



## New automated onion palletiser gains 10% efficiency for Bedfordshire Growers

Bedfordshire Growers have just successfully completed evaluation trials of a new automated palletiser for their onion packing line which was recently installed by Dutch specialist company Symach.

Bedfordshire Growers is a cooperative of local farmers and growers that distributes a range of locally grown potato, vegetable and field lettuce crops directly to major wholesalers and supermarket outlets. Brown onions, and more recently the red varieties, have become a more important crop for the East Midlands region, so the association wanted to improve speed, efficiency and safety in the onion packing line.



After grading, quality control inspection and automated weighing and filling, the 10kg onion nets were previously stacked onto pallets by hand. This was labour intensive and limited the number of nets that could safely be loaded onto each pallet.

The new automated palletiser can cope with up to 10 tonnes per hour, which not only speeds up the process, but frees manual operators who can now focus on other aspects of the packing line. The palletiser also accurately places the nets in the optimum position for maximum stability, and then wraps the entire pallet in heavy duty film ensuring the integrity of the finished product.

Tim Elcombe, sales director of Bedfordshire Growers commented, "The new palletiser has made a huge difference to our packing line. Our activities are directed at providing locally grown fresh produce which is packed and delivered with the minimal delay. As well as speeding up the whole packing line, the improved accuracy and efficiency in stacking now



means each pallet can now safely accommodate an additional 100kg. This represents a space saving of over 10% which not only improves the service we offer but will also will have a direct benefit on transport costs and help to reduce our carbon footprint even further.

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**Date** 25 February 2013

### **Editor's notes**

High resolution photos available on request

### **More about Bedfordshire Growers**

Founded in 1963 Bedfordshire Growers started from a small wooden hut on a 17 acre site near Biggleswade. It was formed as a co-operative of local farmers and horticulturalists business to promote the highest standards of crop marketing and presentation that customers demand. The business focuses on packing and distributing the traditional Bedfordshire vegetable crops of onions and potatoes.

The first packhouse was constructed on the site in 1966, but has expanded and now includes three packing houses fitted with the latest crop grading and packing equipment, cold stores and long term controlled atmosphere stores. The business occupies a 98 acres site which includes adjacent farmland. Bedfordshire Growers currently employs over 35 full time staff, which is supplemented by up to 60 temporary staff for grading and packing during peak periods.

Still a grower-owned consortium, the group's success has attracted growers from wider fields and Bedfordshire Growers now distributes root and salad crops from growers throughout the Eastern Counties and Spain to multiple retail outlets, wholesale food services and food processors.

### **For further information**

#### **Technical information**

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