pack houses. Also, Compac's carrier design has been tested over the years and found to be the most effective carrier system on the market for a wide variety of fruit without modification. The systems have been well proven for Avocados with Compac equipment operating in Australia, NZ and Chile.

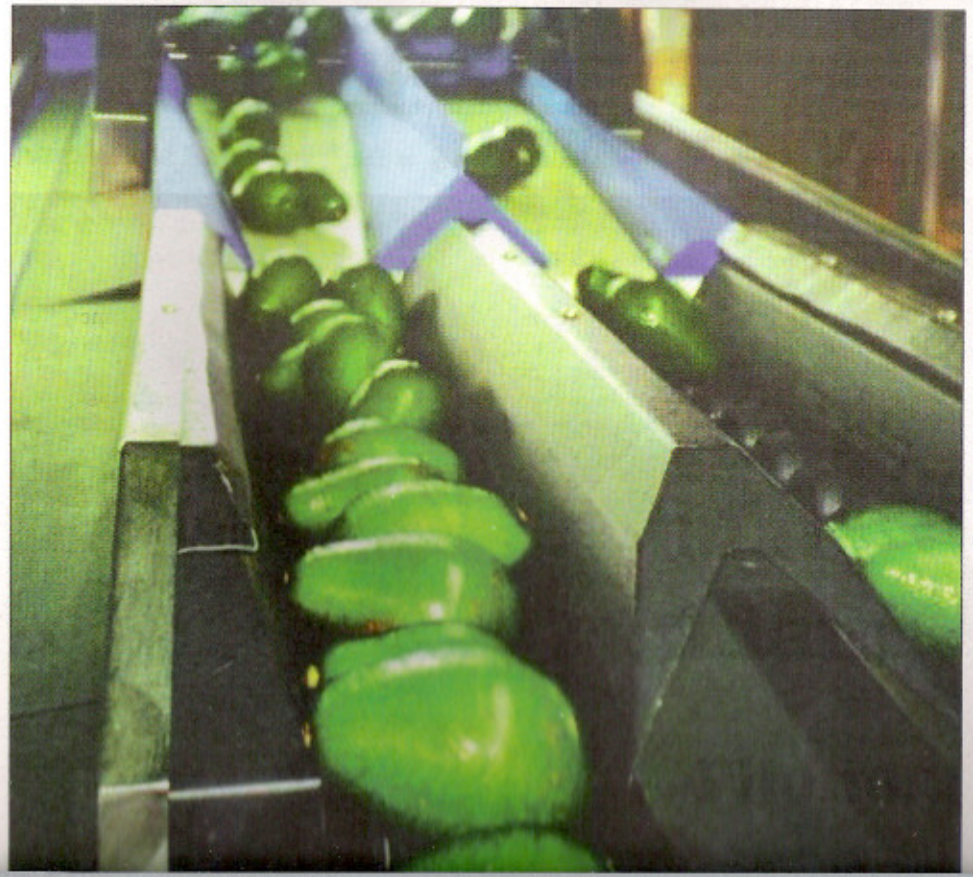
"The software's flexibility allows it to interface with as many labellers as required, and because Compac's new technology development is done with retrofits in mind, it can be a very cost-effective solution for smaller pack houses to only upgrade their software and electronics on their existing sizer.

Compac's machinery is installed in several Avocado pack houses throughout Australia, with the first being a two lane sizer at NSW's Summerland House. According to **Rick Behrens** of Summerland, the decision was not taken lightly and came about after evaluating US and Australian products.

Mr Behrens said Compac's flexibility was imperative as the pack house runs limes as well as avocadoes, without reconfiguration. The low noise level, soft handling and speed were also big pluses as was the cost-competitiveness.

"Compac gives small pack houses the ability to significantly increase their throughput in the same size shed," Mr Padrevita said. "Compac's technology helps increase returns though accuracy and smart packing systems without needing to add on construction costs to the upgrade project. This flexibility is a big payoff for pack houses because the same machine can handle citrus, apples and stone fruit with precision weighing and variability of packing methods."

Mr Padrevita said the NZ-driven technology, fine-tuned on that country's kiwifruit machines there, will play a bigger part in the avocado industry as the sector grows and moves away from its traditional older technology base.



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