

Dressing For Success

Eagle Product Inspection



Ken's Foods demonstrates the importance of its stringent contaminant detection process to ensure the highest level of quality control.

Ken's Foods is a family owned and operated business with retail grocery and food service divisions that produce and package more than 400 varieties of dressings, sauces, marinades and condiments. The company has three plants across the U.S. in Marlborough, Mass.; McDonough, Ga.; and Las Vegas, Nev. Its facilities run 24/7 with two different shifts working to ensure the production line never stops. Ken's Foods' condiments are supplied to some of the biggest retailers in the world, such as Wal-Mart.

The company has a rigorous focus on quality to ensure all products meet the tough standards of its customers and consumers alike and to succeed in the highly competitive and increasingly global food marketplace.

Product Inspection Challenge

After the 9/11 attacks the FDA was advising manufacturers to use tamper resistant seals on their food products. At the same time Ken's Foods started investigating the possibility of using x-ray technology. The company proactively implemented tamper-

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resistant seals before they were mandated, but was aware that these seals' foil linings could cause problems for its legacy metal detection equipment.

In addition to a proactive food safety approach, senior management executives at Ken's Foods saw benefit in investigating a foreign body detection system that not only worked with the tamper-resistant seals but also reduced product loss experienced with current methods. At the time, Ken's Foods used pipeline metal detectors, which are designed for installation in food production environments where there is a need to inspect liquid, paste and slurry products for contaminants as they travel through process pipelines. They can be utilized to inspect a wide variety of food products and are able to detect all metal contaminants including ferrous, non-ferrous and stainless steel.

Pipeline systems are pressurized, making it difficult to add test contaminants to the mixture. Test contaminants are used for system verification as a part of the HACCP program. The HACCP management program supports food safety initiatives by analyzing and controlling biological, chemical, and physical hazards.

When pipeline systems reject product due to contamination, a reject valve opens to remove the contaminant along with a significant amount of product from the production flow, resulting in product loss. To boost contaminant control and reduce product loss, the company decided to turn to x-ray inspection technology.

Finding the solution

After evaluating multiple x-ray vendors, Ken's Foods selected Eagle Product Inspection as its product inspection supplier of choice. Eagle x-ray inspection systems evaluate in-process and finished products for contaminants such as metal, glass, stone and bone while also having the ability to check mass and evaluate compartmentalized fill level. Eagle was chosen based on three main factors: performance, reliability and the quality of service offered.

To date, Ken's Foods has purchased 15 x-ray inspection systems consisting of nine EAGLE™ Tall units, three EAGLE™ Pack 720 units and three EAGLE™ Tall PRO XS units. The machines are able to inspect products at high speeds, whether in jars, bottles or on composite lines as well as in upright and odd-shaped containers that are ideal for salad dressing and sauce containers. The blind spots that had previously occurred at the bottom of such vessels can also now be inspected.

The EAGLE Tall units examine the gallon- and the half-gallon-size plastic jugs of salad dressing that Ken's Foods produces for its food service customers for potential foreign body contamination. The systems are set up so that when contaminated products are detected, a push-arm reject expels the product from the production line into a rejection bin where products can be evaluated and disposed. The EAGLE Pack 720 is used for inspection of small case sizes and multi-lane applications which allows Ken's Foods to inspect multiple lanes of the same or dissimilar products, or use one lane for production and the other for rework.

Increasing performance

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The EAGLE™ Tall PRO XS is of a tall and slim design to enable it to easily fit into a smaller surface area than most machines, saving space on Ken's Foods' product inspection line. The system also has the ability to concurrently perform a wide range of in-line quality checks such as verifying fill level, measuring headspace, and verifying component presence and absence to alert Ken's Foods to over- or under-fulfillment, avoiding waste and ensuring customers receive what they paid for. The machine also has the added benefit of being able to inspect gallon bottles and 12-ounce containers at speeds of up to 200 per minute.

The EAGLE™ Pack 720 evaluates cases of salad dressing packaged in single-serve cups with foil lids. X-ray inspection equipment has a distinct advantage over legacy metal detection equipment, as foil packaging does not affect detection capabilities. X-ray technology is able to visually look through a packaging material to the product contained within to detect foreign body contamination and can simultaneously evaluate compartment and or total container weight. It can inspect six 12 x 18-inch cases a minute which each contain 200 2-ounce single-serve cups.

Adding value to the business

Since x-ray inspection has been installed, Ken's Foods has reported increased line efficiency, a reduction in wasted product compared with previous inspection methods and additional confidence that it is delivering the highest quality products to the market.

The Eagle systems are also equipped with online remote diagnostics to allow the Eagle service department to dial into the x-ray system via modem access to work through trouble shooting, saving Ken's Foods downtime on the line and the expense of an onsite service visit.

"Because Eagle provides remote monitoring, an engineer can dial into the machine to carry out any maintenance which has eliminated fifty to sixty percent of our service calls. The unquestionable reliability of the machines ensures that we can save time, money and increase our efficiency. On the rare occasions that we need a service engineer onsite, a member of the Eagle maintenance team is onsite within 24 hours which is crucial for us to minimizing downtime," said Murzycki.

The Eagle Product Inspection line of x-ray inspection systems evaluates in process and finished products for contaminants such as metal, glass, stone and bone while also having the ability to check mass, evaluate compartmentalized fill level, and analyze fat content. With its headquarters in Tampa, Fla., and local offices across the globe, Eagle Product Inspection machines meet today's HACCP certification requirements to ensure that food and beverage manufacturers and their customers in turn are well protected. Visit www.eaglepi.com [1] for more information.

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