UNITEC, technological solutions a step forward in the peach

Thanks to the strong connection with the market in which the UNITEC Group has been operating for 100 years, the Research & Development team has designed and developed a new, innovative solution to meet the requirements of the customer Sun Valley Packing, a leading American grower, packer and distributor of stone fruit (peaches, nectarines, plums) based in Reedley (California).

The project comes from a brand-new idea, different from the US standards of the industry. For the UNITEC team, the ability to listen and to find the right solution have been key elements in creating a strong relationship with the customer based on trust.

As confirmed by Casey Jones, CEO of Sun Valley Packing, where UNITEC has recently started up a major peach handling line: “The feeling with UNITEC has been overwhelmingly positive. Great group of individuals, very family like company, even though it’s a quite large company, it feels like they’re in your backyard, even if we were working on continents thousands of miles apart”, and he adds that “what really solidified the project was the visit to Italy, meeting the team out there, meeting the engineers and then walking on that campus.

That's something to be very proud of there!" Based on this trust, the UNITEC team developed a new solution to meet the needs of Sun Valley Packing. "UNITEC came forward with a new idea of how to process stone fruit.

They didn't come here offering a new sorter or a new technology. They came with the idea of a new solution, unheard of in the stone fruit industry", says Sergio Chavez, Chief Operations Officer. The 8 lanes sorter Unical 600, equipped with Peach Vision 3 quality selection technology, processes more than 200,000 fruits per hour. Thanks to the innovative Peach Vision 3 external quality selection system, Sun Valley Packing can now detect and remove fruits with defects such as soft, apical damage, peel damage, as well as sort by weight, optical size and color, with the aim of selecting them according to homogeneous characteristics.

The project also includes 4 packing lines, dedicated to different pack-styles (trays, boxes, bags, clamshells) with a strong focus on packing trays of various sizes, especially the "consumer" size, more and more requested by US retailers.

This solution, developed by UNITEC, is designed to facilitate the filling of trays thus allowing the operators to work in a more ergonomic position compared to traditional methods, with a substantial increase of productivity. The line is then equipped with an automatic palletizing system, capable of picking and stacking entire layers of boxes automatically thus allowing great flexibility, and with the UNISTRAP technology for automatic placing of corner-boards and strapping of pallets. The Traceability System, entirely developed by UNITEC, completes the line and allows Sun Valley Packing to track the product from the dumping of the bins, all the way to the palletization thus reducing labor and time required for lot change operations, while monitoring the production in real time and automatically communicating with the ERP system of the customer the results of each grower lot.

Such innovative systems with strong automation made by UNITEC, that include the anthropomorphic robot for the handling of empty boxes, like the one installed at Sun Valley Packing, provide many benefits to packing houses: greater efficiency and efficacy thanks to cost reduction – up to 50% (as in the case of Sun Valley Packing) thus getting round the problems of labor shortage and making operations smoother, with the aim of being more effective and efficient while increasing the return to the growers. Customer satisfaction is the beating heart of UNITEC and this is confirmed by customers: "It is really a team unlike any team I've ever seen that the UNITEC Group has put together.

They all have one goal and that's to make the equipment work and to satisfy the customer!" – Casey Jones and Sergio Chavez from Sun Valley Packing conclude