

UK Supplier enables Swedish meat producer to maximise production with the cutting edge of automation

ABB Limited and AEW Delford, a UK-based supplier of meat slicing equipment, portion control and weigh price labelling machines and systems, is enabling Swedish cooked meat producers and processors, The Charkman Group to maximise production and optimise yields. The Group is benefiting from an intelligent new robotics solution which has helped it to transform its meat packing operation at its Fernebrand Chark plant in Boras, Sweden.

Having recognised the need to continue developing its plant automation system to meet growing demands, The Charkman Group approached AEW Delford to supply one of its intelligent portion loading (IPL) Robots, which utilise ABB robots, for its existing manual slicing line. The new line needed to handle more than 26 pack variations and a multitude of product sizes, whilst introducing labour-saving benefits, improved hygiene and health and safety.

The new line comprised a Junior Slicer and an IPL Robot which featured ABB's 340 stainless steel Flexpicker- the fastest picking robot in the world.

While the Junior Slicer works continuously, producing shingles and stacks of products which are placed onto the conveyor, the IPL robot consistently and accurately loads the product into preformed trays, containing 10 to 24 slices per tray. The robot picks up the sliced groups and places them carefully into the tray to produce a visually pleasing overlapped pack. The robotic cell then conveys the loaded trays into a flow wrapper for packing and sealing prior to being weighed, priced and labelled, ready for distribution.

Capable of handling up to 150 picks per minute, the IRB 340 FlexPicker utilises vision technology to accurately recognise the position and orientation of portions on the conveyor via the Cognex vision system, enabling the robot to "see" the conveyor belt.



This system is supported by ABB's *PickMaster* software, offering additional support for high speed picking applications, several robots and high product flows. The PC-based software product uses a graphical interface to configure applications where up to eight robots may work in a team through the packaging process. The software can also be set up to handle as many as

100 product programmes with room for an additional five robot cells to join the manufacturing line, ensuring Charkman has the room for additional developments

The Charkman's Group new automated production line, provided by AEW Delford Systems using ABB's IRB 340 Flexpicker has been successfully in operation for nearly two years. With the improvements achieved by the robots, the Charkman Group is now able to manufacture a wide range of products in increasingly large volumes.

For more information on AEW Delford IPL robots please visit www.aewdelford.com. Alternatively to find out about the potential benefits of integrating robots into your production process, email robotics@gb.abb.com.

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