

- Advertisement -

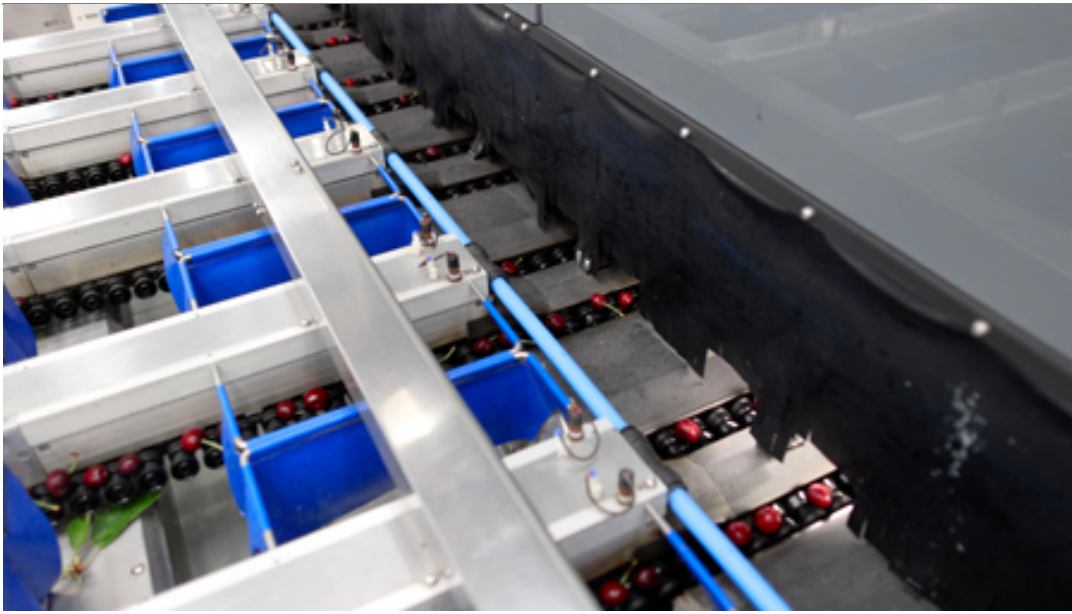
TOMRA tech a boon for cherry packhouses

Prima Frutta Packing is a family-owned business based in Linden, CA, that packs high-quality cherries using the latest packaging technologies to ship across the U.S. and internationally. It was founded in 1991 by Tim Sambado to pack the produce from orchards on and around the family's ranch, which is marketed by Primavera Marketing, also run by the family.



The business has grown steadily, and 10 years ago it introduced [TOMRA Food](#) sorters into its processing line to achieve the quality demanded by its customers. "We pride ourselves on our consistent quality, day in day out, season to season," said Tim Sambado, president of Prima Frutta. "Our customers look for us to deliver a high-end quality product as well as excellent service. We can't do our business without technology and information. We are obsessed with data, and we are obsessed with getting the best technology in the world."

In 2023, TOMRA Food was in the final stages of development of its AI-powered LUCAi platform, ready to trial its innovation with customers in different conditions and regions – from California to New Zealand. When Prima Frutta was offered the opportunity, Sambado, a keen believer in technology, was eager to see how it could help him achieve the improvements he wanted for Prima Frutta. "We wanted to become more accurate, to simplify the system for our operators, and to be able to detect some defects that in our traditional mapping system was more difficult," he said.



After the 2023 cherry season, Prima Frutta decided to install LUCAi on all of their machines, for a total of 132 lanes for its upcoming 2024 cherry season.

LUCAi's user-friendly interface software makes it very easy for the customer's operators to get the best sorting and grading performance from their processing line. "It allows us to make changes and gives us accurate data on how it is going to impact our grading before we apply the change. This means that the operators can do things with much more confidence and quickly. They don't have to do a lot of sampling and testing before they can apply a change because they get the data immediately," said Sambado.

This not only helps cherry packers deliver consistent quality and meet the specific requirements of their customers, but it also enables them to increase their productivity and address the short cherry season.

"We are running more tons per hour with the same labor force, allowing us to keep up with the cherry harvest, which is quite compact in California," said Sambado. "We also continue with the quality that we expect in our brands. One of the advantages of LUCAi is that when we depend on electronic sorting to do all the heavy lifting, the number of good-in-bad errors has been dramatically reduced."

[Print](#)