

CUSTOMER TESTIMONIAL

KENTAUR AG, SWITZERLAND

The Swiss company Kentaur AG, a specialist in cereals processing, has been using a TOMRA 3C optical sorting system to sort puffed grain for a year now. This has resulted in a significant optimization of output: the TOMRA sorter ensures high sorting performance and accuracy and helps Kentaur meet the strictest requirements for food safety and quality. The investment has paid off - since the new system was introduced, there have been very few issues with the puffed grain end products.

HIGH-QUALITY CEREALS FOR PRIVATE LABELS

Kentaur AG from Lützelflüh in Emmental, Switzerland, is specialized in the refinement of cereals for customers from all over the world. The wide range of innovative, conventional, and organic products, including products developed by Kentaur - from flakes to puffed cereals, coated flakes, and pops to granules - is produced exclusively for the private labels and offers consumers throughout Europe and beyond a high-quality alternative to name-brand products. About 70 percent of the products are exported. In most cases, they come in shelf-ready packaging - folding boxes with bags or printed stand-up pouches. For Kentaur, only the best quality will do as international customers expect the highest standards. This applies to everything, from the purchase of raw materials and ingredients from selected suppliers to delivering the finished products in the customer's desired packaging. The products are subject to constant testing.

“We continuously invest in optimizing our standards. Aspects such as sustainability and ethics are essential to us, and we see ourselves as role models here. We succeeded in doing this with the TOMRA 3C optical sorting system, which we have been using to sort puffed grain for over a year. Since the TOMRA 3C was integrated into our line, the number of complaints has been almost zero.”

Andreas Hebeisen, Head of the Supply Chain Department at Kentaur AG.



POWERFUL SORTING SYSTEM FOR HIGH THROUGHPUT - 14 KILOGRAMS IN 40 SECONDS

The company uses state-of-the-art technologies for the production of puffed grain. Spelt, oats, wheat, and even small grains such as amaranth and quinoa are first pre-cleaned in this process, then pre-heated and saturated with steam in a pressurized vessel at 160 to 180°C. When the 14 bar pressure is reached, the grains are puffed in the system's expansion duct in a fraction of a second. The TOMRA 3C optical sorter integrated into the puffing line ensures careful sorting after an initial sieving process - the product stream arrives at the sorter via a three-lane feed. The powerful TOMRA 3C system sorts 14 kilograms of puffed grain in just 40 seconds. It can be used for a wide variety of grains but also vegetables and seeds. In the plant at Kentaur, the puffed grain, which increases to up to ten times its original size during this process, falls from the funnel onto a shaking pan and is evenly distributed on the feed chute. High-resolution dual laser and camera units check the puffed grain from all sides for various parameters. Just milliseconds later, the intelligent ejection system separates defective products and ejects them via the reject chute. All product that passes this evaluation continues on the good-product chute and is directed into big bags or a corresponding silo, where it is later subjected to coating, e.g., with liquid sugar, as required, or added to the final packaging.



SIZE, COLOUR OR FOREIGN BODIES – REMOVED AS REQUIRED

“The pre-screened good products are checked for discoloration or clumping. Our customers do not accept dark grains, e.g., products with husk remains or products that are overheated,” explains Andreas Hebeisen. The system rejects products of the wrong size or color while eliminating foreign bodies such as stones, straw, plastic, glass, and others by using a combination of multispectral, pulse-controlled LED lighting technology, double-sided high-resolution RGB cameras, laser technology and innovative TOMRA analysis software. In this way, the TOMRA 3C ensures that cereals meet the highest food safety and quality requirements. At Kentaur, the only additional check occurs when the product passes through a metal detector. “The new sorting system offers a decisive advantage: it sorts even tiny grains extremely reliably. We also use it for amaranth and quinoa, for example. These are tiny goods that make it difficult to separate the black undesirable product elements from the good dark ones. The changeover to a wide variety of products and sorting features is straightforward and user-friendly. The entire puffing line is looked after by just one employee,” adds the Head of the Supply Chain Department.

TESTING AT TOMRA TEST CENTER - THE DECISIVE FACTOR

Kentaur's decision to acquire the TOMRA 3C was made at TOMRA Food's headquarters in Leuven (Belgium). Here, interested parties can test their products with the support of TOMRA's mechanical engineering experts. All of the sorting machines developed by TOMRA Food are available for testing at the company's Test Center in Leuven. The results of the tests are discussed and evaluated with the engineering specialists. The tests carried out convinced those responsible at the Swiss cereal specialist. The results were finally confirmed with the installation and commissioning of the system in the Lützelflüh plant. “Throughout the entire process up to commissioning in the factory, we were looked after by the same highly competent contact persons, which created a lot of trust,” explains Andreas Hebeisen.

INTENSIVE USE IN TIMES OF PANDEMIC

Since installation, the production line, including the optical sorting system at Kentaur, has been in operation around the clock, sometimes even for several weeks without being switched off. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the months created an additional burden for the plant and the Kentaur team. Andreas Hebeisen describes it thus: “Our roughly 90 employees mastered the extraordinary situation impressively. We were very grateful for the high demand while other industries had cause to worry. We are particularly pleased that our machines - including the TOMRA 3C taking on a key role - have withstood the heavy workload.” Even with 24/7 operation, regular cleaning is a constant requirement, especially when changing products.

If organic or gluten-free products are produced, cleaning is particularly time-consuming and can take eight to ten hours. TOMRA's hygienic design, which enables the sorting system to be cleaned quickly, is an excellent support for Kentaur employees in implementing fast delivery times, not only at times of high stress.

ABSOLUTELY RELIABLE SORTING - A PROFITABLE INVESTMENT

The TOMRA 3C optical sorter has been in use at cereal specialist Kentaur for over a year. The Head of Supply Chain is delighted with the increase in product quality:

“Compared to the previous system from another manufacturer we are now worlds better in sorting. The new system is so precise that we have almost no issues. It has proven its excellence in every respect.”

Andreas Hebeisen, Head of the Supply Chain Department at Kentaur AG.

For Andreas Hebeisen, therefore, there is no question that TOMRA Foods will be very high on the list of possible partners should the need arise for a new sorting system at Kentaur.



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