



The automation solution comprises a VF 600/VF 800 vacuum filler, a PVLS 143 AL cutting line, a collating system and a collating belt



In conversation:
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GS 300 collating system in production



Granby fresh sausages

Automation

Higher productivity and improved hygiene

The Irish company Granby Ltd. puts its trust in Handtmann collating systems for fresh sausage processing.

Granby Ltd. is located in the centre of Dublin, with a production area of more than 5,100m² for fresh sausage and cooked sausage, plus a factory shop. The company produces a wide variety of pork and beef products, such as traditional fresh sausage, speciality products (e.g. black and white pudding), cooked sausage and burgers. The products are primarily sold to retailers and the Catering Trade. Granby is licensed in accordance with the most stringent EU standards and boasts top level BRC certification (tested products in tested packaging). The family company, founded by John Kavanagh in 1933, is now headed by Eoin Kavanagh who represents the third generation. At the beginning of 2016, Granby invested in the new collating technology from Handtmann and integrated 2 systems into their production, the GS 300 and GS 301. Right now, a third collating system is being delivered to Granby.

How did you work before and why did you switch to the Handtmann GS 300 and GS 301 collating systems?

We traditionally hand loaded sausages into trays traditionally and we always had a collation system here for grouping sausages for packing into boxes, but about a year ago I was introduced to Mr. Michael Heim (development engineer at Handtmann) and his tray loading system and was immediately impressed by it. We kept in close contact and as it developed we got more involved with it and we ultimately decided to purchase it in its development state. We have had great success with it here in the factory loading sausages into trays without any manual intervention. That's a huge benefit for us and we see it going forwards. Because everything is becoming highly automated in the industry and everybody is looking for solutions to automate, whether it would be robots or picking, we think this the way the industry is going. We also see Customer convenience benefits, traditionally for production efficiency our sausages were always cut in eight and they were folded and placed into a tray. Now they are individually cut and that is more convenient for the end-consumer. So it has multiple benefits but from the manufacturing point of view, certainly automation has brought us efficiency, staff optimisation, better product presentation and improved hygiene through less handling.

Why did you decide to increase automation in your production and choose a development partnership with Handtmann?

At the time when I was upgrading my filling machinery I had made an investment in the PVLS 143 systems and my Handtmann partner here in Ireland, Martin Keane of Handtmann Ltd, said to me that Handtmann is developing a collation system. I had been looking for a collation system for tray loading and I had seen at a number of different collation systems from different manufacturers, but like I said in my previous comment I met Mr. Heim and was immediately impressed with what I saw. What I liked the most about it was the integration with the actual vacuum filling machine where everything is controlled. It is part of a system and importantly, it's modular. This meant that I could plug and play what I needed. I wasn't incumbent with just one system. I could adapt it to do tray loading or I could adapt it to do crafting, there were endless possibilities there. And whatever Handtmann comes up with in the future I'm sure it can possibly be integrated into this system.

What products do you produce with which system and what do you view as the benefits?

How flexible are the systems in production?

For the GS 300, again it is the elimination of labour in the tray loading of sausage and the modularity of the whole system. When we have finished our tray loading production, we can then move in the GB 320 collating belt and do crafting, because we have various aspects of our business, whether they be bulk loaded sausages for catering or whether they be 6 kg bags of sausages for our cooking operation or whether they be the retail trays for our retail side of our business. There are many facets of our business that these machines allow us to produce for, more efficiently.

Looking at the GS 301, in our current collation system we are limited to maximum 420 portions per minute. With the new system we have done trials with a significantly higher output in double groups and that works quite well. In reality we will run it at about 600 to 650 portions per minute which immediately gives us a 50% increase over what we are currently getting. And while we have invested in the PVLS 143 to give us very accurate cutting at this line, we can also now utilize the speed benefits the PVLS 143 offers us in the new GS 301.

How many hours per day are the systems in operation on average?

The tray loading system I would guess 5 hours per day, the GS 301 definitively 8 hours per day.

To what extent does automation with the GS 300 and GS 301 optimise your production times or increase productivity?

In regards of the tray loading with the GS 300 it's a bit of a double edged sword, I'll be honest with this. When we are manually loading trays, we are filling at about 600 portions per minute, but there are 6 operators on the line. Now we are filling at 450 portions per minute, but there are only 2 operators on the line. That means our production capacity was slightly lower, but our overall efficiency went up tremendously. The collating with the GS 301 allows us immediately to have an increase of 50% in the line capacity with the option to maybe increase that even further. That's significant! The decision was made to invest in that line specifically with a new VF 628, a new PVLS 143 and ultimately when I was buying the GS 300 there was always the additional GS 301 system in the back of my mind. That was always there. I wanted to get the filling capacity and cutting right for that line and I wanted to see how the first GS 301 operated when we got it into the factory. And then once we got the system up and running in the factory it convinced me immediately how effective that line had become.

Where do you see the biggest advantage for your production with the Handtmann systems?

Reliability! Pure and simple. I can not emphasize how impressed we are with the complete Handtmann system. The 600-series fillers which we've had here for the last 14 years, the PVLS 143s we've had now for nearly two years, have been absolutely outstanding. The GS 300 is just an extension of that. Again it has been very good. The performance has been good on it, the execution is fantastic and the product coming off at the very end is very good.

How important is it for you to have Handtmann at your side as the single point of contact for the turnkey solution?

We have been a Handtmann user for more than 50 years. We have not bought any other brand of filling machinery in that time. It has always been Handtmann equipment, so we have always quietly looked on Handtmann as being a filling partner and our choice of machinery for filling. With the advent of automation and the way technology has progressed Handtmann have been able to deliver us systems that we are able to integrate into our process and maximize our throughput and our production with. What I really like about the whole thing is, it is all under the one badge of Handtmann. So I don't have various suppliers that... – you know what I mean. This piece of equipment needs to talk to that piece and so on... It is terribly important for me that I have one person I can say "this is working or this is not working" and you'll find a solution for it. This is very important because you can have companies that will play off one another and say "Oh, no it's not our problem..." For me it is always preferable if I can have a system from one company. I just think with the advent of the GS series, that the way they just integrate into the fillers, everything is controlled through the one control panel, is just phenomenal. You can change a single parameter on the touch screen without having to change anything else or adjust every single machine. Sure, format changes in packaging require minor machine adjustments, but that's it. 3 minutes and a program change you're up and running again. Simple!

On top you recently invested in production networking with Handtmann HCU-Software?

Another great Handtman innovation which we invested in and that gives huge insight to our production. The information and control available inside and from this application is mind boggling. It truly gives an overview of the whole filling process and machine parameters in minute detail. Efficiency, weight control, casing yields, casing performance, up time, down time are all available in predefined readable graphs and data tables.

What do you think the production of the future will look like?

I think automation is the way forward, because labour is becoming extremely expensive and labour is an element that also adds bacteria to the product. So the less (manual) handling we can give a product the better. The skill and the care and attention still will always go towards the raw materials we put into the product and the way we process the meat, but ultimately I think it will be automation all the way. This is the way everything is going, even with the Handtmann filling systems. They offer a completely new level of filling automation and performance, now add the new Handtmann GS product handling systems we have an integrated automated system that as a sausage maker, I could only dream about before. Anyway, well done! It's easy for me to say that, because I do genuinely believe you make the best equipment. Seriously, every day when I walk onto the production floor I find myself smiling at how efficiently everything runs.

At IFFA there was just a lot of pick and place robots and I think this is the way things are going. And I think, I don't know in how many years this will happen, but at some point people will not be working anymore, it will all be done by robots. But ultimately what we are doing here is we're making an investment for the next generation that are coming along. I'm trying to give them the best possible machinery to bring the business forward. Over the last two years we've completely re-modernized our sausage room with the latest equipment, whether it would be filling, wrapping, bowl cutters or whatever. So it's up to the fourth generation to pick up the business and move forward with it.