

MAJOR SAUDI POULTRY PROCESSOR NOW WELL-EQUIPPED TO MEET PRESENT AND FUTURE DEMAND

Case Study
Almarai

Facts and figures

- » What began as a 21,000 bph (birds per hour) project, escalated over a 3-year period in three phases to become a 37,000 bph facility.
- » The new factory, with its 200 million birds per year capacity, is now one of the largest single output poultry plants in the world.
- » Little or nothing of the chicken is wasted.

Almarai's launch in 2009 of Alyoum, its brand of premium chicken products, involved the purchase of a factory and farming site in Ha'il Province, where the company first came into contact with Ishida. Almarai is confident that its new 37,500 bird-per-hour plant, built as a turnkey project, can more than keep pace both with growing demand and with changing consumer preferences.

Challenge

Whole birds are, and will continue to be, an important part of the market. However, consumer demand is driving development more in the direction of fixed weight packs of, for example, breast fillets, drumsticks, thighs, legs or wings, or combinations of different pieces. Almarai's objective was to be able to satisfy such demand with fully sealed, fixed-weight products meeting the highest standards of hygiene and presentation.

Solution

In keeping with Almarai's ambitions, the scope of the project increased as the work proceeded. What began as a 21,000 bph (birds per hour) project, escalated over a 3-year period in three phases to become a 37,000 bph facility. The new factory, with its 200 million birds per year capacity, is now one of the largest single output poultry plants in the world.

The equipment supplied included re-hanging and cut-up systems, deboning machinery, multihead weighers, checkweighers, tray sealers and batching and grading systems as well as X-ray inspection systems and metal detectors. In addition there are scanners, strapping and trussing machines and glazing equipment and also the many associated infeed systems.





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The level of integration is exceptional, as one might expect when a single organisation is in charge of supply and installation. Live bird handling, slaughter, evisceration, chilling, cut-up, deboning, batching and grading, weighing, piece mixing, packing, labelling and crating are all linked by, and contribute to, information exchange that enhances quality, efficiency and speed.

Once plucked, eviscerated and chilled, chickens can be sent for grading and packing as whole birds or delivered to one of the plant's three cut-up systems. For the whole birds, there are separate lines for packing into bags and trays. Special fillet lines pack chicken breasts that have been removed with the greatest precision and then X-ray inspected for bone fragments. There are also separate packing lines for thighs, legs, wings and drumsticks. Little or nothing of the chicken is wasted, with lines also for giblets and for feet.

Other lines are devoted to producing mixtures of chicken pieces, such as drums, chops and wings, according to availability or market demand. Most of these items can be delivered into fixed-weight trays or bags of high hygiene and appearance standards and as fresh or IQF (individually quick frozen) products. In addition, threaded through the plant are systems capable of collecting any of these parts for bulk packing.

Ishida provided automation of the weighing and packing processes to the same advanced level. The main benefit here, apart from the speed needed to keep up with the cut-up lines, was the reduction of giveaway to low levels. We see the new Ha'il plant as equipping us to meet demand far into the future and also of enabling us to serve the market's movement towards poultry pieces sold in fixed weight packs."



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"Ishida provided us with a strong team of professionals to drive the installation," recalls Mr Asgeirsson. "They were well prepared and extremely professional." "The Ishida lines have now been operating for two years, and I find them robust and reliable: we have had minimal downtime."

Mr Asgeirsson also praised the dedication of the Ha'il workers, whose dedication and readiness to learn enabled them to adapt to the change from a 30-year old factory to possibly the most modern poultry processing plant anywhere today.

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