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Multivac identifies controlled environment ag as key market

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Controlled-environment produce packaging has become a new market focus for Multivac Inc., a German equipment manufacturer with U.S. headquarters in Kansas City, MO.

Multivac sells packaging equipment and materials to create the ideal produce packages. It specializes in food packaging and in recent years, Cem Yildirim, national sales manager for produce, has aggressively built a presence in the fruit and vegetable market segment.

The firm's German-engineered technology applies a variety of options in forming and sealing equipment to create highly advanced modified atmosphere consumer packages.

Yildirim cites many advantages for controlled environment agriculture — "CEA" — to use Multivac technology. These operations produce and sell product 12 months a year through hot houses, hydroponics, and aquaponics.

Yildirim notes that even in the idyllic environment of some California growing areas, it is generally rare for a farm to produce and pack every day of the year. "When you're harvesting and packing every day, it's more like a dairy operation. The product just keeps coming and your packaging operation must be able to keep up. Every day there is more to harvest."

Thus, it becomes highly cost-effective to invest in top-level, efficient packaging technology.

Furthermore, Yildirim said CEA is the fastest-expanding production technique in the industry, so even greater utilization of the equipment is expected with inevitable expansion of many individual indoor farms.

Controlled environment farms characteristically are built near population bases, to reduce transportation costs and maximize freshness in serving large cities. Yildirim said Multivac equipment lowers labor costs in these operations with its comprehensive range of packing equipment that minimizes packing room hand labor. Yildirim added that larger metro areas will likely have a greater availability of skilled labor required to operate sophisticated packaging equipment.

All of that said, Yildirim added that Multivac equipment is used in many traditional farms and in traditional growing areas.

Multivac's fully-automated integrated leafy greens packing line serves the following roles: denesting, filling, tamping, sealing, printing, labeling and inspection. This includes metal detection and precise electronic weighing.

By eliminating the top lid of a clamshell there is a reduction of plastic usage and waste for material source reduction. The trays can be made from recycled content (RPET), recyclable PET or compostable fiber.

The attractive, modern trays offer improved shelf life due to active and/or passive modified atmosphere. Multivac's equipment is hygienically designed, easy to clean and wet-environment suitable.

He said Multivac equipment offers simple, complete integration for ease of use and change-over efficiency.

Characterizing the sealed tops are secure and can be reclosed with peel/re-seal and micro-perforated lidding material. The tops offer a relatively large billboard for graphics and messaging, which can include a variable printed date code and lot number.

Yildirim stressed that having Multivac supply all packaging line components yields a comprehensive line that is electrically and mechanically integrated through one control panel and tested as a system before delivery. Communication across machines reduces downtime and allows safety verification for the entire packaging process. A single point of supplier responsibility also provides clear ownership of future troubleshooting, service, and spare parts support.

Multivac Inc. is a subsidiary of the German company Multivac Sepp Haggemuller SE & CO. KG, Wolfertschwenden, Germany. Yildirim said the parent company was created in 1961 and has sold more than 115,000 packing machines.

The company placed its United States office amid North America, near the Kansas City International Airport. The firm is service-oriented and, across the continent, has regional offices and service centers to support its products.

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