

“I save one person and one forklift when storing”



The storing of potatoes at Herens Koeling in Voeren (Belgium) has become much easier since last year. The company took the BF 280 box filler from Mechatec into service in 2021. This to the great satisfaction of Christophe Herens, who looks with satisfaction at the box filler when it is in action. "I am now running at double capacity and meanwhile saving on people and equipment."

Herens stores about 7.500 tons of potatoes per year. Since the company has been using the new box filler from Mechatec, this is done much easier and faster.

"We are now turning seventy to eighty to tonnes per hour. It goes twice as fast as the old box filler, where an empty box was replaced by a full one. The BF 280 runs fully automatic so I can do the work with one person and one forklift

driver less. We have bought the machine because I wanted to simplify the process. This has worked out very well", according to Christophe Herens. The BF280 at Herens Koeling is only used for storing potatoes.

Keep working

A major part of the time saving arises because the supply line does not stop during the exchange of boxes. This is possible by using an intermediate bunker with a capacity of 500 kilogrammes. Herens has an additional buffer conveyor belt for empty boxes and a conveyor belt for full boxes. "The machine is able to process eight boxes without any intervention of people", tells Herens, who indicates that for next season he will order extra buffer conveyor belts for empty and full boxes.

Nice and flat filling

Herens is also very happy with the quality of the box filler. The machine is designed very well. "You can see that it is been well thought out. Boxes are stacked and de-stacked with precision. With Dynamic Flow control an optimal filling level of the vertical conveyor belt is automatically regulated.

When filling the boxes, the potatoes will be layered very neatly on top of the other layer of potatoes.

Also, the use of the weighing and shaking system that we bought together with the box filler, we can fill the boxes very evenly flat. At 1,250 kilogrammes, the filling stops automatically.

At most a slight cone shape is created during filling. But if the box is subtly shaken back and forth by the shaking system once, the product lies nice and evenly in the box", says Herens.

Top service

The BF 280 has run completely trouble-free in its first season at Herens. In the event of a malfunction, action can be taken quickly. The machine is connected to the Internet. In case of a malfunction, a mechanic logs in remotely and can see what is wrong and if possible, solve the malfunction immediately. Herens also has spare parts from Mechatec at its disposal. 'I have agreed with Mechatec that we keep them for them. If necessary, they can then be used by other entrepreneurs in the neighbourhood who are using a machine from Mechatec. All in all, top-class service. That's important, because we can afford to have as little downtime as possible when it comes to storing.'



Box filler raises productivity of Canadian growing company

“Two hundred percent suitable for potatoes.”

Hugo d'Astous is managing director of the Canadian company Dolbec. The company is active in the growing of fruit, vegetables and potatoes. They have several BF-280 box filler machines. “We looked for information on the web and found some videos showing how the box filler and the box washer work. We were quickly convinced of the box filler because of the interchangeability of the stacker/de-stacker for the box filler and the box washer.” “This system offers flexibility and reduces costs. In addition, the boxes are filled very quickly. We have no comparable system in North America. Another advantage is that everything is easy to move from one location to another. And the last plus is that the European boxes are larger than those in America, which increases productivity.”

For d'Astous, the human aspect is very important when choosing a partnership. “Mechatec is a

company that cooperates with its customers.

The most important element in choosing a machine is the person behind its design and manufacture. At Mechatec I found people who are open, flexible, honest and respectful. Together we adapted the equipment to our needs. If there were any problems, the whole team was available to help us find solutions.

According to d'Astous, the strong points of the machine are the ability to weigh the boxes, a fast cycle time and a very limited impact on the potatoes. The connection of the machine with their ERP-system for making the boxes is also an advantage. “For this, Mechatec has modified the programme and added extra safety features. The machine is two hundred percent suitable for potatoes. These are quickly and carefully placed in the boxes so that they are not damaged. We feed the machine with two boxes

at a time, maximum four high, and we remove the boxes in pairs.”

The latest version of the machine has been upgraded to make some things even more reliable. “In our case, we filled 23,000 boxes in less than four weeks. We have four box fillers and two box washers. We work with three teams filling boxes at the same time. Since the machine works sixteen hours a day in a sandy environment, that is almost four weeks without a break.

Because in Canada we harvest just before the frost period, we cannot afford to interrupt the harvest due to a breakdown. So, we always have an extra machine to make up for that. Last year, the spare machine was not used. So, the equipment is very reliable”.

