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The tricky task of detecting botrytis bumps in lemons has challenged fruit sorters and packers for years, but fruit and vegetable sorting innovator, Compac Sorting Equipment has developed the answer.

A key component of the solution for successful lemon sorting is Compac's InVision 9000 blemish sorting system. Cameras and advanced software combine to sort this traditionally tricky crop, detecting and grading on minor to major defects.

Traditionally, hand sorting has been needed to identify scale's miniscule red/brown dots, whilst the variegation found on lemons has challenged grading systems.

Dave Buys, Compac's International Sales Director says the technology underpinning InVision 9000, and its high resolution cameras, has been developed specifically to enable packers to pick up almost invisible marks on any range of lemons from green to yellow, and easily cope with patchy green and yellow.

The benefit is being evaluated by the world's largest lemon exporter, San Miguel in Argentina who ran a demonstration site in 2006 and have just confirmed an order with Compac for a year's commercial trial.

Chile's Propal packhouse is running an 8 lane Compac sorter and four sites in Australia have picked up the technology specifically for lemons in the past 18 months.

"Lemon packers are no different from other packhouses, in looking to increase throughput via intelligent distribution optimisation; in other words increasing profits by reducing overall packing costs" says Mr Buys.

"Essentially this means effective removal of removing unwanted fruit prior to the processing line, maximising existing packing line capacity and improving accuracy and consistency which in turn reduces variations and the cost of grading by hand."

Mr Buys says the higher resolution of the advanced InVision system also picks up physical damage such as punctures, cuts and bruising which contribute to a significant percentage of defects. They are also often difficult to pick up with the human eye, but can cause fruit break down in the market.

"Separating damaged fruit prior to shipping ensures the best return from the crop. In turn, this creates a win for all concerned, from improved profits to securing the integrity of the fruit or brand.

Compac Sorting Equipment has a sound history of using innovative technology to improve pack house profits. Its win of the mammoth installation in California's Sun Pacific packhouse saw an initial supply of 40 lanes of pre-grade blemish grading machinery covering 60 metres and 12 lanes of final

grade sizer stretching to 75 metres, capable of processing 500 mandarins a second and covering half an acre of the 10 acre pack house. Sun Pacific then put the icing on Compac's cake with a further order for 32 more lanes of Compac's grading technology and packing machinery.

That order was another step in confirming Compac's well-proven track record in blemish grading, beginning in the late nineties when it helped Sunkist growers supplying California's Golden Valley Citrus pack house avoid a potential crop write-off from frost damaged fruit.

Since 2001 Compac has installed around 180 lanes of fruit sizing equipment in California alone, with just over 60% of these being dedicated to citrus blemish grading,. Paramount Citrus Association, Del Rey is the latest convert, installing 33 lanes for its pomegranate and orange size and blemish grading

But Compac, California and blemish grading is only the rather large tip of the iceberg; Compac has a further 151 lanes in the US and an additional 20 sites around the world, including Chile, Australia, Germany and Spain as well as in New Zealand, making it the pre-eminent fruit sorting and blemish grading company

More information:

Compac Sorting Equipment

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