



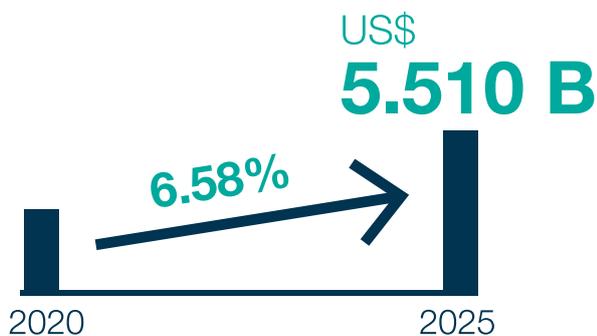
Customer Testimonial Vitafoods, Chile

New global player in international frozen fruit markets trusts in SORTEX

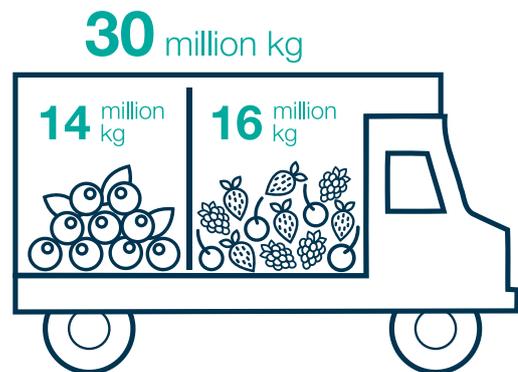


IQF fruit processor Vitafoods, born from a recent merger between frozen food giants Hortifrut and Alifrut, has trusted in Bühler SORTEX to execute its processing operations which includes a target of 30 million kg of frozen berries for global export in 2021.

Since the start of the global Covid-19 pandemic, public concern for healthy eating has risen. In particular, sales of easy to prepare and long-lasting frozen fruits have increased globally; a trend which is expected to continue with the frozen fruit market predicted to grow at a compound annual rate of 6.58% from 2020-25, reaching a market size of US\$ 5.510 billion in 2025.



In response to this opportune time, multi-product frozen foods processing giant Alifrut and leader in the commercialization of frozen berries Hortifrut, joined forces to merge their frozen food operations (including five frozen production plants and corresponding assets) to satisfy their key consumer markets in Europe, Asia, the USA and Oceania. The new company called Vitafoods, established in July 2020, is on track to process and export approximately 30 million kg of frozen product in 2021, including 14 million kg of frozen blueberries and above 16 million kg of other frozen berries, including raspberries, strawberries, blackberries and cherries.

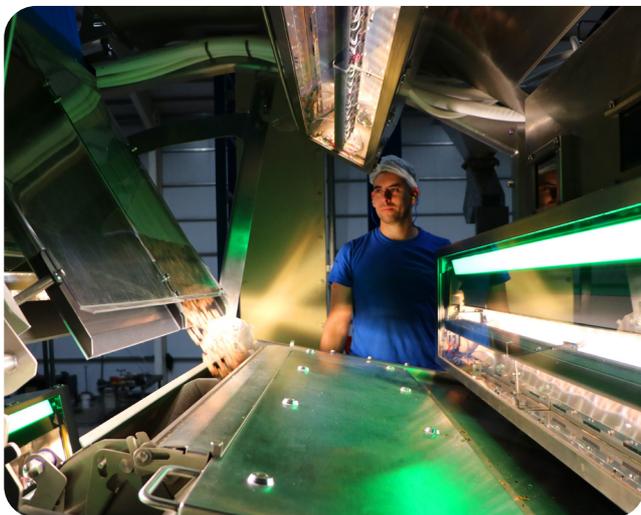


Drawing on experience

When deciding which technology to invest in to ensure the highest quality of frozen berries, Vitafoods drew on its past experience with the SORTEX FA2 optical sorter installed previously at Hortifruit's Molina facility. Fernando Larios, Chief Operating Officer of Vitafoods, says: "back in 2019 when we were operating as Hortifruit, we decided to invest in the SORTEX FA2 predominantly for our frozen blueberries and for small quantities of strawberries and blackberries."

"We decided to go with Bühler because of their very good price-quality ratio compared to other optical sorter providers. The stability and durability of their systems, the way that their technology met all of our required parameters and incorporated the vital component of food safety, all of these factors made it a simple decision for us.

"As Hortifruit, our main problem before investing in the sorter was that we lacked confidence when it came to foreign material removal. As soon as we started using the SORTEX FA2, our confidence was restored. From then on, we could be sure that whatever problematic foreign material would come through our process (mainly plastic but also wood, sticks and stones) would be rejected. That feeling is priceless.



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– **Fernando Larios**,
Chief Operating Officer of Vitafoods

"Secondly, we wanted better definition of color defects and the SORTEX FA2 allowed us to precisely adjust parameters to our specific needs. For example, 100% blue on the accept or a little more purple, without having to sacrifice our good fruit in the reject.

"Bühler's PolarVision technology also proved very useful to us in terms of foreign material and quality defects removal such as dehydrated blueberries and blueberries with attached stems. We saw another advantage with the LED lighting system. The foreground lighting provided unmatched stability and reliability, while the background lighting allowed enhanced contrast depending on the product we were running (e.g. red in strawberries) without needing to change any part of the machine physically, it just required a quick software adjustment."

As a result of the SORTEX FA2, Hortifruit was able to ensure consistent production around the clock, running the machine for 16 hours a day. The company also increased its capacity by an average of 5%, "Not just because of the defects we were able to remove, but also thanks to the reduction of good/bad ratio in the reject," Larios notes. Since the merger, the SORTEX FA2 been migrated over to Vitafoods' processing line.

Did you know?

Consumption of blueberries has been linked to health benefits including a reduced risk of cancer, increased insulin response, a reversal in age-related memory loss, and lowering blood pressure.



New investments

Owing to the impressive performance of the SORTEX FA2 for Hortifruit, Vitafoods decided to invest in a second SORTEX FA optical sorter for its frozen berries. “We chose the SORTEX FA1 because we knew it would allow the greatest flexibility for our operations. After running tests with Bühler, we decided that it would be a great addition to our line, in conjunction with the existing SORTEX FA2, to run different types of berries.

“We needed to be able to clean products with varying levels of contamination and the FA1 seemed up for the challenge. It’s given us peace of mind that our quality specification and market-specific export requirements will always be met and that our finished product will be free of FM. We can say this with confidence because of the experience that we’ve had with the SORTEX FA2 machine,” Larios comments.

A continued partnership

“The machine practically runs itself and doesn’t require too much technical service or support, but whenever we’ve needed Bühler’s service team, they have been very helpful. Most of the visits have been more to answer any questions and to provide training; the local SORTEX team have taken good care of us,” Larios says.

Looking ahead, Vitafoods operates with the intention of global expansion with an integrated network. “We have several projects for the future and for these Bühler will always be one of our main references. If any fellow processors are looking for an efficient, flexible and stable solution, we would say Bühler is a really good option!” Larios concludes.

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