Remote monitoring to optimise and protect food manufacturing operations

Weighing and packing line equipment specialist Ishida Europe has introduced a unique remote customer care software solution that combines machine performance monitoring with comprehensive data capture and in-depth analysis. This enables food manufacturers and packers to operate their lines to maximum performance and efficiency, and avoid unnecessary and unwanted downtime.

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The new Ishida Sentinel software connects compatible Ishida machines, anywhere in the world, to a central system manned by Ishida engineers. This provides complete monitoring of machines, however widely distributed, with Ishida experts on hand to identify and rectify any faults or poor performance.

With a number of different Sentinel pack options available, customers can mix and match the different services to their needs.

In addition to the monitoring and reporting pack, a variety of intervention options are also available. Customers can, for example, select live performance monitoring, with Ishida engineers keeping a continual check on their line's performance and informing them when this drops or a fault occurs.

In this way, uptime is maximised and potential and recurring problems can be identified early and dealt with before they become critical.

Equally important, Ishida Sentinel is able to produce clear, easy-to-read daily or weekly reports from production line data that can be easily accessed by designated personnel. These reports (available in multiple languages) enable quick and preventative actions to be taken, often without the need for an engineer call-out.

Nearly all equipment that contributes valuable information to the packing line management process can be linked into Ishida Sentinel including multihead weighers, checkweighers, tray sealers, graders and bag-makers. Contact with Ishida engineers can be made by email, phone or directly using a video conferencing VOIP access feature via a webcam that is fitted to individual machines' Remote Control Units.

In addition, the Ishida Sentinel Web Client facility provides instant access from any Smart phone, tablet, laptop or PC worldwide so that machine operation can be monitored and assessed at any time or place.

Ishida has incorporated a high level of security into the software design to create a fully secure, virus-immune network that ensures remote access can only be performed by authorised personnel.

"Performance monitoring and reporting is not part of most companies' core business, nor is the gathering of such information generally an area of expertise, yet they can play a huge role in helping to create a more profitable and efficient operation," comments Ian Atkinson, Multihead Weigher Business Manager at Ishida Europe.

"With Ishida Sentinel's full data capture and analysis capabilities, our new software relieves operators of a whole area of 'information gathering' tasks, and they can instead concentrate on using clear-cut, tailored information to make rapid, informed decisions."

Ian Hodgson, Ishida Europe's Control Systems Manager, adds: "The Ishida Sentinel Web Client facility allows factory personnel to directly monitor machine operation and assess performance whenever and wherever they wish. In this way, our new software is like a 'use-anywhere window' onto real-time production data."

"More and more businesses are adopting fully-integrated production and packing lines to get the best out of each piece of equipment in order to maximise throughput and minimise costs," continues Ian. "Ishida Sentinel is simply pushing this concept further, enabling companies to achieve optimum benefits from this approach." ■