

# The Co-operative Farms

Speciality packaging equipment supplied by packhouse profitability experts Marco is playing a vital role at The Co-operative Group's newly commissioned strawberry-packing plant at Longforgan, near Dundee. The scope of supply included Marco's Trac-IT data management system, Linemaster checkweighers, in-feed and out-feed conveyor systems, high speed twin top labelling machine and end of line packaging equipment.

The new plant represents a total investment of more than £2 million and has been specifically built to pack local 'Grown by Us' strawberries from the Group's own farm at Blairgowrie. The Co-operative Farms, part of the The Co-operative Group, is the UK's largest farmer supplying its Co-operative food stores with 'Grown by Us' produce. The new Longforgan plant has a seasonal throughput capacity of around 800 tonnes, equating to over 3 million punnets.

The manual packing of strawberries requires a fine balance to blend operator speed and accuracy, with the added need for careful handling to avoid any fruit damage. Accurate and repeatable packing is also essential, with each gram of giveaway per punnet at Longforgan representing a loss in profit equating to around 3000Kg of fruit in a season.

Rob Hull, The Co-operative Farms' Head of Vegetable Operations, recognised that the efficiency, of the punnet packing process would be vital to the operation, and so spent considerable time evaluating different options and suppliers, including site visits around the country, before choosing the Marco solution.

Marco have extensive experience in the design of packhouse solutions and have developed innovative technologies to optimise yield control and ensure line control labelling parameters are strictly adhered to.

By constantly monitoring each and every pack weight, the Marco system can fine tune settings to consistently maintain target weights within fractions of a gram. Operators simply have to intuitively react to a red-amber-green traffic light system, without the need to monitor actual weight readings.

Rob Hull is delighted with the overall performance of the packing system and as he concludes:

*"The Longforgan plant is a welcome addition to our extensive operations in Scotland. This investment will help us to ensure we can get fresh strawberries, grown on our own farm, into our shops and on to our customers as efficiently as possible."*





For over 25 years Marco has delivered competitive advantage to market leaders through the installation of over 350 factory efficiency systems worldwide. From pharmaceuticals to foodstuffs Marco has made the difference between good and great performers.

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