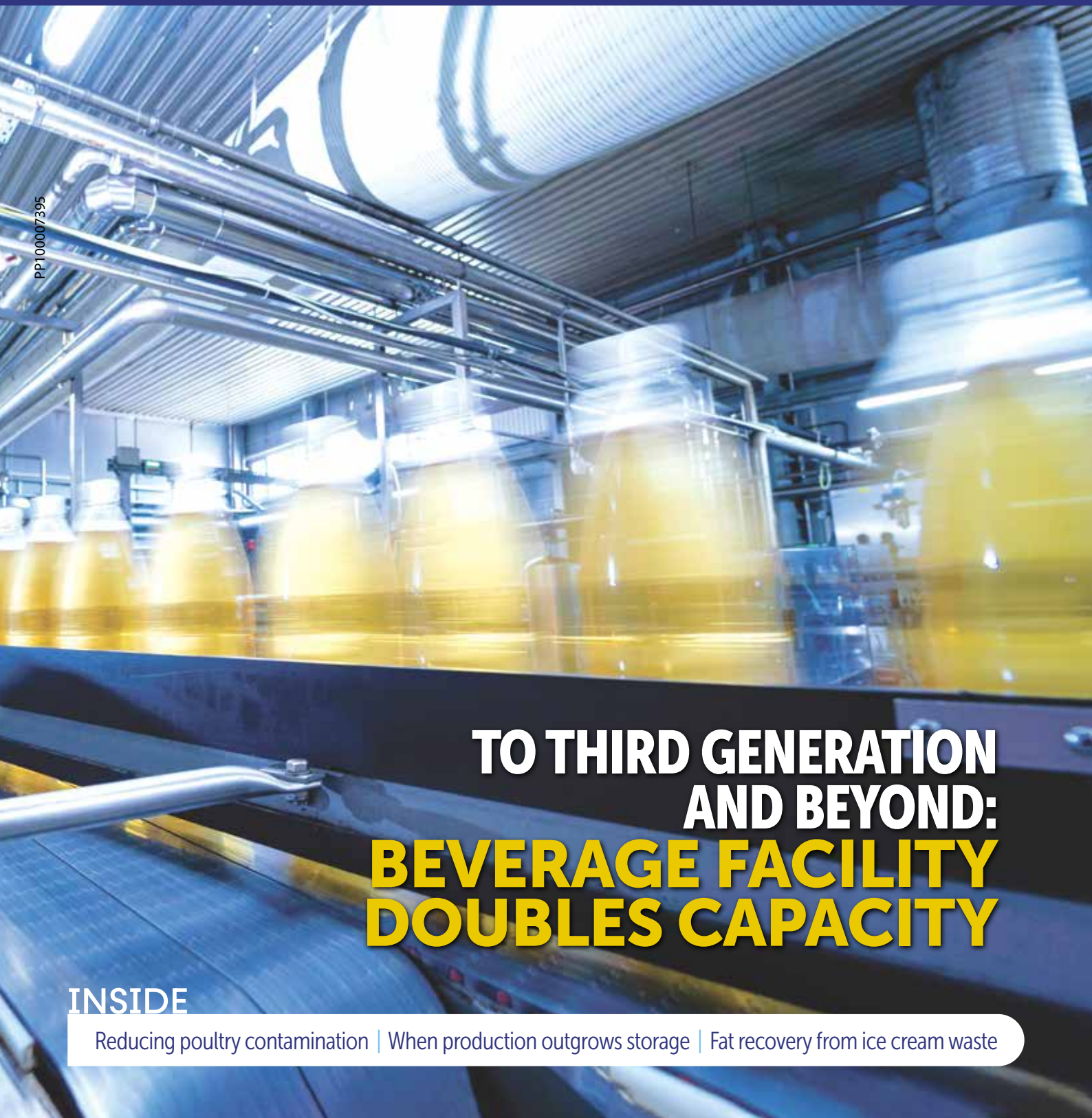
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2026
VOL.34 NO.5

WHAT'S NEW IN

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INSIDE

Reducing poultry contamination | When production outgrows storage | Fat recovery from ice cream waste

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editor's NOTE

CAROLYN JACKSON
EDITOR

From fruity smoothies to sparkling sodas and energising coffee, the Australian beverage industry sector continues to evolve, with growing consumer demands for healthier drink options, sustainable packaging and locally sourced products.

In this beverage feature issue, we talk to the Managing Director of Aussie-owned business Eastcoast Beverages, Samuel J Lentini, who is the great grandson of the original founder. Building on six decades of experience and tradition, the third generation of this juice beverage business has embraced innovation and a forward-thinking vision resulting in the opening of a new fully automated facility on the family citrus farm in Kulnura, NSW. The company's growth trajectory has meant that modern technologies are a key part of its expansion plans, with the new facility boasting a capacity of 120 2-litre bottles/min — that's a 50% increase on the previous facility.

In our food facility design section, we take a closer look at the $39.7 million upgrade to Coca-Cola Europacific Partners' Kewdale manufacturing facility, which has been operating for over 50 years in Western Australia. The new can line will operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week during peak season, with a capacity to produce 16 million cases of soft drink — equivalent to approximately 384 million cans per year.

While on the coffee front, we discover how the Australian Coffee Research Program plans to help the local coffee industry capture a greater share of the market — which is currently around 2 billion cups of coffee every year in Australia.

If beverages are not your thing, there's plenty more to read in this issue.

Want to contribute?

We welcome submissions from the food industry across Australia and New Zealand that will be considered for possible inclusion in the bi-monthly print publication and our daily web page. If you have a story you think would be of interest, please send an email to **wnift@wfmedia.com.au.**

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Leadership change at CCEP Australia next year

Coca-Cola Europacific Partners Australia has announced that Orlando Rodriguez will leave the business in early 2027, with Miles Karemacher appointed Managing Director, Australia, effective 18 January 2027.

Rodriguez joined the business in 2019 and led CCEP Australia through an important period of transformation and sustained growth.

Gareth McGeown, General Manager, APS Business Unit, said: "Orlando has made a significant contribution to CCEP in Australia. His leadership and commercial focus have helped position the business strongly for the future. I want to thank Orlando personally for his impact on our business, customers and partners."

Miles Karemacher will return to Australia, where he began his career in Coca-Cola Amatil. He is currently General Manager, Italy, for Coca-Cola HBC. He brings extensive experience across the Coca-Cola system and the consumer goods industry, including senior leadership roles with Coca-Cola HBC, SABMiller and Coca-Cola Amatil in Australia.

McGeown added: "I am delighted to welcome Miles back to Australia and to CCEP. His deep market knowledge, international perspective and focus on building strong, engaged teams means he is the right leader to take our Australian business into its next chapter of growth."

$109m funding for South Australia's wine industry

The South Australian Government has announced $109 million in funding to help the state's $2.4bn wine industry transition through a period of global oversupply, declining grape prices, shifting consumer demands and ongoing market pressures.

Building upon existing state and federal government support, the South Australia Wine Industry Transition and Growth Package features a suite of measures including government-backed loans, business support, market promotion and the appointment of a Wine Industry Coordinator.



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Allied Pinnacle invests $10 million in Sydney manufacturing capacity

Australian flour and bakery manufacturer Allied Pinnacle has invested $10 million across its Sydney manufacturing operations, increasing capacity, improving production speed and deploying automation to build a more efficient manufacturing base.

The investment spans Allied Pinnacle's Kingsgrove and Taren Point facilities, with $5 million invested in a new high-speed packaging line at Kingsgrove and a further $5 million in an automated muffin production line at Taren Point. Both are now fully operational.

At Kingsgrove, the $5 million packaging line has increased packaging capacity and improved production speed, flexibility and consistency across its range of flour and bakery products.

At Taren Point, Allied Pinnacle has completed a $5 million investment in an automated muffin production line, increasing productivity while improving consistency across the operation for both large and small muffins.

Allied Pinnacle CEO David Pitt said the investment reflected the company's focus on building manufacturing capability for the long term.

"For more than 100 years, we've been baking the future from flour, and that means continuing to invest in how we manufacture and how we support our customers," Pitt said.

"The investment across Kingsgrove and Taren Point is about building the capacity, speed and efficiency we need for the next chapter of Australian food manufacturing. It means we can respond faster to customer demand today, while building a more productive manufacturing base for the future."



Image: Supplied



Image: Supplied

Peacock Bros. and insignia to unite under one roof in Victoria

Peacock Group is expanding its Victorian operations, with a new 8000 m^2 Dandenong South purpose-built facility set to bring Peacock Bros. and insignia together. The new site will increase the company's combined warehouse and production footprint by approximately 66% and provide approximately 56% more production space.

The move will see around 150 employees from the two businesses progressively relocate to the site, creating a shared Melbourne base for teams currently operating from Knoxfield and Oakleigh.

"Bringing our Oakleigh and Knoxfield teams together is a significant step forward for Peacock Group and for how we work together as one team," said Ryan McGrath, CEO of Peacock Group.

"Peacock Bros. and insignia have established teams and expertise, and the new facility gives us an opportunity to bring those strengths closer together in a way we haven't been able to before."

Also including AMR Hewitts PrintPackaging, Peacock Group provides solutions spanning industrial coding and marking, printing and labelling, mobile computing, identification and tracking, colour labels and packaging, and software solutions.

A key feature of the site will be its Solutions Centre that will showcase its solutions for industries including manufacturing, warehousing, transport and logistics, retail, food & beverage, pharmaceutical, beauty and health care.

The new facility will be officially opened in the first half of 2027.


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Tetra Pak appoints new Managing Director



Tetra Pak appointed Michael Wu as Managing Director of its Oceania business on 1 September 2026.

Wu brings 18 years of experience across Tetra Pak's global business, including serving as Managing Director for Tetra Pak Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines and Indonesia. In his new role, he will lead the company's operations in Australia and New Zealand and continue supporting customers and partners across the region's food and beverage sector.

Wu said he was looking forward to leading the Oceania team and building on the business's momentum in the region.


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Tibaldi acquires South Food Group

The owner of Tibaldi (Aust) Pty Ltd, Singapore-based investment group Chestnut, has completed the acquisition of South Food Group on 30 September 2026.

South Food Group is an Australian smallgoods manufacturer supplying the retail and food service sectors across the Asia–Pacific region. Its brands include: Casalingo, Chicharon, Fiora, Greenvale Farm and Crackle & Co, with products spanning prosciutto, salami, chorizo, ham, bacon and protein snacks.

Tibaldi supplies ham products, bacon, salami, deli meats, sausages and fresh pork to supermarket and catering/fast-food customers under various brands including: Tibaldi, Signature Collection and Coburg Smokehouse.

The two smallgoods businesses have an existing commercial relationship, including contract manufacturing and raw material supply arrangements.

Back in June 2026, the ACCC provided its approval for Tibaldi's proposed acquisition of all issued shares in South Food Group to proceed after it determined that the acquisition is "unlikely to have the effect of substantially lessening competition in any market".

EP Advisors advised South Food Group on the transaction but declined to comment on transaction value or other confidential details.

"South Food Group has built an exceptional reputation for quality, innovation and customer service within the Australian food manufacturing sector. This transaction brings together two highly complementary businesses and provides a strong platform for future growth. We congratulate the shareholders, management team and Chestnut-backed Tibaldi on the successful completion of the transaction," said Emil Parthenides, Founder of EP Advisors.

food *for thought*



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Dairy partnership for low-carbon chocolate of the future

Barry Callebaut has announced its first dairy partnership to reduce impact on climate emissions with Arla Foods. The three-year FarmAhead* project collaboration is designed as an important step in the decarbonisation of Barry Callebaut's dairy supply chain, starting with skimmed milk powder sourced from the UK.

Through this partnership, Arla will provide annual primary carbon footprint data linked to the dairy volumes supplied to Barry Callebaut at farm level. This will support the company's Scope 3 emissions reduction and accelerate the rollout of decarbonisation initiatives on dairy farms in the shared supply chain.

Key principles of the partnership include primary farm-level carbon footprint reporting, alignment with recognised greenhouse gas (GHG) and dairy carbon methodologies, and the use of incentive payments for farmers who apply practices that reduce emissions.

*FarmAhead is a registered trademark owned by Arla Foods amba.



Air Liquide to build industrial gas plant in NSW

Air Liquide has announced a new investment to build and operate a new air separation unit (ASU) and its related infrastructure at its existing Fairfield facility located in Yennora, New South Wales, Australia. This will be designed to enhance local supply chain reliability for industrial and medical gases across Australia.

The ASU will produce nitrogen and oxygen, critical gases to support the daily operations and long-term growth of key Australian sectors, including food and beverage processing, healthcare and medical facilities, mining and advanced manufacturing.

Tim Kehoe, Managing Director of Air Liquide Pacific, said: "Expanding our air gas capacity demonstrates Air Liquide's long-term commitment to fuelling the growth of Australian industries with essential gases they depend on every day. With the new ASU in New South Wales, we are reinforcing our commitment to serving our customers and enhancing our supply chain resilience."

The gas plant is expected to start operating in 2028.



Images Supplied

NewCold's $200m expansion of cold storage facility in Vic

On 6 September, global cold-chain logistics company NewCold opened the completed $200m expansion of its cold storage facility at Truganina in Melbourne.

With an additional 80,000 pallet positions, the expansion takes the automated cold-storage facility to 180,000 pallet positions. The company's two cold-storage facilities at Truganina now have a combined capacity of 405,000 pallet positions across frozen, chilled and ambient storage.

Standing 40 m high and operating at -23°C, the 10,453 m^2 freezer is claimed to be one of the world's largest automated high-bay cold-storage facilities and stores food for major manufacturers including McCain, Peters and Patties.

The warehouse functions like a highly automated airport for food where every pallet is digitally checked in on arrival, scanned, assigned a destination and moved through the high-bay by automated stacker cranes, shuttles and conveyors. Overnight, it uses order data and predictive analytics to reshuffle pallets so the stock needed first the following day is already in position for retrieval at its 21 loading docks. Every pallet must pass a series of automated checks before entering the warehouse. If it's too heavy, too tall or even slightly overhanging, the system rejects it, reducing the risk of damage, disruption to the automated system and delays further down the supply chain.

The operation is monitored from a control room where staff can see the movement and location of stock across the warehouse on banks of screens. The 40 m-high freezer is designed to store pallets vertically rather than spreading refrigeration across the site.

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The HC-A-IS-WD is a robust wash-down checkweigher designed for reliable, fully automatic weight control in beverage filling lines.

Its indexing star wheel ensures fast, precise handling and in-line weighing of tall, slim containers such as cans and plastic or glass bottles.

The easy-change star wheel simplifies product transfer and transport, while the open, hygienic balcony design allows easy cleaning and seamless integration into existing production lines.



Beverages

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Beverage facility built to keep the good times rolling

Carolyn Jackson

Aussie-owned since 1965, Eastcoast Beverages has entered its third generation of beverage manufacturing marked with the opening of a new fully automated facility in Kulnura, NSW.

For six decades, the Lentini family's citrus farm has been passed down through three generations — the first generation built the citrus business, the second generation diversified into beverages, and now the third generation is expanding with a new modernised production approach and further diversification.

The great-grandson of the founder of the business shares details about the exciting next phase of the business following the opening of its 'Gen-3' facility on the family farm. The new facility in Kulnura is just one of the recent projects at Eastcoast, which has also launched a new processing partnership in Griffith and two new product developments that are keeping the good vibes of the 60s alive.

"My great-grandfather [Salvatore Lentini] started the business over 60 years ago picking and packing fruit at Sydney markets," said Samuel James Lentini, Managing Director of Eastcoast Beverages for the last six years.

Samuel explains that in the late 80s, the government lifted tariffs on importing juice concentrates so it became cheaper to import a concentrate from overseas. "That's when Dad and his two brothers decided to diversify and started squeezing their own fruit and selling juice."

Over the last 10 years, Samuel said the business has grown significantly, around 15–20% year-on-year, so it was time to upgrade the facility and map out its future.

Enter Gen 3

The company's growth trajectory has meant that AI and automation are a key part of its expansion plans for now and into the future.

The new facility at Kulnura is now in operation with a fully automated manufacturing capacity of 120 2-litre bottles/min — which is a 50% increase in capacity compared to the previous facility.

"Before, it used to take around 15 min to do a pallet and now it only takes 3–5 min per pallet," Samuel said.

"From our Kulnura farm we grow fruit onsite, we squeeze onsite, we bottle onsite, we distribute onsite and we even live onsite!"

The original factory was basically torn apart over the last 18 months as the new fully automated line was established in three stages: firstly, the filler equipment was installed, then the automated palletiser, and the final stage was the installation of the automated case packer.

"It's been a journey that we've been planning over the last five years, so it's been good to see it all come to life."



All images supplied.

Squeezing closer to the source

While growth is improving, there are still many challenges facing food manufacturers and consumers alike, with rising interest rates, energy and fuel costs, and all the red tape associated with running a business.

During stage 2 of the factory build, Samuel said the company partnered with a grower called Mario's Packhouse, a third-generation, family-owned citrus grower and packing operation in Griffith.

"We've started a processing facility with Mario's, which has been up and running for about three months in Griffith, called the Australian Juice Co," Samuel said.

"It has been set up to supply other bottling manufacturers and for us to control supply chain as best we can by squeezing closer to the source and bringing juice into our facility from Griffith.

"We now have our pick of fruit from our farm and other areas up north, but the majority of fruit comes from Griffith.

"Partnering with the growers gives them more flexibility in transporting the fruit closer to home. It also saves us on freight and logistics — so it's a part of our sustainability story."

The business has a 'Return — Regrow — Renew' sustainability philosophy that is designed to make sure nothing is wasted. For example, pulp from its pulp-free juice becomes an ingredient for yoghurt companies, peel becomes feed for livestock and treated wastewater is used to replenish the trees.

Getting 'The Goods' with juice

"In my view, the juice category has become a bit stagnant in the past decade and there is a real push for functional beverages," Samuel said.

"This is where our diversification strategy comes in, as we have been focusing on a couple of projects for the last 12–18 months with our food science, marketing and NPD team."

The business has recently launched a functional beverage to meet the demand from consumers who "want more from their drinks", according to Samuel.

Available in a 400 mL and 1L bottle, 'The Goods' is Eastcoast's new pressed juice and smoothie range available in three flavours with 4 g of fibre per serve plus prebiotics.

"This new product launch is the first iteration, homing in on the 1960s good vibes, with a good fibre and prebiotic call-out as well, which is really cool," Samuel said.

Another new product is set to be released for the kids' market in November. "We are going for something completely different with a 100% real juice jelly. Being packaged in pouches is also quite unique for the beverage market."

The Aussie family's beverage business is now making around 500,000 L per week and looks like it's in good hands, with the third generation well prepared for the future.



Image credit: David Ross

Food talk is a regular feature designed to gain new perspectives from industry leaders within the wider food manufacturing industry. To participate, please email **wnift@wfmedia.com.au**.



STAINLESS STEEL PANEL PC

Backplane Systems Technology has introduced the Vecow STC-7000 Series, a rugged range of full stainless steel panel PCs designed for demanding washdown and hygiene-critical industrial environments.

Built for applications where standard operator terminals may be exposed to water, cleaning processes and contaminants, the series combines IP69K/IP68 protection, fanless operation and a true-flat projected capacitive touchscreen in a sealed stainless steel enclosure. This makes the platform suitable for food and beverage processing, pharmaceutical production, chemical manufacturing and hygienic industrial HMI applications.

Powered by 12th Gen Intel Core i7/i5/i3 P-series processors, the series provides the performance required for modern production monitoring, equipment control, recipe management and plant-floor visualisation. Sealed M12 connectors for USB, LAN and COM help maintain good connectivity in washdown areas, while VESA mounting provides flexible integration into machinery and production environments.

Available in display sizes from 10.4–21.5″, the STC-7000 Series gives system integrators flexibility to select the right operator interface while maintaining the same rugged stainless steel platform.

Backplane Systems Technology Pty Ltd
www.backplane.com.au

MAGNETIC FLOW METERS



Emerson Rosemount 9000 Series Magnetic Flow Meter portfolio has launched with the Rosemount 9732 Magnetic Flow Transmitter and the Rosemount 9205 Magnetic Flow Sensor. Its new features are designed to help users improve flow measurement, simplify troubleshooting and keep critical processes running in industries including chemical, oil and gas, metals and mining, food and beverage, pulp and paper, power, water and wastewater, refining, electronics and semiconductors, and life sciences.

New features include: advanced diagnostics, enhanced sensor design, and a universal power supply and configurable outputs.

Diagnostics include coated electrode detection, tuneable empty pipe detection, smart fluid diagnostic and five standard logs (totaliser, audit trail, alert, security and Smart Meter Verification, Emerson's proprietary diagnostic software).

Enhanced sensor design can help to improve accuracy and long-term stability to deliver quality measurements in demanding applications. Design improvements include advanced magnetics design, optimised sensor construction, redesigned housing, intrinsically safe wiring and 50% reduction in power requirements.

A universal power supply simplifies installation and eliminates configuration errors to reduce set-up time and the risk of incorrect wiring. The meter can accept either AC or DC power for flexible deployment across global sites and retrofit scenarios, all without requiring reordering or reconfiguration. Configurable outputs enable flexible integration and simplify commissioning by adapting to a wide range of control system requirements.

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WALL-MOUNT FOAMER

The Lafferty HVHC high-volume, high-concentrate foamer is a wall-mounted foam applicator for foam cleaning large areas and equipment, such as food plant processing floors.

Water flowing through its venturi draws the chemical concentrate into the water stream, giving strong dilution ratios of up to about 2.8 to 1 with no metering tip fitted. 20 colour coded metering tips set weaker ratios when the job allows. Compressed air is then injected to create a high volume of rich, clinging foam, which increases chemical contact time.

Water and air pressure gauges are fitted, and the foam can be adjusted from wet to dry. The fan nozzle projects foam up to about 460 cm, or up to about 760 cm with the zero degree nozzle.

The unit works with water pressure of 2.4 to 8.6 bar and water up to 71°C, with compressed air of up to 142 L/min. It mounts on a stainless steel bracket and has stainless steel check valves. It comes with a 1520 cm discharge hose, and a no-hose version is also available.

It is available in Australia from Brisbane supplier NORA PRO, which can match the seals to the user's chemical requirements.

NORA PRO
www.norapro.com.au



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MYZEL by Pilz is designed to address one of the biggest challenges in modern industry: the gap between machines, people and compliance. As automation becomes more complex and regulatory requirements tighten, critical information is often scattered across systems, documents and departments — which can create risk, inefficiency and uncertainty.

The MYZEL Lifecycle Platform is designed to bring everything together in one secure, digital environment, connecting machinery, workflows, documentation and employee qualifications across the entire machine lifecycle. By making safety, compliance and operational data visible and traceable in real time, the platform can transform fragmented information into clear, actionable insight.

Operators, machine builders and safety professionals gain a shared source of 'truth' — enabling faster decisions, smoother collaboration and proactive compliance management instead of reactive firefighting. This unified view helps reduce downtime, prevent errors and ensure that the right people, with the right qualifications, are working on the right machines at the right time.

Built on strong cybersecurity foundations and designed to evolve with industry demands, the platform can help bridge the digital gap and turn complexity into confidence — supporting safer, more efficient and future-ready industrial operations.

Pilz Australia Industrial Automation LP
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INDUCTION MOTOR

The WEG W22 Prime induction motor is available in IE4 and IE5 efficiency classes. It covers power ratings from 0.12 to 1000 kW with IP55 protection, enclosed fan cooling and compatibility with soft starters, direct-on-line (DOL) and variable speed drive (VSD) operation.

With its combination of high efficiency, flexible installation and robust construction, the motor is suitable for machine builders looking to improve equipment efficiency. For food manufacturers, where motors can operate continuously across conveyors, pumps, fans and processing equipment, the ability to reduce energy consumption while maintaining performance can help lower operating costs and support wider efficiency targets.

WEG Australia Pty Ltd
www.weg.net



CCEP's upgrade at its Perth facility

Coca-Cola Europacific Partners (CCEP) has unveiled a $39.7 million upgrade to its Kewdale manufacturing facility, reinforcing its long-term commitment to Western Australia and the future of Australian manufacturing.

The investment centres on a new can production line, increasing manufacturing capacity by more than 40% and ensuring the Kewdale site remains a critical part of CCEP's national manufacturing network for decades to come.

The new can line will operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week during peak season, with a capacity to produce 16 million cases, equivalent to approximately 384 million cans per year. The new technology increases production speeds from approximately 1060 cans per minute to 1500 cans per minute, while delivering enhanced automation and increased flexibility to respond to changing consumer demand and improved water and energy efficiency.

"This upgrade is one of the largest investments in Kewdale's recent history and reflects our long-term belief in manufacturing in Western Australia. As we head into summer, this line will operate around the clock to help ensure Western Australians can continue enjoying the beverages they know and love. Beyond increasing production capacity, this





investment strengthens local manufacturing, supports skilled jobs and positions Kewdale as a world-class facility for the future," said Tom Schiebling, Director of Manufacturing, Coca-Cola Europacific Partners.

Operating for more than 50 years, the Kewdale site employs 300 Western Australians, including 125 manufacturing team members, making it CCEP's fourth largest manufacturing facility nationally.

The investment comes as demand for locally manufactured beverages continues to grow and strengthens CCEP's ability to produce products where they are consumed, supporting local jobs, supply chains and communities.

Workforce of the future

Alongside the can line upgrade, CCEP is also showcasing an innovative workforce pilot designed to attract more people into manufacturing careers.

The Kewdale site recently introduced a flexible part-time frontline manufacturing model aimed at making manufacturing careers more accessible for people balancing family, caring or other commitments.

The pilot generated over 900 applications for its first intake and has already welcomed new team members into manufacturing roles through part-time opportunities, helping broaden participation in the manufacturing workforce.

"The future of manufacturing depends on both world-class equipment and a skilled, diverse workforce to operate it. By rethinking traditional workforce models, we're creating new pathways into manufacturing and opening opportunities for Western Australians that may have not previously considered a career in the industry," Schiebling said.



Images: Supplied



Do you have a design story to share? Please email **wnift@wfmedia.com.au** if you'd like to contribute.

CASE **STUDY**

Bottling line for resealable aluminium beverages



Images: Supplied

A family-owned beverage producer and contract bottler in Germany, RHODIUS Mineralquellen, required a new line for its resealable aluminium bottles, so it enlisted the help of its long-time partner, KHS Group. An existing KHS canning line with a maximum capacity of 50,000 cans per hour was extended to cater for the new container format — known as the Alu Bottle.

"Lots of brands are looking for high-quality alternatives that can be incorporated into existing closed-loop systems and which will help them stand out from their competitors at the point of sale," said RHODIUS managing partner Hannes Tack. "Our packaging system provides them with great opportunities, especially for trend beverages in the RTD (ready-to-drink) segment such as functional drinks, flavoured water and energy drinks."

The specifications for this project were demanding. RHODIUS wanted to have the new aluminium bottle with a screw cap integrated into an existing KHS line at its bottling plant in Burgbrohl, with the clear instruction that ongoing operation was not to be disrupted. The limited amount of space and ambitious schedule of around nine months for implementation were also a challenge.

"We ran through lots of different scenarios at the beginning of the project, integrating the new packaging into various lines in our minds," said KHS project manager Gerd Bodenheimer.

A KHS canning line already in production with an output of up to 50,000 containers per hour was eventually selected. RHODIUS then invested in new depalletising, filling, labelling and inspection technology for the conversion.

An unconventional solution was found for the filling section of the line, with an Innofill Glass DNRF glass bottler being used instead of a classic can filler.

"We deliberately went for a long-tube filler. The long tube gently inserts the beverage just above the container base, forcing oxygen to the top and thus ensuring optimum oxygen values in the product," said Thomas Hüser from Technical Sales at KHS.

With its volumetric flow metering, the glass filler can process a broad spectrum of beverages without any loss in quality — which is essential for a big beverage producer and contract filler like RHODIUS.



Conversion of the bulk depalletiser also called for an unusual approach. Both the existing and new KHS Innopal AS 1 HZ machines were moved to the basement of the production shop. Two canners were also decoupled from one another. The new array allows both empty cans and empty aluminium bottles to be delivered to a single place for all lines. Another key task was to convey the empty containers to the filling line above. The perfect solution was ultimately provided by a vacuum conveyor built by KHS partner H. F. Meyer.

The converted line was successfully commissioned in July 2026. "All processes ran smoothly from planning through installation to commissioning," Tack said.

The revamped line has again reached its initial maximum capacity of 50,000 bottles per hour and already processed the first saleable products. To start with, RHODIUS is filling its own water brand into 400 mL bottles and a special Halloween edition of Bluna. Further product launches are planned for the end of the year.

KHS Pacific Pty Ltd
www.khs.com



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INSIDE THREE DECADES OF CHANGE IN AUSTRALIAN BEVERAGES

Geoff Parker, CEO, Australian Beverages Council

The range of drinks available today compared to 20 years ago has changed dramatically. A walk down the supermarket drinks aisle or opening a fridge in a convenience store highlights just how much the sector's portfolio has shifted over that time.

Earlier this year, the peer-reviewed journal *Nutrients* published research tracking Australian non-alcoholic beverage sales from 1997 to 2024. The study was conducted independently by FOODiQ Global and commissioned by the Australian Beverages Council. It builds on three earlier studies of the same data set, so together these provide one of the longest continuous analyses available of how Australians' drink choices have changed. The research is the only one of its kind in the world.

The headline finding is stark. In 1997, sugar-sweetened varieties made up 70% of carbonated soft drink sales. By 2024 that share had halved to 35%. Sales of low- and no-sugar have moved in the opposite direction, from 30 to 65%.

The growth in bottled water sales has been just as striking. Still and sparkling water sales grew from 4.8% of the market in 1997 to 36% in 2024, and today water sales have surpassed sugar-sweetened soft drinks outright. On average, water-based drinks now contain 54% less sugar per litre than they did in 1997, and carbonated soft drinks 31% less.

Consumption data points the same way. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the share of Australians drinking sugar-sweetened beverages fell from 43.2% in 1995 to 20.9% in 2023.

This didn't happen by accident

Shifts like this don't happen in isolation. Behind those numbers are years of research and innovation by beverage manufacturers. Companies continue to reformulate much-loved products without losing the taste consumers expect, extend zero-sugar ranges, introduce smaller pack sizes and adopt front-of-pack Health Star Ratings.

The pace of change has picked up, too. Between 2015 and 2024, sales of sugar-sweetened carbonated drinks declined faster than any other period, coinciding with the industry's Sugar Reduction Pledge, a voluntary commitment by the major beverage companies to cut sugar across their portfolios. The Pledge remains the nation's only voluntary commitment to reduce sugar in products. The researchers link the two, and from where I sit, the industry's sustained and ongoing effort in this area is very clear.

It's also worth remembering how hard these sustained changes are for the industry to maintain. Removing sugar from a beverage isn't as simple as it sounds. Sugar provides sweetness, mouth feel and energy. Replacing it at scale, across hundreds of products, while keeping consumers coming back, is a substantial technical and sensory challenge, and the industry has met it with innovation and investment.

Not every line is moving the same way

To be clear with the data, the picture isn't uniform. Juice sales fell 15% between 2015 and 2024, with fruit drinks containing added sugar down 27%. As a juice consumer myself, these shifts are perplexing given the nutritional benefits juice provides to the diet. Flavoured milk rose 37% and kombucha is a growing segment. The researchers also found rising sales of energy, sports and functional drinks.

I see these changes as an opportunity rather than a red flag. These are newer, fast-moving categories, and the reformulation work that transformed soft drinks can be applied to them too. The consumer base has also diversified. People are choosing drinks for function, flavour, occasion and wellbeing as much as for refreshment, which keeps the sector innovating.

Looking ahead

The drinks fridge of 2026 is a different place from the one of 1997, and Australians clearly like having the choice. Our job, as an industry and as policymakers, is to keep listening to what the evidence tells us.



Geoff Parker is CEO of the Australian Beverages Council, the peak body representing Australia's non-alcoholic beverage industry.

CASE **STUDY**

Brewing a future for home-grown coffee

Australians drink around 2 billion cups of coffee every year, yet less than 1% of the coffee consumed in Australia is home-grown.

The Australian Coffee Research Program plans to change that statistic by helping Australian growers capture a greater share of the nation's premium coffee market, while protecting the industry from future threats.

The $4 million national research program was launched on 29 July by AgriFutures Australia, Southern Cross University, Plant Health Australia, the University of Queensland and the Australian Grown Coffee Association.

Research will focus on improving farm productivity, evaluating coffee varieties suited to Australian conditions, strengthening biosecurity preparedness and providing growers with better tools to manage future risks.

Samantha Beresford, AgriFutures Australia General Manager, Levied and Emerging Industries, said Australia was well placed to build a globally recognised premium coffee industry.

"Australians are among the world's most passionate coffee drinkers, yet almost every cup we drink starts overseas. That presents an enormous opportunity for Australian growers," Beresford said.

"Demand for locally produced food and beverages continues to grow, while global coffee supply is becoming increasingly vulnerable to climate pressures, pests and diseases.



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"This investment is about ensuring Australian growers have the research, innovation and confidence to produce more world-class coffee while protecting the industry from future biosecurity threats."

Coffee is already grown commercially in the tropical tablelands of Far North Queensland, the cooler subtropical regions of South-East Queensland and northern NSW, with the potential for expansion into other suitable regions as knowledge, genetics and production systems continue to improve.

Australia's coffee industry comprises around 40 commercial growers, farming approximately 400 hectares, with capacity to produce around 800 tonnes of coffee each year.



Image Supplied

New look for Victorian craft spirits' packaging

Peacock Bros has partnered with Organic Bay Distillery to deliver a packaging transformation to help the Victorian producer strengthen its shelf presence in Australia's increasingly competitive craft spirits market.

"At the time, we were still using the labels we'd designed ourselves when we first started the business," said Dean, one of the co-founders of Organic Bay Distillery. "While they held a lot of sentimental value, we'd begun to feel they were getting lost on the shelf amongst many other standout brands in the market.

"We initially thought we just needed to refresh one label and introduce some foiling, but after speaking with Peacock Bros and seeing the possibilities, we realised it was the right time to take a much broader look at our brand."

Working closely with both Organic Bay Distillery and Heng Design, Peacock Bros provided expertise on materials, finishes and production techniques to ensure the final packaging delivered the premium look and feel the brand was aiming for while remaining commercially viable to produce.

Starting on the HP 6800 Indigo Press, Peacock Bros printed the designs in CMYK + Digital Silver onto Manter Embossed Linen. The label was then finished on the ABG Embellishing Press, where hot foil and Digijet (digital hi-build screen) effects were applied before a soft matt finish completed the design, creating a distinctive label that stands out on the shelf.

"Organic Bay Distillery already had a fantastic story and an exceptional product, but the founders recognised the packaging was no longer standing out in an increasingly competitive market," said Marcus Horvat, Sales Manager for the Colour Labels & Packaging Division at Peacock Bros.

"By bringing together the customer, designer and production team early in the process, we were able to create a solution that honoured the brand's heritage while giving it much stronger shelf presence."

Drawing inspiration from the coastal location of the distillery, the design of the packaging also preserves the heritage of the original labels while reinforcing the provenance, craftsmanship and authenticity behind the brand.

Peacock Bros Pty Ltd
www.peacocks.com.au

IN-SHELL NUT INSPECTION SYSTEM



The WECO Multiscan MXV-Bulk X-ray inspection system is designed for in-shell nut applications. It can analyse density differences inside each nut to identify hidden quality defects and insufficient kernel fill, as well as dense foreign material (FM).

Suitable for inspecting pecans, walnuts, pistachios, peanuts and other nuts, the system identifies and rejects a wide variety of product defects that show no obvious external signs including empty shells, insect damage and internal mould. It also removes FM including stones, glass, ceramics and embedded metal.

Nuts enter the system on a belt designed to stabilise and distribute product evenly for consistent scanning. The system captures and analyses images of each object as it passes through the inspection zone. When it identifies out-of-tolerance product or FM, it signals the air valves to eject the unwanted material.

The system is designed to complement optical sorting, aspiration and other separation methods on the line. Optical sorters identify external characteristics such as colour, size, shape and surface condition, while aspiration separates material based primarily on weight and aerodynamic properties. X-ray inspection adds information about internal density, helping processors build a more complete quality-control strategy.

The system is designed to be easy to use. Operators set the density threshold directly on the touchscreen, defining the tolerance that determines how fully a nut must be filled to be accepted. The system can also evaluate fill within specific areas of each nut, allowing inspection to be configured for differences among varieties and quality targets.

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Blue-light approach to reducing *Campylobacter* in poultry

Campylobacter is the most common cause of bacterial food poisoning worldwide. In the UK alone there are hundreds of thousands of cases each year, costing an estimated £700 million annually in health care and lost productivity.

In a study published on 6 October 2026 in the journal *Microbiology*, researchers from University of Reading, working in collaboration with the Animal and Plant Health Agency, tested a new technique known as violet-blue photodynamic inactivation (VB-PDI) against 64 different strains of Campylobacter, which is found in around three-quarters of all raw chicken sold in the UK. Every single strain was killed by the treatment, regardless of species or antibiotic resistance profile.

VB-PDI works by shining a visible violet-blue light onto bacteria, causing molecules naturally found inside their cells to produce lethal levels of destructive compounds called reactive oxygen species. Crucially, the method needs no physical contact with the food and no added chemicals, making it a promising option for use on poultry carcasses in processing plants after slaughter, before products reach consumers.

The researchers estimate that if the technique could reduce contamination on chicken carcasses by a factor of 100, the proportion of highly contaminated carcasses reaching retail could fall from around 1 in 10 to just 1 in 50.

The team also found no evidence that *Campylobacter* bacteria could develop resistance to the treatment. Strains that were already resistant to antibiotics were killed just as effectively as fully susceptible ones. When one strain was repeatedly exposed to the light over 15 rounds in the laboratory, in an attempt to force resistance to evolve, no increase in tolerance was seen.

Dr Aidan Taylor, from the University of Reading and lead author of the study, said: "Campylobacter is a genuinely nasty bug, and its sheer abundance in the food chain, combined with rising antibiotic resistance, makes it a really difficult problem to tackle.

"What's exciting about this light-based approach is that it doesn't rely on chemicals or antibiotics at all, so it sidesteps the resistance problem entirely. We've shown it works against a wide range of real-world strains taken directly from UK poultry, including the multi-drug-resistant strains that worry us most, and we can't find any evidence that resistance could evolve. That combination of broad efficacy and durability is what makes this such a promising option for cutting contamination before chicken ever reaches someone's kitchen."

Because VB-PDI uses simple, low-power LEDs with a long lifespan and minimal running costs, the team also believe it could offer a low-cost option for poultry producers, including in low- and middle-income countries where food safety infrastructure is limited.

Dr Samuel Connelly, from the Animal and Plant Health Agency, who co-led the research, said: "While further evaluation using contaminated meat samples is required, the simplicity and adaptability of this technology suggest that it could be implemented at various stages of the food production process. Such application has the potential to reduce the prevalence of *Campylobacter* within the food chain and, consequently, contribute to a reduction in the incidence of foodborne illness."

The researchers say further trials on naturally contaminated poultry carcasses in real processing settings are now needed before the technology could be rolled out commercially.

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STAINLESS STEEL DISPLAY



The Interworld Electronics ViTAM-116 is a 15.6-inch (1366 x 768 resolution [optional 1920 x 1080]) IP66/IP69K fully sealed stainless steel industrial display engineered for hygienic operator control and process monitoring across food and beverage processing facilities.

Designed to assist food manufacturers in maintaining strict compliance with hygiene protocols, the display features a true-flat front bezel and Grade 304 (or optional Grade 316) stainless steel enclosure. This crevice-free housing eliminates dirt-trapping areas and withstands routine exposure to aggressive cleaning chemicals. Its IP66/IP69K ingress protection rating allows direct, high-pressure, high-temperature washdowns on active processing lines without risking internal hardware damage.

Touch screen options include resistive touch for operation with heavy work gloves or in liquid-heavy environments, projected capacitive multi-touch for a heavy-duty and responsive display, or a non-touch glass display. An optional 1000-nit high-brightness panel ensures clear visibility under intense factory lighting. To maintain operational continuity during production shifts, a side-edge touch lock enables safe wipe-down cleaning, while rear OSD controls allow quick system adjustments.

Industrial-grade M12 waterproof connectors, including VGA, HDMI, USB and DC power inputs, maintain reliable signal transmission and seal integrity against moisture ingress. The monitor supports a wide 9~36 V DC power input and operates across extended temperatures from -20 to 60°C, making it suitable for cold storage, washdown zones and hot processing areas. Flexible installation options include standard VESA 75 x 75 mm mounting and specialised yoke mount kits for processing line positioning.

Interworld Electronics and Computer Industries
www.ieci.com.au

ROTARY LOBE PUMPS



Alfa Laval has introduced the MaxiLobe rotary lobe pump ranges, new positive displacement pumps designed to improve volumetric efficiency, with the potential to reduce capital investment and deliver energy savings. They are also designed to extend the operating range while protecting product quality, simplifying maintenance and increasing uptime in hygienic and high-purity applications.

Additionally, by enabling a smaller pump to be selected for the required duty in suitable applications, the range can help to reduce equipment and installation costs, including the associated electrical equipment. This reduces the need for oversizing while maintaining operational flexibility.

Upgrades are equally straightforward. Key porting dimensions match those of all Alfa Laval SRU pumps and most SX and SX UltraPure models, allowing replacement without modifying existing pipework. Under defined operating conditions, MaxiLobe is claimed to deliver at least 5% higher flow rates than the equivalent SRU model.

The range is designed to protect product quality and reduce cross-contamination risk through precision-profiled elastomers, good cleanability and hygienic and high-purity design. It provides both EHEDG and 3-A certification alongside full FDA compliance as standard.

Alfa Laval Pty Ltd
www.alfalaval.com.au

CLEAN-IN-PLACE HOSE PUMP

The Bredel CIP pump is designed for sanitary and hygienic processes that require optimal efficiency and regular clean-in-place (CIP). Bredel hose pumps are part of Watson-Marlow Fluid Technology Solutions (WMFTS), a specialist in manufacturing peristaltic pumps and associated fluid path technologies.

In the food and beverage industry, lengthy downtime for cleaning equipment and batch contamination results in higher costs. However, a pump that supports CIP without bypassing or disassembly minimises production downtime and avoids spoilt product due to contamination. WMFTS has designed the CIP pump with a new rotor to enable companies to achieve the CIP cleaning velocity requirements of >2 m/s.

Automatic retractable shoes for cleaning the pump element inside are specifically designed for CIP processes to allow the pump and rest of the system downstream to be cleaned at the correct fluid velocity. By retracting the shoes during cleaning, hose compressions at high temperatures are eliminated, thereby extending hose life and reducing costs of replacement hoses. The CIP pump is available in sizes 20 (600 L/h), 25 (1800 L/h) and 32 (3200 L/h).

Existing customers can upgrade their pump rotor to the CIP variant in situ with clear instructions, without removing the pump from the process line and experiencing downtime.

Key benefits of the pump include reducing maintenance downtime; reducing power consumption as there is no need to run the pump during CIP cycles; and compliance with food safety standards (FDA, EC1935 and 3A). Additionally, the pump provides extended hose life by avoiding hose compressions within the CIP cycle at high temperatures; hygienic design (the only point of contact with the fluid is the inside the hose); and high-accuracy dosing with flow independent of suction or discharge conditions.

Whether handling sensitive yeast or abrasive diatomaceous earth, the pump is a suitable choice for various brewery processes, including yeast dosing; yeast transfer; flavour and colour dosing; diatomaceous earth dosing for filtration; and polyvinylpolypyrrolidone (PVPP) and silica gel dosing for stabilisation.

Watson-Marlow Fluid Technology Solutions
www.wmfts.com/en-au



HYGIENIC FLOW TECHNOLOGIES PORTFOLIO

LEWA, part of Atlas Copco Group Industrial Flow division, has a portfolio of hygienic industrial flow technologies designed to help manufacturers in the food and beverage industry maximise production efficiency while maintaining product integrity.

The range includes lobe, centrifugal, reciprocating diaphragm and plunger, progressing cavity and twin-screw pumps, as well as customised metering and mixing systems. The unified portfolio designed for hygienic food and beverage production provides producers with pumps, systems and technical expertise tailored to operational requirements of the industry.

The solutions are engineered to meet stringent industry standards, for safe and hygienic processing across applications from ingredient handling to finished product transfer. These technologies are suitable for a range of sub-segments, including dairy, fruits and vegetables, beverages, prepared foods, pasta, cereals, meat, seafood, sugar, confectionery, bakery products, starch and proteins, or liquid foods, among others.

LEWA has advanced diaphragm metering and process pumps (LEWA ecoflow, LEWA ecodos, LEWA triplex), as well as customised mixing and metering systems, for dosing of critical ingredients. Pomac lobe pumps are designed to gently handle shear-sensitive, high-viscosity products, while Pomac centrifugal pumps can help to ensure efficient, cleanable transfer and consistent quality.

Wangen twin screw pumps handle a range of media with low wear and high uptime, and Wangen progressing cavity pumps enable hygienic conveying and dosing across varying viscosities, including solids.

Complementing the portfolio, Varisco internal gear pumps provide smooth and controlled transfer of products such as syrups, oils and chocolate in industrial food processes.

Together, these technologies form a consolidated portfolio, providing end-to-end solutions that support the entire production chain, from ingredient intake and formulation to conveying, processing and cleaning with Clean-in-Place (CIP) and Sterilise-in-Place (SIP) compatibility.

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Baiada chicken processing facility in Tamworth

Baiada Poultry has officially opened its new Tamworth Processing Plant, marking a major milestone for a company that has been operating in the region since 1966.

Representing a multimillion-dollar investment, the purpose-built facility combines next-generation food manufacturing technology with industry-leading sustainability initiatives and modern employee amenities. It has been designed as a large-scale, integrated food manufacturing operation capable of supporting future growth while strengthening domestic food production capability.

Simon Camilleri, Managing Director of Baiada Poultry, said the investment reinforces Baiada's enduring commitment to the region and the people who call it home.

"This is a long-term investment in Tamworth and the people who have supported Baiada for generations. Our history in this region stretches back to the 1960s, when Charlie Baiada first established operations here, and this facility reflects our confidence in the future of Tamworth," Camilleri said.

"We have grown alongside this community for six decades. This facility is about ensuring Tamworth remains at the heart of our operations for decades to come, creating opportunities for local families and supporting the broader regional economy."

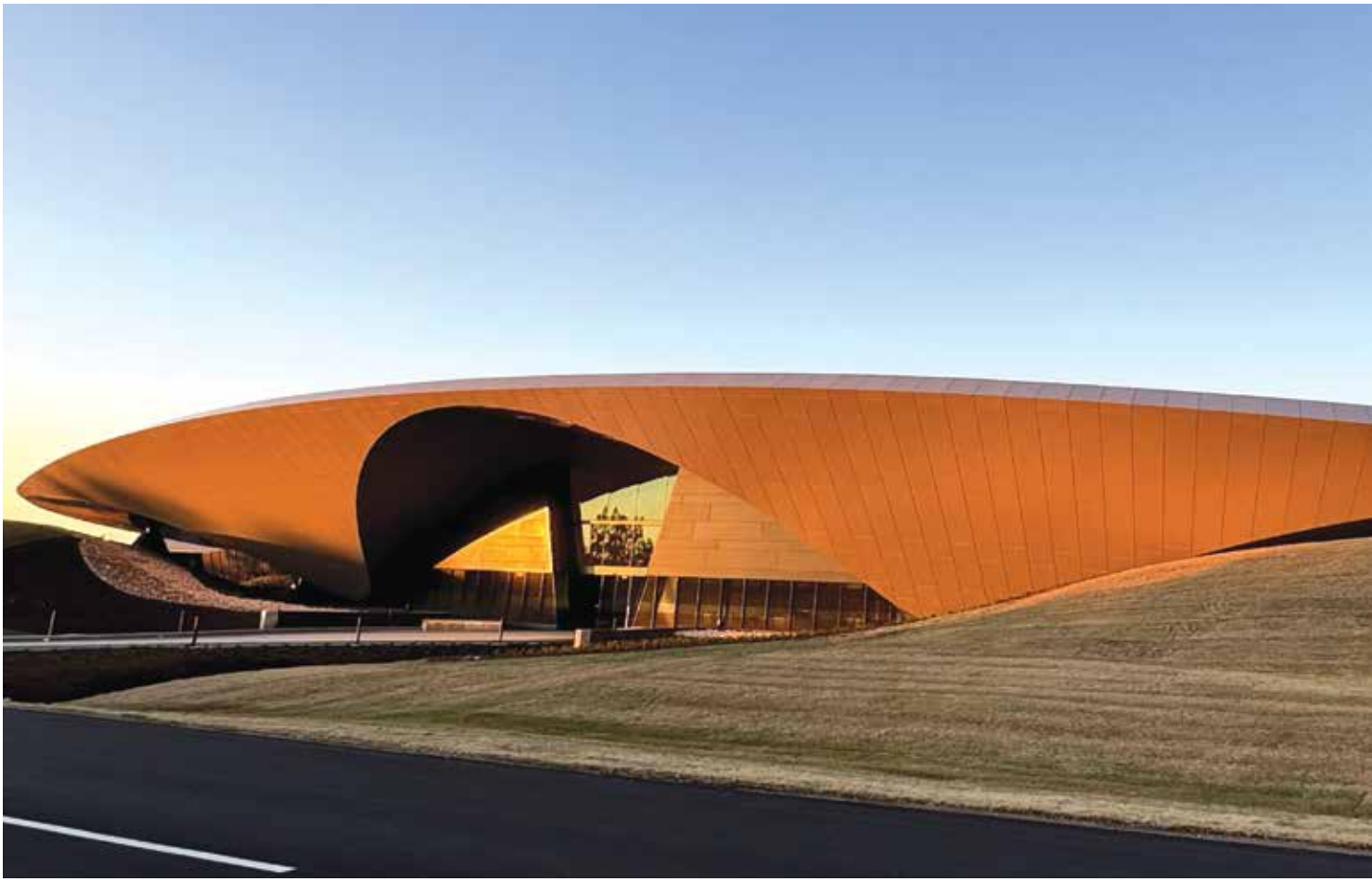
The food manufacturing facility

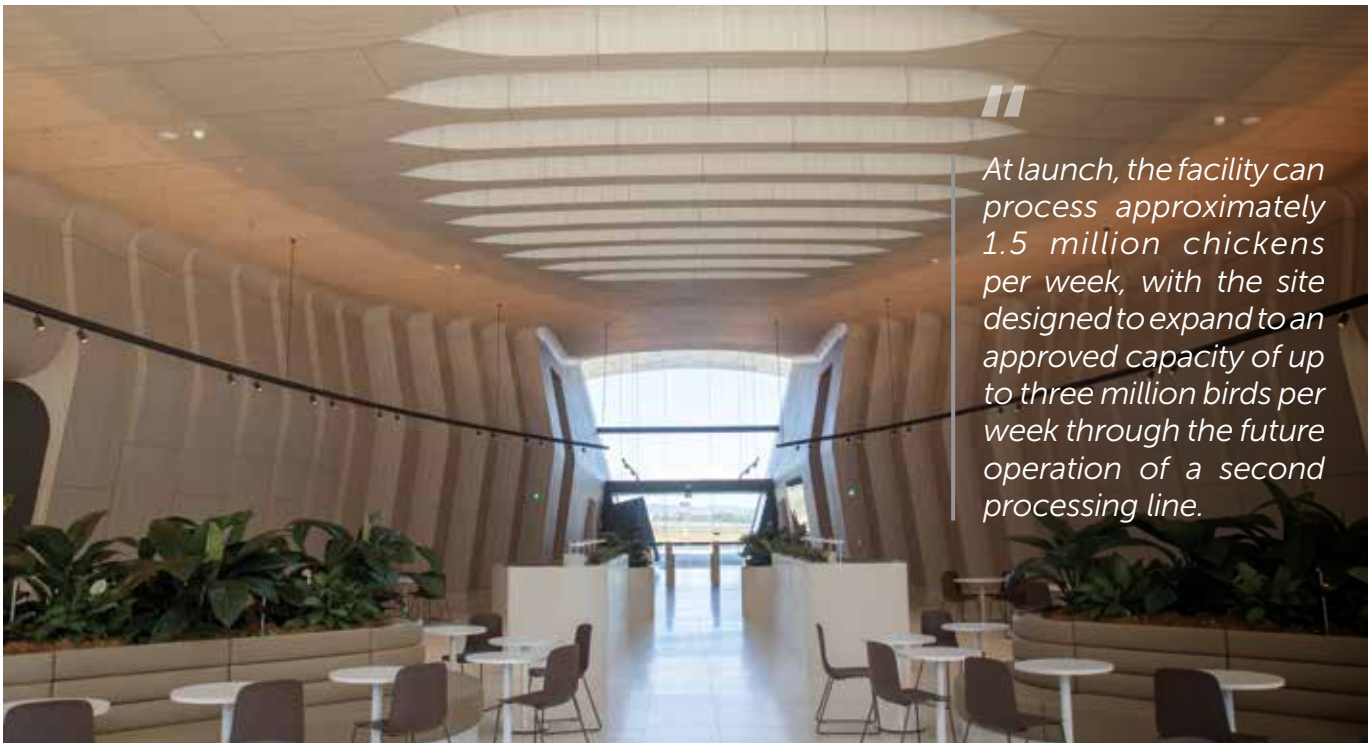
The facility brings together advanced processing technologies designed to improve efficiency, quality, traceability and operational performance.

The site incorporates automated inline processing systems, digital process control and traceability capabilities, automated quality assurance systems, secondary processing operations, automated packaging technology, automated cold storage facility and integrated logistics capabilities.

At launch, the facility can process approximately 1.5 million chickens per week, with the site designed to expand to an approved capacity of up to three million birds per week through the future operation of a second processing line. The plant features two high-capacity online processing lines, each designed to process up to 15,000 birds per hour.

A key feature of the facility is its advanced three-stage chilling system, incorporating immersion chilling, shock chilling and maturation air chilling technology. The system is claimed to be the first immersion and air chilling combination of its scale deployed anywhere in the world,





> *At launch, the facility can process approximately 1.5 million chickens per week, with the site designed to expand to an approved capacity of up to three million birds per week through the future operation of a second processing line.*

helping deliver improved product quality, consistency and operational efficiency.

Tamworth was selected for the expansion due to the geographic location, and its established poultry industry, infrastructure and skilled workforce, providing a strong foundation for the long-term growth of the sector.

Investing in people and technology together

While the facility has been designed around advanced manufacturing systems, equal emphasis has been placed on creating a workplace that supports employee wellbeing, comfort and experience.

Purpose-built employee facilities include a cafeteria, gymnasium, landscaped courtyard, breakout areas and modern administration spaces, creating an environment designed to support the thousands of people who work across Baiada's operations in the Tamworth region.

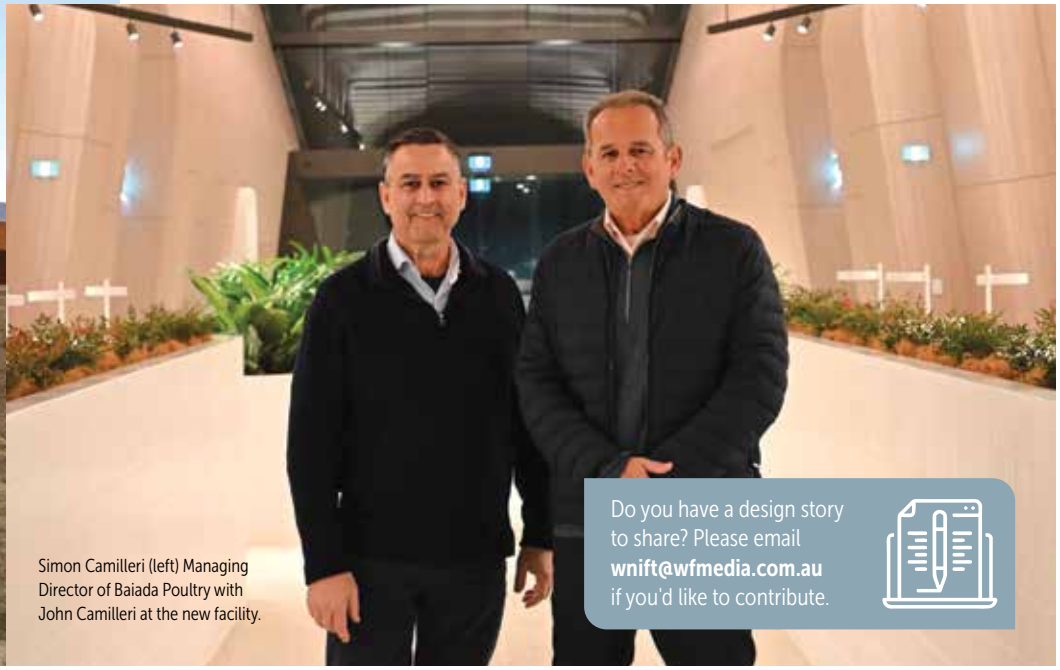
"Technology is an important part of this facility, but it's the people behind that technology who make our business successful," Camilleri said.

"We wanted to create a workplace that our employees are proud to come to every day. That's why we invested not only in world-class processing technology, but also in the amenities and facilities that support our people, their wellbeing and their experience at work."

The opening comes as demand for poultry products continues to grow across Australia and follows significant investment by Baiada to expand its production and processing capabilities in support of its leading brands, including Steggles and Lilydale Free Range, and the future needs of customers and consumers.



Images: Supplied



Simon Camilleri (left) Managing Director of Baiada Poultry with John Camilleri at the new facility.

Do you have a design story to share? Please email **wnift@wfmedia.com.au** if you'd like to contribute.



Lone Star Bakery automates its dessert production line

Image: Supplied

From its humble roots as a neighbourhood bake shop in the late 19th century, Lone Star Bakery has grown into a commercial operation with two facilities in China Grove, Texas. The company produces millions of baked goods each week — including fruit and savoury fried pies, buttermilk biscuits, kolaches, cup desserts, cinnamon buns, pecan rolls and chocolate chip cookies.

Due to its reputation for excellence, Lone Star was awarded a contract by a multinational fast-food chain to produce a new line of cheesecake in a cup. Each cup featured a base layer of either graham cracker crumbs or an Oreo mix, which was compressed into individual cups, and then topped with a cheesecake and fruit filling swirled into the cup.

"It was a brand-new product for them, and no one was sure how it would perform in the market," said Mike Brehm, Chief Engineer at Lone Star. "Initially, everything was done manually. We mixed the crumb bases in tubs, and our team hand-scooped the mix into each cup. It was extremely labour-intensive."

When the client confirmed the product's success, Lone Star knew it was time to automate.

"The cup filler line was designed by ATS with an All-Fill crumb depositor attached," Brehm said. "We needed an efficient way to feed the crumb depositor, and they recommended Flexicon — so we reached out."

Flexicon provided a solution with the Portable Flexible Screw Conveyor. Today, the crumb base is blended in a mixer and discharged into a portable tote. Operators wheel the filled tote over to a mechanical tipper, which unloads the contents into the conveyor's hopper.

The screw conveyor features a stainless-steel spiral enclosed within a polymer tube. Designed for dust-free operation, it uses an electric motor positioned beyond the discharge point to rotate the spiral, which moves material upward at an angle from the receiving hopper into the depositor. The spiral is the only moving part that contacts the material and self-centres as it rotates, minimising wear and simplifying maintenance.

Both crumb bases consist of fine particles with a mix of oil and fats included for cohesiveness. As a result, both require additional activation to keep them flowing. Based on material samples Lone Star supplied Flexicon, the company specified a vibrator for the hopper wall and a mechanical agitator above the charging adaptor of the conveyor. These additions, along with the specialised geometry of both the hopper and the spiral, all help to keep the semi-free-flowing material moving.

Mounted on casters for mobility, the conveyor can be moved between processing lines as needed, reducing the requirement for multiple fixed systems. It also rolls easily to washdown stations for quick cleaning between product changeovers. A NEMA 4X stainless steel control enclosure protects the electrical components during washdowns and in humid environments.

"Our operators are very happy with the conveyor," Brehm said. "When they see that the hopper is running low on mix, they press the button to activate the mechanical tipper, which dumps the tote's contents into the hopper. Flexicon also provided the integration between the crumb distributor and the conveyor, so that if the distributor is running low on mix, it signals the conveyor to turn on and fill it back up. We've seen both a reduction in labour and an increase in throughput."

Lone Star was able to have the conveyor up and running quickly. "It was very simple," Brehm said. "Flexicon included an installation manual which was easy to follow. They (Flexicon) are great to work with. Having a dedicated Project Manager was key, as we had a few change orders after we signed off. Everything went smoothly; they did a great job communicating with us."

"We're looking at the possibility of adding another production line in another year or so, and we'll definitely be giving Flexicon a call," he said.

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CONTAINER DUMPER EQUIPPED WITH LIGHT CURTAIN

The TIP-TITE Box Dumper from Flexicon is designed to provide dust-free transfer of bulk solid materials from boxes or other rigid containers into downstream processes. A key feature is its light curtain — a non-contact safety device that replaces traditional safety lock doors.

As a result, a single operator can load the dumper via fork truck without leaving the vehicle, eliminating the need to repeatedly dismount, remount and reposition the fork truck during loading, helping speed production cycles.

Once loaded in the dumper, the box is hydraulically raised to seat against a discharge hood. The assembly is then hydraulically elevated and tipped until the spout of the discharge hood mates with a gasketed receiving ring on the lid of the receiving bin. The light curtain automatically stops the dumper's motion if someone enters the hazard zone. Once the hood is properly positioned, the operator activates a pneumatically actuated slide gate, enabling material to flow into downstream processing equipment.

The receiving platform accommodates boxes measuring 915 to 1220 mm per side and 914 to 1321 mm in height.

A wire mesh enclosure provides additional operator protection from moving parts. All hydraulic, pneumatic and electrical functions, including a programmable HMI, are housed in a NEMA 4 control box suitable for washdown with water or mild solvents.

The system is available in carbon steel with durable industrial coatings and stainless steel material contact surfaces; or in all stainless steel, constructed and finished to food, dairy or pharmaceutical standards.

Flexicon Corporation (Aust) Pty Ltd
www.flexicon.com.au

OPTICAL SORTER

Key Technology has introduced new enhancements for its COMPASS belt-fed optical sorter. Delivering repeatable removal of foreign material and product defects, the sorter is designed to help processors ensure product quality while simplifying operation. Now available with advanced backlight technology, three-way sorting and a larger-capacity model size, it has enhanced sorting capabilities and production efficiency across a wider range of snacks, vegetables and other foods.

In challenging applications like kettle chips where shadows, belt staining and other variables can complicate optical inspection, the sorter is now equipped with advanced pulsed LED backlight technology. Available with both visible and near-infrared wavelengths, the backlight transmits light through the belt rather than illuminating product solely from above. This approach improves product segmentation, reduces the impact of shadows and helps mitigate the effects of belt staining that can interfere with defect and foreign material detection.

For processors that need to make multiple sort decisions on a single product stream, optional three-way sorting adds a second ejection manifold that enables the sorter to separate incoming product into three independently configurable streams in a single pass. Processors can configure the third stream to recover product for rework, separate different defect categories or create multiple product grades. By performing multiple sort decisions in one pass, three-way sorting can eliminate the need for a second sorter or manual inspection station.

To support higher-capacity production lines, Key has also expanded the COMPASS family with the new B200 model featuring a 2 m-wide sorting belt.

Key Technology Australia Pty Ltd
www.key.net







Image: Supplied

When production outgrows storage

The food and beverage warehouse challenge

Steve Dimitrovski, Director of Sales, Swisslog Australia and New Zealand

Food and beverage (F&B) manufacturers are facing a warehouse space crisis, and most of them did not see it coming. Production expanded. Storage followed. Over time, an organised operation became a fragmented footprint of disconnected warehouses, rising third-party costs, and a site nobody would have designed on purpose. This article examines why the space problem is structural and how automation is helping manufacturers solve it without building a new site.



Swisslog Australia and New Zealand Director of Sales, Steve Dimitrovski

Why do F&B manufacturers keep running out of warehouse space?

Production space generates revenue. Warehouse space does not. When the two compete for the same footprint, production wins and warehousing gets whatever is left over, or moves off-site entirely.

Over years of incremental growth, storage ends up distributed across multiple areas in buildings of different ages, connected by logistics flows nobody planned. Geography compounds the challenge. Many established F&B sites are in towns, tied to water sources, ports or the communities where the brand was founded. Expanding outward is simply not an option.

What does off-site storage cost?

The standard response to running out of space is third-party logistics. But the true cost is consistently higher than it first appears.

According to a 2025 survey by uTenant, Australian ambient pallet storage averages around AU$18–24 per pallet per month nationally, with Sydney typically around AU$32 per pallet per month. Cold storage attracts a further premium, with costs typically averaging AU$40–72 per pallet per month.

Many providers also charge separate receiving, pallet movements and handling fees, so storage is only one component of total 3PL costs. This double touching inflates the real cost well beyond the headline rate. For F&B manufacturers, short-term seasonal storage attracts a further premium still.

Is the F&B warehouse space problem getting worse?

Cold storage vacancy in Australia sat at approximately 0.6 in 2025, according to Cushman & Wakefield. This is in contrast to approximately 3% in the broader industrial market. Inventory buffers are growing as manufacturers hold more safety stock, and regulation is restricting where new facilities can be built. The option of simply finding more space elsewhere is narrowing at the same time as the need for it is growing.

How is automated storage solving the F&B space constraint?

The answer is density. Block stacking uses around 30% of available building height. Conventional racking reaches approximately 60%. Automated storage systems use 90% or more, delivering around 300% more capacity within the same footprint.

Swisslog offers three technologies matched to different building types: vertical stacker crane systems for very high-bay buildings up to 48 m, bidirectional deep-lane shuttle systems for buildings up to 45 m with lower SKU counts, and 4-way roaming pallet shuttle solutions for irregular layouts and lower ceiling heights. Intelligent software coordinates all three in real time, integrating with existing WMS and ERP systems.

One major snack food manufacturer has worked with Swisslog for 22 years, increasing onsite storage by 300% across multiple projects without opening a new site.

Conclusion

The space problem in F&B manufacturing is structural, not cyclical. Manufacturers who invest in density find that the space they need was already there. It just was not being used.



iStock.com/Mizina

Fat recovery method for ice-cream waste

It has been estimated that nearly 5% of the raw materials used in ice cream production end up as waste, which represents millions of dollars in lost product per year. Now researchers at Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences have found a possible cost-effective method that could help to recover a large amount of fat from this waste. The recovered fat could then be used for other potential applications, such as animal feed, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics and other products.

Ice cream waste typically has a fat content three to five times that of cows' milk, so the researchers found that it didn't need complicated treatment for the fat recovery. All that was needed was a simple separation, such as centrifugation — a mechanical process that uses rapid spinning to separate mixtures of different sizes, shapes and densities — together with an alkaline treatment to aid the process.

"Here in the Department of Food Science at Penn State we have a close relationship with the food industry, so it was through our industry partners that we first heard about the magnitude of the ice cream waste problem," said study senior author Yi Zhang, Frederik Sr. and Faith E. Rasmussen Career Development Professor in Food Science. "After offering the Ice Cream Short Course for over 100 years, we have ties to nearly every major ice cream company in the world, so we wanted to see whether we could help solve the problem."

In the study, which has been published in *Cleaner Engineering and Technology,* the team worked with Perry's Ice Cream in New York using around 40 kg of ice cream waste from four production batches at the ice cream manufacturing facility, with fat content ranging from 1.8 to 10.3%.

The first approach used to recover the milk fat was a process called proteolysis — which used enzymes such as pepsin, trypsin and bromelain to break down proteins that help stabilise the fat emulsion. The second approach used pH shifting, where they made the waste either strongly acidic (pH 2 or 4) or alkaline (pH 11) to destabilise the emulsion. After treatment, they centrifuged the material to separate the fat.

The team then measured the fat recovery and fat purity of both approaches, with surprising results.

"You might expect enzymes to be essential for breaking up the emulsion, but our study found that you don't necessarily need them," Zhang said. "The untreated control, when simply processed by centrifugation, recovered about 95% of the fat and actually improved fat purity compared with the original waste."

Short enzyme treatments of one to two hours sometimes helped fat separation, but longer treatment, higher temperatures and extensive proteolysis did not increase the total amount of fat recovered and could actually decrease fat purity. The pH experiments found that pH 11 — strongly alkaline conditions — separated fat better than acidic conditions.

> *"The team worked with Perry's Ice Cream in New York using around 40 kg of ice cream waste from four production batches at the ice cream manufacturing facility, with fat content ranging from 1.8 to 10.3%.*

To analyse the economic implications of their findings, study co-author Rui Shi, assistant professor in Penn State's Robert V. Waltemeyer Department of Chemical Engineering, and her team built a techno-economic model to evaluate how the fat recovery approaches could be incorporated into the industrial processes. It was estimated that the minimum selling price per kilogram of recovered fat would be about 40 cents.

The economics depended heavily on how much fat was present in the incoming ice cream waste. Higher-fat waste makes the process more profitable, because roughly the same amount of waste is being processed to obtain more valuable product. The research findings indicated that larger-scale processing operations could improve profitability.

Zhang and her collaborators will now continue to explore value-added products from recovered fat; recycling and reuse pathways for the other recoverable by-products in ice cream waste, such as proteins and sugars; and potential applications for using ice cream waste as a whole.



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CASE **STUDY**

Humidification solution for Tasmanian Botanics



Australian medicinal cannabis producer Tasmanian Botanics required a solution to control humidity throughout its drying, curing and post-harvest processing operations.

Maintaining precise humidity levels is essential in many controlled-environment production facilities, where even small fluctuations can affect product quality, yield and consistency. The installation at Tasmanian Botanics demonstrates the effectiveness of AKIMist dry fog humidification technology, and also highlights its potential across a wide range of food production and agricultural applications.

Supplied by Tecpro Australia, the AKIMist system was initially installed in Tasmanian Botanics' drying rooms to provide control of relative humidity during the critical post-harvest drying process.

With a target relative humidity of 60%, the system consistently maintained conditions between 59.5 and 60.5% over a seven-day monitoring period, providing a stable environment for processing.

Importantly, the ultra-fine dry fog increased humidity without wetting the product, equipment or surrounding surfaces. The improved environmental control supported more consistent processing conditions and product quality, with the success of the initial installation leading to further installations in post-harvest processing areas.

While the Tasmanian Botanics project demonstrates the benefits of precision humidification in medicinal cannabis production, the same dry fog humidification technology is also suitable for humidity control across food production, vertical farming and mushroom cultivation:

- **Vertical farming and controlled-environment agriculture**: maintaining appropriate humidity is essential for healthy plant development, particularly in indoor growing environments. AKIMist can help regulate humidity, reduce excessive transpiration and support consistent growing conditions without wetting foliage.
- **Mushroom cultivation**: mushrooms require carefully controlled humidity throughout their growing cycle. Dry fog humidification can help maintain the high relative humidity required for mushroom development while minimising unwanted surface wetting and supporting consistent growing conditions.
- **Fresh produce storage and handling**: fruit, vegetables and leafy greens can lose moisture rapidly after harvesting. Maintaining appropriate humidity in storage and processing environments can help reduce dehydration, minimise weight loss and preserve freshness.
- **Bakeries and dough processing**: controlled humidity can help prevent dough surfaces from drying out during proving and processing, supporting consistent product quality and reducing crust formation before baking.
- **Cheese production and maturation**: humidity management plays an important role in cheese aging, helping control moisture loss and support the desired maturation conditions.

AKIMist uses compressed air and water to generate an ultra-fine dry fog that evaporates rapidly into the surrounding air. Combined with humidity sensors and automated controls, the system is designed to maintain precise humidity setpoints with minimal operator intervention. Its ability to increase relative humidity without creating wet surfaces makes it suitable for facilities where product quality, hygiene and environmental consistency are critical.

Tecpro Australia supplies AKIMist dry fog humidification systems for industrial, agricultural and food processing applications, helping businesses improve environmental control, protect product quality and optimise production conditions.

Tecpro Australia
www.tecpro.com.au



AIRLESS WALL-MOUNT FOAMER

Food plants that foam clean usually need a compressed air line at every washdown point. The Lafferty A-50 airless foamer, available in Australia from Brisbane supplier NORA PRO, does not. It runs on standard mains water pressure alone.

The A-50 mounts on the wall at the washdown point. Water flowing through its Venturi injector draws the cleaning or sanitising chemical from its container and dilutes it at a set ratio. The solution then runs through the hose to an airless foam wand, which draws in air and projects a wet, clinging foam up to about 2.4 m. The foam holds on walls, equipment and other vertical surfaces, and is designed to stay in contact for longer so operators can see where it has been applied.

The unit works with water pressure of about 2.4 to 8.6 bar. It comes with a stainless steel mounting bracket, stainless steel inlet and discharge ball valves, a polypropylene injector body, 20 colour-coded metering tips for setting the dilution, and a 15 m foam hose with a polypropylene foam wand.

Because it needs no air supply, the A-50 suits sites where running compressed air to each wash area is costly or impractical, such as smaller food processors, commercial kitchens and wash bay.

Each unit can be matched to suit the chemical it will apply.

NORA PRO
www.norapro.com.au

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Dairy waste to fuel:

Unlocking the potential of tonnes of salty whey



Stock.com/Andrii Lysenko

A company that helped design how astronauts grow and recycle food in space is now applying that thinking to the critical problem of dairy waste here on Earth. Take Root Bio worked with Heriot-Watt University to turn salty whey, a high-volume by-product from cheese production, into a widely used fuel called bioethanol.

Supported by the Industrial Biotechnology Innovation Centre (IBioIC), which connected the two organisations through its industry network, the project brought together Take Root Bio's closed-loop approach with Heriot-Watt's expertise in bio-based solutions.

Together, they looked at how the sugars found in salty whey could be transformed through a bio-based process, creating value from a material that is often difficult and costly to manage. The process also leaves behind a secondary stream that could potentially be recovered and reused.

The challenge of disposing of salty whey is significant. Around 95,000 tonnes are generated in the UK each year from the production of cheddar and similar cheeses, and its combination of milk sugars and high salt content makes management particularly difficult.

A single dairy producer can generate tens of thousands of litres every week, creating both environmental and economic pressures for the sector.

While the project focuses on dairy waste, the thinking behind it comes directly from the company's roots in biosphere engineering and complements Heriot-Watt's circular economy expertise. In the kinds of systems Take Root Bio develops, resources are kept in use for as long as possible, with one process feeding into the next rather than creating waste.

That same thinking runs through Heriot-Watt's side of the project. Its scientists specialise in finding new value in food and drink by-products. They use biological processes to turn difficult materials into usable resources, making the partnership a natural fit.

At the heart of the project was the idea that salty whey could be treated as a resource rather than waste, meaning dairy producers could potentially reduce the costs associated with its management while providing feedstock for new bio-based products. The company is also looking at whether mobile production units could be deployed closer to where these by-products are produced, helping to reduce transport requirements and making the concept easier to scale.

Kirk Siderman-Wolter, founder of Take Root Bio, said: "We've always been interested in what happens when you stop looking at something as waste and start asking what else it could become. The company began by looking at how people might grow food in space, where every resource matters and nothing can be thrown away. The same principles apply surprisingly well here on Earth. Salty whey is produced in huge volumes and can be difficult to deal with, so we wanted to find out whether there was a better use for it.

> *At the heart of the project was the idea that salty whey could be treated as a resource rather than waste, meaning dairy producers could potentially reduce the costs associated with its management while providing feedstock for new bio-based products.*

"If we can help turn something that currently costs money to manage into something with real value, that's a positive outcome for both dairy producers and the environment."

Heriot-Watt has taught and researched brewing and distilling since 1903 and is home to the International Centre for Brewing and Distilling (ICBD). The university is also developing plans for a new Centre for Sustainable Brewing and Distilling to help the sector address environmental challenges and support more sustainable ways of working. The centre will give the sector access to low-carbon testbeds, support for bringing new products to market, and training for the next generation of industry talent.

Dr Jane White, an expert in waste valorisation at Heriot-Watt University, said: "Food and drink manufacturing produces a huge range of by-products, many of which still contain valuable components but can be challenging to manage. That makes them interesting candidates for bio-based processes that can recover value from materials that might otherwise be treated as waste."

Their future investigations will explore how similar techniques could be applied to other food and agricultural by-products, including waste from fruit and vegetable processing. They are also looking at ways to capture gases generated during fermentation, such as methane and hydrogen, for use in future food production systems.



Contamination detection solutions for the food manufacturing industry

In the highly regulated food manufacturing industry, ensuring product safety and quality is essential to protecting consumers, maintaining brand reputation, and meeting regulatory requirements. Even a single contamination incident can result in product recalls, financial losses, regulatory penalties, and long-term damage to consumer trust.

To help manufacturers address these challenges, METTLER TOLEDO provides reliable and cost-effective contamination detection solutions designed to meet a wide range of inspection needs. These advanced systems help safeguard products while improving operational efficiency and quality control.

One of the biggest challenges food manufacturers face is the risk of foreign object contamination. Materials such as metal fragments, glass, stone, plastic, or bone can accidentally enter products at various stages of production. If undetected, these contaminants can pose serious health risks to consumers and lead to costly recalls and reputational damage.

Maintaining consistent product quality is equally important. Issues such as incorrect fill levels, damaged packaging, faulty seals, or missing components can negatively affect customer satisfaction, product shelf life, and compliance with industry standards. Manufacturers therefore need inspection systems that support both contamination detection and quality assurance.

METTLER TOLEDO's X-Ray inspection technology goes beyond traditional contamination detection by identifying a wide range of foreign materials regardless of packaging type. The systems can reliably detect metal, glass, stone, dense plastic, and bone, helping ensure only safe products reach consumers.

In addition to contamination detection, the systems perform critical quality checks, including:

- Verifying product fill levels
- Inspecting seal integrity
- Detecting missing or damaged components
- Identifying packaging inconsistencies

This multifunctional capability makes X-Ray inspection a valuable tool for maintaining both food safety and product quality.

Key Benefits for Food Manufacturers

Enhanced Food Safety

METTLER TOLEDO X-Ray systems help protect consumers by detecting and rejecting contaminated products before they leave the production line. By preventing foreign materials from reaching the market, manufacturers can reduce risk and strengthen consumer confidence in their brand.

Regulatory Compliance

The systems support compliance with food safety programs and regulations, including HACCP and FSMA. Consistent monitoring, inspection, and documentation help manufacturers remain audit-ready and meet evolving industry requirements.

Reduced Waste and Recalls

Early detection of contaminants and defects minimises the risk of costly recalls and reduces product waste. Reliable inspection helps manufacturers identify issues before products enter distribution, resulting in significant cost savings and improved operational performance.

Improved Operational Efficiency

Designed for high-speed production environments, METTLER TOLEDO systems integrate seamlessly into existing lines without compromising throughput. Automated inspection and rejection processes reduce manual intervention, improve productivity, and support continuous production.

Versatility Across Applications

The systems can inspect a wide variety of food products and packaging formats, including bakery, dairy, meat, seafood, and confectionery applications. This flexibility allows manufacturers to standardise inspection technology across multiple product lines.

Beyond performance, METTLER TOLEDO systems are designed with hygiene in mind. Stainless steel construction, smooth surfaces, and accessible cleaning areas help prevent contamination build-up, reduce cleaning time, and support compliance with strict sanitation standards.

With decades of industry experience, METTLER TOLEDO delivers solutions that combine precision, reliability, and ease of use. Intuitive interfaces and customisable settings enable manufacturers to tailor inspections to their specific production requirements, while comprehensive training, maintenance, and technical support ensure long-term success.

The systems also support data-driven manufacturing through advanced reporting and analytics. Inspection data can be collected, monitored, and analysed to identify trends, improve processes, and reduce operational costs. METTLER TOLEDO's ProdX software enhances this capability by centralising inspection data from multiple production lines into a single platform, providing real-time visibility and supporting paperless compliance management.

When food safety and quality are non-negotiable, METTLER TOLEDO's Product Inspection Solutions provide the confidence manufacturers need. To see how these technologies can improve safety, quality, and efficiency within your operation, book a free personalised demonstration and experience the benefits firsthand.

METTLER TOLEDO

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Image supplied

An updated design on Ishida's CCW-AS multihead weighers makes it easier to remove and reinstall the weigh buckets. This simple change makes a big difference during cleaning and changeovers.

Product profile: making multihead weighing easier for operators

For many food manufacturers, improving productivity isn't just about running faster. It's about making equipment easier to operate, easier to clean and simpler to maintain, so operators can spend less time making adjustments and more time keeping production moving.

The latest generation of Ishida CCW-AS multihead weighers are designed with these priorities in mind, combining weighing performance with features that simplify operation, streamline sanitation and reduce the need for manual adjustments.

Simplifying day-to-day operation

The CCW-AS features a redesigned 15.6″ touchscreen human–machine interface (HMI) with an intuitive, tablet-style display that simplifies set-up and day-to-day operation.

Smart automation features, including automatic feeder adjustments, help reduce routine operator intervention by continually optimising machine performance throughout production.

"It's not just about standing in front of the machine and operating it," said Heat and Control Business Manager, Packaging and Inspection Systems, Robert Marguccio.

"Operators have other responsibilities across the production line, so these features help them spend less time making routine adjustments while maintaining efficient operation."

Faster cleaning and changeovers

With food safety an ongoing priority across the industry, hygienic equipment design and ease of sanitation are key considerations when selecting packaging equipment.

The CCW-AS has been redesigned to simplify cleaning and maintenance, including a hopper design that allows components to be removed and reassembled with one hand.

"The updated design makes it much easier to remove and reinstall the weigh buckets," Marguccio said. "It's a simple change that can make a real difference during cleaning and changeovers, especially the fact that the new design also gives you positive location, stopping the issue of buckets appearing to be engaged but in fact are not."

The redesigned drive units also support hygienic design by making the weigher easier to clean, helping manufacturers meet food safety requirements while reducing the time spent on routine sanitation.

Helping operators achieve more

The CCW-AS has also been designed to reduce the number of routine adjustments operators need to make throughout a production run.

Automatic timing continually adjusts the weigh hopper's open and close interval based on product flow, eliminating a task that previously required manual adjustment.

Optical charge control (OCC) continuously monitors product levels in each radial feeder and automatically adjusts feeder performance in real time, helping maintain consistent product flow and weighing performance throughout production.

Together, these intelligent automation features reduce routine operator intervention, allowing operators to focus on keeping the broader production line running efficiently.

Supporting users beyond installation

Heat and Control supports its users with remote diagnostics, troubleshooting, production assistance and training tailored to individual applications.

"We're able to support customers every step of the way, from troubleshooting and set-up to production assistance and training," Marguccio said.

As manufacturers continue looking for ways to improve efficiency without increasing operational complexity, equipment that is easier to operate, easier to clean and simpler to maintain can make a meaningful difference across the entire packaging line.

Heat and Control
www.heatandcontrol.com

Pecan inspection system finds hidden product defects

Payne's Pecans is a family-owned pecan cleaning business that handles up to 907,000 kg of in-shell pecans annually for local growers. Founder Jay Payne has been around pecans since childhood, when he picked nuts from his family's grove for Christmas money. Since he opened Payne's Pecans in Rich Hill, Missouri, in 2004, labour has become harder to find, while buyers have grown more particular about product quality. Last year, Payne began using WECO's Multiscan MXV-Bulk X-ray inspection system to improve product quality, increase throughput and reduce reliance on hand-sorting.

"Inspection has always been one of the hardest parts of this business," Payne said. "Finding several people to stand at a table and sort pecans by hand for hours is difficult enough, but there's also only so much a person can catch by eye. We needed a better way to identify internal product defects."

While optical sorters identify external characteristics such as colour, size, shape and surface condition, the MXV-Bulk analyses density differences inside each nut to identify hidden defects and insufficient kernel fill. The system also detects dense foreign material including stones, adding another layer of product protection before the pecans leave the facility.

The inspection system sits near the end of the line, after pre-cleaning equipment has removed much of the lightweight debris and obvious foreign material. As the pecans pass through the inspection zone, a channel belt keeps them stable and evenly distributed for scanning. The system analyses the X-ray images and triggers air valves to eject out-of-tolerance product.

"What surprised me most is what the system can detect that we simply couldn't see before," Payne said. "You can pick a pecan out of the reject stream, look at it and think there's nothing wrong with it. Then you crack it open and find there's little or no good nutmeat inside."

For in-shell pecans, those hidden defects directly affect value. Buyers sample each lot, crack representative nuts and calculate



the percentage of edible kernel. After installing the MXV-Bulk, Payne's average grade increased from 40 to 44. "Buyers pay for what is inside the shell," Payne said. "At 2 cents a point, going from a 40 to a 44 is another 8 cents a pound. On a big load, that adds up in a hurry."

Consistency improved alongside grade. Payne's A-grade lots now carry less than 1% lower-grade contamination, compared with the 2 to 3% the industry generally accepts.

"A machine evaluates every pecan the same way every time," Payne said. "People get tired, and different people catch different things. Now, with our X-ray system, we're getting much more consistent inspection. Buyers who have bought from me for years told me it was the best product they had seen come out of here."

The operational gains have been equally significant. Before the X-ray system was installed, six to eight people inspected pecans by hand at the end of the line. Now, one person handles final inspection immediately after the system, with very little left to remove. Payne estimates throughput has increased by 907 to 1361 kg/h.

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HIGH-PRESSURE HOMOGENISER SERIES

The GEA KOB series of homogenisers is designed for small and medium production plants. With KOB models 11, 22, 45 and 90 available, the homogenisers offer a compact, hygienic and flexible solution for a broad range of food, beverage, chemical and personal care applications, including homogenising and feeding spray dryers. Features include: optimised and compact mechanical construction, lower noise levels, simplified maintenance access and efficient power use.

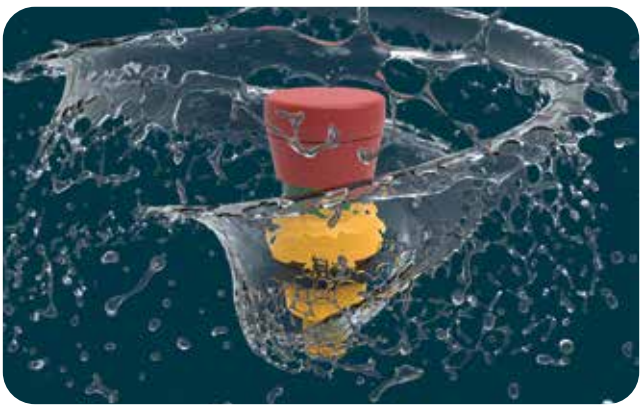
At the core of the homogenisers is a robust high-pressure design up to 400 bar, supporting stable and efficient homogenisation for demanding, moderately viscous and abrasive applications. To meet the requirements of diverse applications, higher-efficiency homogenising valve technology and more wear-resistant materials are available as options to the economical version.

The series is designed for processors who need adequate and fit-for-purpose homogenisation performance within a limited footprint. Its compact architecture is enabled by an optimised crankcase and gear-reducer design that delivers high mechanical efficiency while generating minimal heat, noise and vibration. As the drive compartment requires neither oil cooling nor forced-air ventilation, the machines are designed to rely on fewer auxiliary components and deliver lower installation, maintenance, energy and utility demands.

Designed to meet demanding sanitary requirements, every KOB model is available with CIP and SIP capabilities and can be configured to meet 3-A sanitary standards. Steamable full-stroke barrier chambers provide aseptic product handling. The machines can be equipped with a second-stage pressure gauge and pressure transmitters on both homogenisation stages as well as the outlet, for process automation and control. This makes the series suitable for a broad range of products and processes such as milk, dairy ingredients, beverages, plant-based formulations and selected chemical, personal care and cosmetic products in manual, semi-auto and fully automated production lines.

The series supports a wide range of automation levels, from simple motor-starter solutions to full PLC/HMI control.

GEA Group
www.gea.com



EMERGENCY STOP BUTTONS

RAFI is expanding its easy-to-install RAMO product family with new emergency stop buttons. The models in the RAMO E series include the RAMO 22 E and RAMO 30 E emergency stop buttons with pull release.

The company now has emergency stop actuators up to IPX9K degree of protection on the front side, which are suitable for high-pressure and steam-jet-cleaned applications.

The RAMO E PLUS 1 emergency stop variant is also being added to the portfolio. This emergency stop button has three contacts so that, for example, in addition to two redundant contacts for safety applications, a signalling contact for position detection can also be assigned.

The range extension is completed by RAMO E buttons with rotary release.

In addition to the 4- and 5-pole versions, both actuators are now also available as illuminated versions with an 8-pole, A-coded M12 connection.

The series is designed for 50,000 actuation cycles and meets all applicable ISO and IEC standards. With maximum mounting depths of 30.2 mm (RAMO 22) or 36.4 mm (RAMO 30), the emergency stop buttons, which are designed for mounting hole diameters of 22.3 or 30.3 mm, can be installed in a space-saving manner even where installation space is limited.

Like the entire RAMO series, the emergency stop buttons are equipped with easy-to-install M12 plug terminals that reduce wiring work to a minimum.

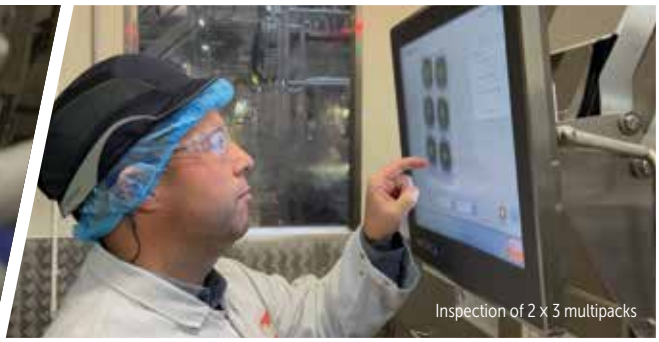
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2 x 2 multipacks (4 pots) while passing line 1 X-ray.



Split Pots entering a SC 6000



Inspection of 2 x 3 multipacks

Flexibility and Safety: Inspection in the Dairy Industry

The food industry in Australia is currently undergoing a profound transformation, driven by automation and the need to comply with increasingly strict food safety regulations. In this highly globalised environment, local producers require advanced technologies that minimise product waste and protect their brands against contamination risks.

Wipotec, the leading German manufacturer of dynamic weighing and product inspection technology, stands out in this landscape. With a core focus on modular X-ray and checkweighing systems, the company provides processing plants with key tools to achieve maximum operational precision without sacrificing line speed.

The Challenge: High Output and Diverse Packaging Formats

The success story at the Müller yoghurt plant in Telford (UK) perfectly illustrates the type of high-end engineering solutions that Wipotec deploys globally. This modern facility, which produces around 9 million pots per week ranging from 125 g to 1 kg, needed to upgrade all of its production lines with advanced X-ray inspection systems.

The main technical challenge was the immense diversity of the packaging formats. The plant handles traditional large pots, dual-compartment split pots (with separate yoghurt and topping sections), yoghurt drinks, and multipacks of four or six units. Each variant required a specific design to prevent product tipping, collisions, or false rejections caused by the varying densities of the different ingredients.

Intelligent Modular X-ray Technology

To solve these complex production scenarios, Wipotec implemented customised solutions from its modular SC and SC-WD series across all lines. Every installed machine was configured with two independent reject stations: one dedicated exclusively to detecting foreign object contamination and another for fill-level deviations.

Wipotec's adaptive engineering resolved the unique challenges of each line through purpose-built designs:

- 1 kg Pots and Drinks: A special curtain-free design was implemented alongside pop-up roller rejection systems, preventing the cups and small bottles from tipping over when passing through the scanner.
- Split Pots: Customised four-lane SC 6000 systems were installed. Each compartment of the pot is inspected using different software settings to optimise detection performance for the respective ingredients.
- Multipack Formats: The plant introduced the SC-WD 6500 solution, capable of handling 6-packs (2x3) in a dual-lane configuration and 4-packs (2x2) in a three-lane configuration. Thanks to specially designed guide rails and flap conveyors, the system handles format changes automatically without requiring any manual adjustments or intervention from the operator.

The Results: 24/7 Operational Continuity

The integration of Wipotec's technology resulted in immediate improvements in profitability and safety for the Telford plant:

- Record Startup Times: The machines arrived from Germany and were fully ready to run within just three to four days of taking the line offline.
- Zero-Downtime Flexibility: The automatic format changeover eliminated human error and drastically reduced the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) by reducing downtime.
- Continuous Support: Since the plant operates 24/7, maximising availability was crucial, a goal successfully achieved through Wipotec's local technical support and remote maintenance options.

The shift toward intelligent automation is an irreversible path for the Australian food industry. Wipotec's success with major European dairy producers proves that modularity and technological customisation are the ideal tools to transform complex lines into highly efficient processes. By adopting this next generation of X-ray inspection, food processing plants not only safeguard consumer safety but also solidify their competitiveness in a market driven by high volumes and extreme demands.

For more information, contact info.au@wipotec.com.

WIPOTEC

Wipotec Australia Pty Ltd
www.wipotec.com/au



COMPACT TRAY SEALING SYSTEM

The G.Mondini CIGNO is a compact, plug-and-play tray sealing system designed for flexible fresh food packaging applications across multiple sealing technologies and packaging formats. With a compact footprint, the system is suitable for ready meals, fresh produce, protein and high-care food packaging environments.

Over the past year, the platform has expanded its versatility across multiple packaging technologies including heat sealing, eMAP, stretch sealing, skin packaging and G.Mondini's Slimfresh technology. Compatible with paper, plastic and aluminium trays, the system supports evolving sustainability goals while maintaining good seal integrity and shelf presentation.

Paired with G.Mondini's INSEAL flange-free lidding technology, the system can also help to reduce plastic usage and packaging material consumption without sacrificing pack quality.

Designed for operational simplicity, the fully washable hygienic platform features tool-free format changes in under two minutes, intuitive controls and Augmented Reality support for faster setup and troubleshooting. Capable of speeds up to 25 cycles/min, the system is designed to deliver a scalable, flexible tray sealing solution built for modern food production.

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www.selectequip.com.au



HIGH-BARRIER METALLISED BOPP FILM

The Innovia Films Propafilm CHBM high-barrier metallised BOPP film is designed to replace aluminium foil in recyclable flexible packaging.

Combining good oxygen and moisture barrier properties with metal adhesion and thermal stability, the film is designed to replace aluminium foil in polypropylene-based laminate structures.

With its ultra-high oxygen transmission rate (OTR) and water vapour transmission rate (WVTR) barrier performance, the film can provide protection for oxygen- and moisture-sensitive products, helping preserve freshness, aroma, flavour and product quality throughout the supply chain.

Available in an 18 µm (0.72 mil) gauge, the film also features enhanced metal adhesion for robust converting performance; high optical density; reverse-side treatment suitable for lamination or surface printing; good thermal stability; and it is designed to support recyclable mono-material PP packaging structures.

The film is suitable for a range of flexible packaging applications, including: high-barrier food packaging, mono-material laminate structures, stand-up and flat pouches, applications requiring aluminium foil replacement and packaging requiring good oxygen and moisture protection.

Innovia Films Pty Ltd
www.innoviafilms.com



BLISTER PACKAGING LINE

The Unity 600 double-lane, high-speed blister packaging line by Romaco Noack is designed to package a variety of tablets and capsules with speed. The product range of this monobloc extends from small and lightweight blisters to large and heavy packs up to 145 mm long and 90 mm wide. This blister line with rotary sealing and a continuous motion cartoner achieves a maximum output of 600 blisters and 350 cartons per minute.

The transfer unit that conveys the die-cut blisters to the cartoner has been engineered to operate without the need of energy-intensive vacuum. Instead, after their removal from the blister machine, the blisters are transported on a conveyor belt and fed directly into the stack transfer unit, where they are securely stacked from the bottom up. Moreover, this automated transfer solution is capable of identifying any gaps in the process via software and compensating for these directly.

The unit is designed to achieve energy savings of up to 45% compared to its predecessor. It is also equipped with an energy monitor, which measures the machine's electricity and air consumption as well as its CO_2 emissions.

Romaco Group
www.romaco.com

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MARKING AND CODING SOFTWARE SUITE



Markem-Imaje has launched its CoLOS Software Version 7 software suite, which has new features designed for industrial organisations with multiple production facilities. The software builds on earlier releases with enhanced automation and compliance, reinforced security layers, and more intuitive operations that increase efficiency and reduce errors.

The software is designed to introduce industry-certified advanced security features, centralised management for multi-site packaging operations, improved ability to minimise downtime, and a next-generation responsive web user interface.

A key highlight is the new CoLOS multi-site feature, which enables users to centralise design, control and automate approval workflows for messages and labels in production, and optimise resources across global sites. The feature helps ensure consistency, compliance and security with a single source for all messages and label designs. It also allows comprehensive visibility into production efficiency and supports flexible scaling as operations expand.

CoLOS Version 7 is certified to the IEC 62443-4-2 cybersecurity standard for product components. It is available for use with the complete range of Markem-Imaje printers in both on-premises and cloud-based subscription models. CoLOS follows global standards for marking and coding, including 1D/2D barcodes, and is compliant with the newest GS1 Digital Link.

Markem-Imaje Pty Ltd
www.markem-imaje.com

LINED FIBRE-BASED FOOD TRAYS

Pac Food's Lined Sugarcane (LSC) Trays have now gained recyclability approval following assessment by the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation (APCO).

Built for performance and end-of-life recovery, the trays are made from virgin natural sugarcane pulp and are available with CPET, CPET/EVOH and PP/EVOH linings.

The recyclability approval confirms that the lined sugarcane trays can be classified as 'Recyclable' within the Australasian Recycling Label (ARL) Program provided all other applicable recyclability thresholds are met.

All Pac Food Lined Sugarcane Trays meet APCO's recyclability criteria with the lining still attached.

The trays now provide two potential end-of-life pathways. The tray can be placed in the recycling bin with the lining still attached, in accordance with applicable recycling guidance. Alternatively, once the lining has been removed, the sugarcane fibre tray can be composted. This flexibility makes it suitable for food manufacturers, caterers, meal preparation businesses and other commercial food operations looking for packaging that combines performance with more responsible end-of-life options.

The trays combine renewable sugarcane fibre with functional food-safe linings, providing the performance required for modern food packaging while meeting APCO's recyclability criteria.

Pac Food Pty Ltd
www.pacfood.com.au



LABELLING SYSTEM FOR CARDBOARD PUNNETS

The Visy Enviropunnet labelling system is a bespoke automated labelling system designed for locally made cardboard punnets for fresh produce.

The overclose labelling system is designed to secure produce inside the punnet with cardboard flaps and a paper label. The system removes the need for plastic film or wrap, while still protecting fresh produce, and the packaging is kerbside recyclable after use.

Designed to fit within existing packing lines, the labelling system creates a simple transition from flow wrapping to labelling without additional conveyors. It uses food-safe adhesives, can include adhesive-free areas to prevent contact with exposed produce, optional date coding and custom printing.

The labelling system can be used with a range of sizes, including: 1 kg punnet for apples, pears, stone fruits, tomatoes; 750 g punnet for pears, stone fruits, tomatoes; and 500 g to 1 kg tray pack for apples.

Visy
www.visy.com





Image credit: Clare Kiernan/UBC

Fresh strawberries

A seaweed-derived coating has been developed

University of British Columbia researchers have developed an edible, seaweed-derived coating that can help to keep strawberries fresh for at least four days at room temperature, outperforming uncoated berries stored in the fridge.

The solution is designed to help address food waste, with nearly half of all food produced being lost or wasted each year. Fresh fruits and vegetables are particularly vulnerable to spoilage, losing moisture and becoming susceptible to mould and bacteria during storage and transport.

Published in the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*, the findings could help to provide a simple approach for extending produce shelf life and reducing reliance on refrigeration across the supply chain.

> *"Once we added the coating, the fruit became far less sensitive to changes in temperature and moisture and stayed fresh longer."*

"We wanted to find a simple alternative to cold storage," said senior author Dr Tianxi Yang, an assistant professor in UBC's faculty of land and food systems. "Once we added the coating, the fruit became far less sensitive to changes in temperature and moisture and stayed fresh longer."

The coating is made from agar, a substance derived from red seaweed that is widely used as a vegan alternative to gelatine and as a thickener in foods like puddings and jellies. On its own, agar forms a thick gel. But when researchers combined it with zinc, an essential nutrient, and tannic acid, a naturally occurring plant compound found in grapes and tea, the material transformed — self-assembling into tiny microparticles that create a thin protective layer around the fruit.

When dipped in the solution, strawberries, grapes and apple slices emerged with a thin, edible coating that dried completely clear.

"It was exciting to watch the particles self-assemble in real time, from a cloudy, milky liquid into this incredibly uniform, protective layer," said doctoral student Ivy Chiu, the study's lead author. "To our knowledge, no one had made an agar-based microparticle coating like this before."

Over four days at room temperature, coated strawberries lost less than half as much water as uncoated fruit and remained noticeably firmer, with more vitamin C and antioxidants preserved. Grapes and apple slices showed similar benefits, with improvements lasting 14 days and 24 hours, respectively.

By comparison, untreated strawberries stored at room temperature began developing mould within two days, while refrigeration only extended their shelf life slightly — most untreated berries began to deteriorate by day four.

Coated strawberries stored without refrigeration remained mould-free for at least four days, while those stored in the fridge stayed fresh for at least six days.

The coating also showed antibacterial properties and no signs of toxicity in tests using human intestinal cells. For consumers who prefer to remove the coating before eating, most of it can be washed away with tap water within two minutes.

To assess its potential for real-world use, the team replaced laboratory-grade agar with commercially available food-grade agar. The results remained consistent, with coated strawberries showing reduced moisture loss and spoilage while maintaining quality.

"Our hope is to help keep produce fresh for longer throughout the food system," Yang said. "If we can reduce spoilage during storage and transportation, we can reduce food waste while using less energy to preserve food."

The research team is now testing the coating on additional fruits and vegetables and investigating how it could be scaled, tested and integrated into commercial food systems.

CASE **STUDY**

Resealable pouches for cucumbers

Wholesum Family Farms recently launched its Lil' Ones Organic Baby Cucumbers snack packs using StePacPPC's 3-in-1 patent-pending Xgo PAZ zipper pouches. The resealable stand-up pouches use flexible-film technology to optimise moisture and atmosphere control for maintaining the freshness of moisture-sensitive produce for up to 16 days.

There are several challenges in the cucumber supply chain that can limit the use of modified atmosphere packaging. Cucumbers are often packed and sold in laminated stand-up pouches, whose low water vapour transmission rate (WVTR) restricts the release of excess moisture, creating conditions that accelerate microbial decay. To prevent moisture build-up, the packaging is often macro-perforated.

However, this sacrifices modified atmosphere, accelerates dehydration and shortens shelf life, and even with macro-perforations, there is likely to be condensation in the package. These issues become more pronounced when cucumbers cannot be sufficiently cooled before packing, are subject to unstable supply chains or are displayed at ambient conditions at the retailer before refrigeration in the consumer's home.

The Xgo Modified Atmosphere (MAP) films work by incorporating three functions in one pouch: modified atmosphere, modified humidity and condensation control.

Wholesum now packs its mini cucumber snacks in Xgo pouches. Before commercial expansion, the company conducted 16-day shelf-life tests under simulated supply chain conditions. At day 16, the PAZ pouch delivered a 29 percentage-point advantage in overall quality for organic baby cucumbers compared with a top-seal alternative, and a 10 percentage-point advantage for organic mini cucumbers compared with traditional macro-perforated packaging. The improved performance was reflected in reduced moisture, decay and mould, together with better product visibility, appearance and overall quality.



Image: Supplied

"At Wholesum, we're always looking for ways to remove barriers between consumers and fresh, healthy produce," said Joanna Jaramillo, marketing manager at Wholesum. "Excess moisture may seem like a small challenge, but it can have a significant impact on how consumers perceive freshness. Through our partnership with StePacPPC, we've been able to bring a solution that helps cucumbers maintain the clean, fresh appearance shoppers expect, creating a better experience and bringing more joy to healthy snacking."

The pouches are suitable for extending the shelf life of a range of fresh fruit and vegetables, including exotic fruits such as lychee, pitaya, rambutan and longan. They are available in a range of sizes and feature a resealable closure.

StePacPPC
www.stepacppc.com



CARDBOARD CARRYING HANDLE FOR MULTIPACK PACKAGING

KHS Innopack Kisters TSP Advanced series is engineered to pack beverage cans and PET and glass bottles on trays and pads and in film — and can now turn PET bottles into sustainable multipacks using the new BottleClip Carrier, a cardboard carrying handle packaging module.

The cardboard is clipped onto the PET bottles by a rotating application wheel in continuous operation, eliminating the need for a shrink tunnel.

Up to 4800 packs an hour sporting the alternative cardboard carrying handle can be produced.

Users can choose between multipack format sizes of two, four, six or eight identical bottles and mixed variety packs. The cardboard carrier is suitable for PET bottles made either of virgin PET or of up to 100% recyclate, and lightweight containers can also be processed.

The option is available for all standard models in the Advanced series. Existing machines can be converted to include this module where certain technical requirements are met. Bottling plants can then flexibly switch between the various packaging varieties according to their current demand.

Operator-prompted format changeovers take only a few minutes to complete.

KHS Pacific Pty Ltd
www.khs.com

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Kenna MacTavish,
Managing Director of Seedlab Australia

Protein washing: is it time to think beyond adding protein?



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As protein moves from gym shakes into coffee, chocolate, cereals, snacks, burger buns and confectionery, Seedlab Australia says FMCG brands need to be more thoughtful about whether protein genuinely adds value, or whether it risks becoming the next overused health claim.

Seedlab Australia is a Woolworths-supported FMCG business program that has supported more than 600 founders across Australia and New Zealand, working with emerging brands across food, beverage, personal care, home care and pet care.

The conversation follows growing global attention around the 'protein-in-everything' trend, with rising demand for high-protein snacks, fortified foods and GLP-1-adjacent products placing pressure on whey supply and driving up ingredient costs.

Kenna MacTavish, Managing Director of Seedlab Australia, said protein has become one of the most commercially powerful claims in FMCG because consumers understand it quickly.

"Protein is the marketable macro. Consumers immediately associate it with feeling fuller, getting stronger, supporting health goals and making a product feel more functional," MacTavish said.

"That is why it appears across so many categories, from snacks and drinks to chocolate, coffee and bakery. But the question for brands is not just 'can we add protein?' It is 'does the consumer actually care about this product having protein, and does it make sense for what the product is trying to do?'"

MacTavish said the issue is not protein itself, but brands using it as a shortcut claim when it is not central to the product, audience or consumer need.

"Smaller brands can often lead with more purpose because they are usually building from a real problem or founder insight, rather than simply adding a claim because the market is paying attention," MacTavish said.

Seedlab brands such as Googys, which produces protein chocolate using egg protein, and Innerbloom Coffee show how emerging FMCG brands are approaching protein in more considered ways.

Innerbloom Coffee founder Ollie Puddick said the brand's focus has been on creating a product where protein supports the overall function, rather than overpowering the experience.

"Everyone thinks of protein as 'let's just get the most possible protein into a drink or format', but what we're seeing is that our customers appreciate the function, while flavour is what really sets the product apart.

"By not overloading the product with protein, we can still deliver a functional drink that tastes really good. It's all good and well having 40 grams of protein in a product, but if the taste doesn't deliver, people aren't going to come back for it," Puddick said.

MacTavish said brands also need to consider the commercial risk of building products around trend-led ingredients, particularly as demand for whey places pressure on supply and pricing.

"We have seen this before with ingredients that suddenly become culturally dominant, like pistachio. When demand spikes, supply and cost pressures follow, and that can become a real issue for small brands operating on tight margins," MacTavish said.

MacTavish said the stronger opportunity lies in 'value-plus' products, where consumers are looking less at what a product removes and more at what it adds.

"For a long time, better-for-you products were built around what they did not contain. But consumers are increasingly asking what a product gives them, whether that is protein, fibre, satiety, convenience, performance or a clearer functional benefit," MacTavish said.

"There will be protein fatigue if consumers feel like protein is being added to everything without much thought. The brands that will do well are the ones that can answer why protein belongs in the product, what role it plays, and why the consumer should pay attention," MacTavish said.



TASTE MODULATION TECHNOLOGY

Kerry Tastesense Masking is a precision-led taste modulation technology designed to identify and mask unwanted off-notes in protein-fortified food and beverage applications without overpowering the intended flavour.

As protein inclusion levels increase, manufacturers can encounter layered sensory challenges including bitterness, astringency, chalkiness, metallic character and lingering aftertaste. These effects vary according to the protein source, concentration, processing method and finished application. Bitterness from whey, for example, may behave differently from bitterness associated with pea or soy protein, making broad, one-size-fits-all masking approaches unreliable.

Rather than covering these effects by increasing the characterising flavour, Tastesense Masking is designed to target the specific off-note driving rejection within a formulation. Kerry combines advanced sensory evaluation, analytical investigation and receptor-based science to understand how unwanted notes develop and persist in a defined protein system. Masking solutions can then be tailored to a range of proteins, processing conditions and applications. They are also designed to withstand high-heat manufacturing conditions, helping maintain masking performance through processing at commercial scale.

This targeted approach creates a cleaner, more neutral foundation on which the desired flavour, sweetness and mouthfeel can perform as intended. It enables manufacturers to avoid unnecessary increases in flavour load, protect flavour integrity and manage cost-in-use while also reducing formulation churn during product development.

Kerry's masking flavours are created through a 100% nature-inspired process. Drawing on more than 50 years of experience in dairy science and protein fractionation, Kerry combines nature-inspired building blocks with deep protein expertise and rapid in-house application testing to select and validate customised solutions.

Tastesense Masking can be applied across dairy- and plant-based protein systems in formats including ready-to-drink shakes, clear protein beverages, extruded snacks and other nutrition-led products. The same precision-led approach can also help producers address off-notes introduced by functional ingredients such as collagen, creatine, caffeine, sweeteners, vitamins, minerals and electrolytes.

Manufacturers can also use Kerry's Tastesense Masking Simulator to select a protein type, identify its principal off-notes and explore potential masking solutions.

Kerry Taste & Nutrition (APMEA)
www.kerrygroup.com

Darren O'Sullivan, Global Portfolio Director for Taste at Kerry





COLOURED CRUMBS

Crespel & Deiters has released the Lory Crumb Colored range of coloured crumbs for breading and toppings. Made with natural colorants, the crumbs are designed to remain colour-stable during cooking and are flavour-neutral.

Available in green, pink, yellow, orange and white, they can be used individually or in combination.

From coatings for meat, poultry, fish, vegetables, cheese or plant-based products, to toppings for baked goods and snacks, the crumbs are suitable for industrial applications as well as the convenience and foodservice segments.

Crespel & Deiters
crespeldeiters.com





Right: Knick SE 558 Memosens pH Sensor has an integrated temperature detector to allow automatic temperature compensation of the pH signal during calibration and operation.

Product profile: when pH measurement becomes a production problem

In food processing, pH measurement is rarely just about obtaining a number. It can be critical to product quality, process control and consistent production. So when a pH sensor starts drifting or producing unexplained readings, the consequences can extend well beyond the instrument itself.

Traditional analog pH sensors transmit a very small, high-impedance signal from the sensor to the analyser. Along the way, moisture, electrical interference, ground loops and corroded connections can all affect the measurement. Diagnosing the problem can mean sending personnel into the plant, checking connections and potentially interrupting production.

Digital Memosens technology takes a different approach.

The measurement is converted into a digital signal at the sensor and transferred through a non-contact, inductive connection. This provides galvanic isolation and removes many of the vulnerabilities associated with conventional electrical connections. The sensor also carries its own stored information, including calibration data and operating history.

For food manufacturers, the practical benefits become particularly apparent during maintenance. Instead of calibrating a sensor at the process point, pre-calibrated Memosens sensors can be prepared in the laboratory and quickly exchanged in the plant. The used sensor can then be returned for cleaning, conditioning and recalibration – reducing intervention at the process and helping improve calibration consistency.

And the technology is not limited to pH. Memosens can also be used for ORP, conductivity and dissolved oxygen measurement, providing a common digital approach to liquid analysis.

So why are Australian plants moving away from analog pH measurement? The answer is less about adopting new technology and more about improving reliability, reducing downtime and making maintenance more predictable.

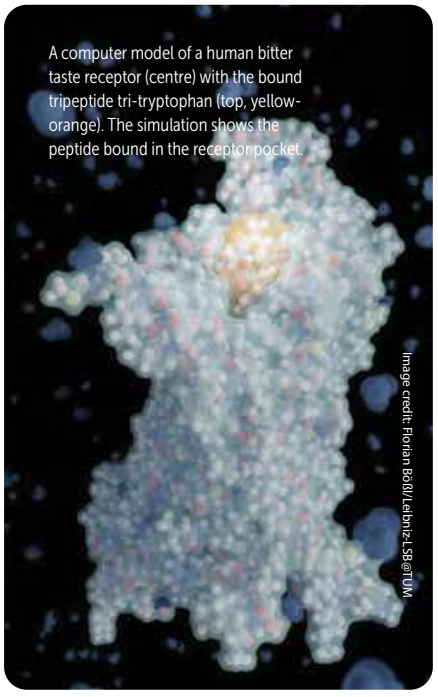
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AI for flavour research

During the production of protein powders and fermented products, such as kefir and Parmesan cheese, bitter-tasting peptides can form, which can impair the taste and thus the acceptability of the products. A research team led by the Leibniz Institute for Food Systems Biology at the Technical University of Munich has now developed and successfully tested an AI-based method that can predict the bitterness of peptides. It can also be used to design new, bitter-tasting peptides from scratch.



A computer model of a human bitter taste receptor (centre) with the bound tripeptide tri-tryptophan (top, yellow-orange). The simulation shows the peptide bound in the receptor pocket.

Image credit: Florian Böll/Leibniz-LSB@TUM

Bitter-tasting peptides are produced during the enzymatic or chemical breakdown of proteins and pose a particular challenge in the production of fermented foods or protein hydrolysates. At the same time, they can possess physiological properties that can, for example, contribute to the regulation of hunger and satiety.

"To make plant-based protein sources more attractive for food production and to use them more sustainably, we need to better understand which peptides taste bitter and what structural features characterise them. AI-based methods can also make an important contribution here," said Antonella Di Pizio, principal investigator of the current study, which also involved researchers from the Technical University of Munich and Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona.

To develop the AI-supported bioinformatics method, the team led by Di Pizio combined a protein language model — which the team had previously trained using approximately 500 known bitter-tasting peptides — with the BitterPep-GCN prediction model they had recently developed. This is a so-called graph convolutional network (GCN), a specialised form of artificial neural networks used to analyse structured data.

Based on this, the researchers first generated 161 new peptide sequences that had not yet been experimentally characterised. They then identified those candidates that, according to the model predictions, were highly likely to taste bitter or non-bitter.

They had the most promising of these peptides synthesised and then tasted by a trained sensory panel. In most cases, the AI predictions were confirmed: of the 31 peptides tested, the test subjects correctly classified 25 as bitter or non-bitter. In addition, the research team identified numerous previously unknown bitter and non-bitter-tasting peptides.

"Our results show that not only can the bitterness of peptides be predicted, but that our new AI-based method can also be used to specifically design new bitter-tasting peptides," said Alexandra Steuer, first author of the study and a doctoral student in Di Pizio's Molecular Modeling research group. "This brings us significantly closer to the goal of proactively controlling taste characteristics," Di Pizio said.

The scientist said the research is ready to be implemented in application frameworks: "In the long term, these new findings could help to specifically control the formation of bitter-tasting peptides during food production. This would be particularly relevant for plant-based, protein-rich foods, whose acceptance often suffers due to undesirable flavour notes."

The research has been published in the *Journal of Cheminformatics*.



Healthy boost for older Aussies

The Pure Food Co has developed a range of nutrient-rich smoothies designed for aged care residents. Containing 10 g of protein, 4 g of fibre, more than 25% of an older person's recommended daily calcium intake and more than 700 kJ of energy per serve, the smoothies were specifically designed to help older adults maintain their nutrition between meals. Available in 1 L cartons that can fit in a small fridge, the smoothies come in two flavours.
thepurefoodco.com/aus



ManGO beyond the fruit bowl

At just 56 calories per serve, the Frosty Fruits Mango Sorbet stick has fewer calories than a whole mango. Made with real mango puree and marbled with passionfruit sorbet made from real passionfruit juice, the treat come in a mango shape with no artificial colours or flavours.
www.peters.com.au



Freezing the strawberry matcha trend

The Connoisseur Strawberry Matcha stick has frozen one of the year's biggest drink obsessions — #strawberrymatcha. Green tea leaves are ground into a vibrant matcha powder, folded through smooth ice cream and swirled with strawberry syrup which is then encased in a layer of strawberry-flavoured pink choc.
connoisseuricecream.com.au

WHAT'S NEW

SIX ON THE SHELF

From low-cal ice blocks and healthy smoothies to meal kits and salad dressing, the latest new product developments have been designed with the approaching summer in mind for range of ages.



High-protein in a pudding

Fresh Fodder enters the chilled dessert aisle with its High Protein Pudding in three flavours, including a nostalgic collaboration with all-natural seasoning brand Mingle Seasoning, Cinnamon Donut, as well as Choc Brownie and Tiramisu. Each pudding contains 20 g of protein, no added sugar and is gluten-free.
www.freshfodder.com.au and www.mingleseasoning.com



Meal kits expand into food solutions

Meal kit provider Marley Spoon has expanded into breakfast options, single-serve ready meals, easy lunches, add-on snacks & drinks, alongside specialised ranges catering to different dietary needs, including GLP-1 support, high-protein and calorie-conscious options.
marleyspoon.com.au



Dressing up for entertaining

Birch & Waite's Gourmet Coleslaw Dressing brings a gourmet twist to classic coleslaw with a balance of tang and light sweetness. The gluten-free dressing is batch crafted in Australia for classic coleslaws or as a creamy side for BBQ or sandwiches. Available in a 250 mL bottle, it does not contain added preservatives, artificial flavours or colours.
www.birchandwaite.com



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