

Accuracy and reliability means quality assured for Italian cured meats

Italian cured meats are loved throughout the world and while global demand for the products has inevitably led to the introduction of mass production and the automation of many processes, the original traditions and heritage of manufacturing are still fundamental to many of the food companies in the Lombard and Brianza regions of Italy.

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Certainly this has been a key reason for the continuing success of specialist pork producer Fumagalli Industria Alimentari SpA, a family-run business to this day, whose antecedents date back to the 1920s where the family owned a 'Salumaria' (delicatessen) in Medea, Milan.

In the 1930s the business started to expand with the establishment of its own slaughtering house, which both increased the range of products in the shop and allowed the sale of these to neighbouring regions. In the following decades, the company continued to invest and expand

with the opening of new facilities, including a plant in Langhirano specifically to produce the world-famous Prosciutto di Parma, and its first sales outside Italy in Germany and Switzerland.

By the start of the 1990s this ongoing investment had opened up several new export opportunities for Fumagalli, particularly in Northern Europe. At the same time, many customers in these markets began to seek further assurances as to the quality of the products, particularly in areas such as supply chain control, safety and health.

This led Fumagalli to implement its own integrated supply chain system that encompasses all phases of its operation – from breeding and slaughtering to the transformation and packaging of the final products.

As part of this, at its own farm in Nerviano the company breeds a specific genetic strain of typical Italian pigs that combines quality of taste with meeting the latest nutritional and health needs of consumers and still ensuring the well-being of the animals.

Today, this enables Fumagalli to offer a range of products of unsurpassed quality that combine traditional methods with modern manufacturing to meet the highest standards of some of Europe's top food retailers. The company achieves 60% of its revenues through export, not just in Europe but worldwide to countries including Japan, South Korea, and Canada.

It is hardly surprising that this success has led to significant increases in production – from 2000 to today the company has doubled its volumes. This in turn has meant that the sophistication of the production processes needs to be matched by the further automation of its packing operations in order to maximise throughput and efficiencies.

Playing a key role in helping to achieve this has been the installation of two Ishida weighers at Fumagalli's state-of-the-art factory in Tavernerio, near Como.

The first weigher was installed in 2006 to pack diced pancetta, supplied to leading retailers in Europe.

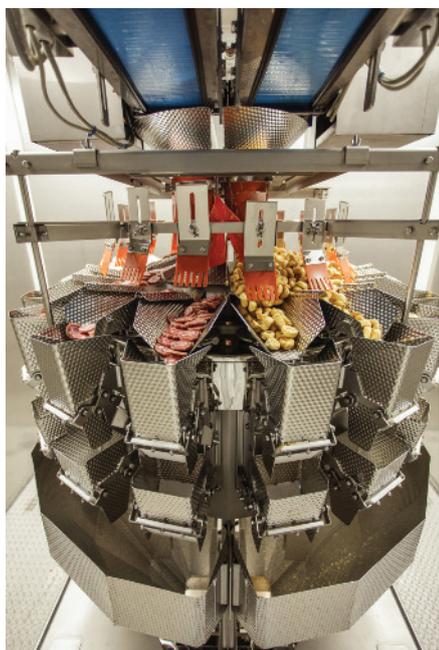
More recently a second model has been added, both to help cope during periods of high demand and also to handle a new

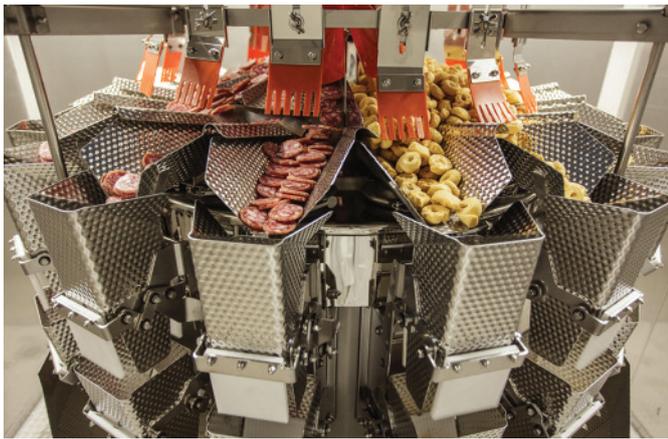


range of snack products. Both weighers – 16 head versions from Ishida's cost-effective RS series – are helping to maximise line efficiencies thanks to their excellent reliability and accuracy, with each line capable of handling around 20,000kg of product each month, equivalent to 1,700,000 packs every year.

The new line in particular is able to focus on Fumagalli's recently launched snacks range of sliced salami with a variety of accompaniments.

Continued on page 8





Continued from page 7

The weigher operates in twin mode with eight heads dedicated to each product.

A specially-devised moving distribution system beneath the weigher transfers the product into thermoformed twin-compartment trays, which are then top-sealed.

For the high-volume diced pancetta line, where product is also discharged into twin-compartment trays, the weigher features Teflon coating to enable the product to keep moving freely during the weighing process.



Both weighers are offering excellent accuracy on pack sizes of 100g (2 x 50g compartments) and 154g (2 x 77g).

“The Ishida weighers have played a valuable role in ensuring that quality is maintained as we automate more of our processes,” explains manufacturing manager Andrea Fumagalli.

He cites the machines’ reliability as one of their major benefits. “In the five months since I joined the business, I have experienced some sort of problem with nearly every other piece of equipment in the factory except the Ishidas,” he explains.

Other benefits of the weighers are their ease of operation and cleaning.

“Product changeovers are simple to effect and the machines can be easily dismantled and reassembled for the thorough cleaning that takes place at the end of every shift,” says Andrea.

In terms of accuracy, giveaway is no more than 1.2% over an entire month’s production.

“Our reputation is based solely on quality, not quantity,” concludes Andrea. “The Ishida weighers, which were supplied and

installed by Ishida Europe’s Italian agent Itech Italia, are critical in ensuring we maintain and build on this reputation.” ■

