

an essential hygiene requirement in food distribution. Other advantages include improved product quality through gentle, robotic handling and error-free orders through automated picking. Most important, however, has been the advantage of virtually eliminating manual handling. “The automatic picking system has replaced 300 tons of manual handling each day,” says Imanol Alberdi, “and the work of some 30 order picking staff is now completed by the automated equipment, supervised by just five operators.”

Increased flexibility

Operations at the distribution center can also be adapted more easily to the demands of the various shops it serves. “Our warehouses prepare almost a million packages a day for over 1,200 stores in a constant struggle against time,” explains Mr Alberdi. “We ensure a guaranteed service and have to balance the needs of our shops with the handling risks to our warehouse staff. This is where automation brings added versatility. Our project in Madrid has acted as a pilot for a series of automated installations we are planning at our regional distribution centers, with the aim of eliminating the manual handling of fresh produce, as well as dry foods.”

Lower costs

Along with minimizing manual handling and improving flexibility, cost reduction was another key objective for Eroski. Automation has secured not only ergonomic benefits but also labor savings. “After the first few months of adjustments,” says Mr Alberdi, “we can say that we will achieve savings of over 20% with this system, compared to the costs of our traditional methods.”

Logistics award

The impressive results of the automation have not gone unnoticed. The project scooped the award for ‘Best Logistics Project’ from the Spanish logistics organization, Club de la Logística. The accolade was presented to Eroski, Euro Pool and Ulma in recognition of the efficiency of the automatic order picking – the key component of which is Cimcorp’s MultiPick robotic system – and the close collaboration between the three companies to realize this pioneering solution. “We were delighted to win this award,” admits Imanol Alberdi.

“It’s an important external recognition of the work carried out and is very satisfying for the teams involved.” ■



Meeting global traceability standards

Cimcorp’s MultiPick system tracks product movement from warehouse to consumer without the additional investment required for barcode or RFID tracking

As new track and trace legislation moves into the global food supply chain, manufacturers and distributors need traceability solutions to meet compliance challenges. Material handling automation is the key to effectively managing the workload and accuracy requirements. Cimcorp’s MultiPick fully automated robotic gantry with its advanced warehouse control system (WCS) ensures crate-level product traceability, from production all the way to the consumer.

If there is a product recall, it is easy to trace shipments back to the source by accessing MultiPick’s securely stored tracking data tables. Here’s how it works – the MultiPick WCS integrates seamlessly with the WMS, providing real-time reporting on task status including goods receiving, buffering, picking, replenishment, order consolidation, palletizing, loading and dispatch. The Cimcorp order fulfillment software handles order management, and maintains all vital tracking data, including product and batch numbers, with total accuracy.

MultiPick applications include pre-baked and fresh-baked wholesale bakeries, snack food operations, candy, manufacturing and ingredients distribution, and dairy operations. ■

For more information on Cimcorp’s MultiPick please contact info@cimcorp.com