**VIRTO GROUP once again chooses TOMRA and renews the equipment at its main plant with eleven Nimbus BSI+ sorters**

*VIRTO GROUP, the largest frozen vegetable company in Spain and one of the most important in Europe, has again put its trust in TOMRA. The company has updated its main plant in Azagra (Navarra) with eleven Nimbus BSI+ sorters. This frozen vegetable mixing, packaging, storage, and distribution center is one of the most technologically advanced in the industry.*

VIRTO GROUP continues to grow and invest in projects to ensure the superior quality of its products – even in the difficult situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic. It has updated its deep-frozen vegetable sorting plant with eleven TOMRA Nimbus BSI+ sorters. They join the 22 TOMRA optical sorters already installed in different group factories, which include Helius, Genius, Blizzard, and Sentinel II models. The Nimbus BSI+ sorter, featuring Biometric Signature Identification technology (BSI)*,* stands out for its high performance, the easy configuration when adding new programs, and its minimal false rejection rate (less than 1%).

TOMRA has proved that its technology is cutting edge and highly versatile with this installation. Although the Nimbus BSI+ had traditionally been used mainly for sorting dried fruits, once the TOMRA sales team understood VIRTO's needs, they thought it could achieve excellent results for them.

Minor modifications were made to the chassis to fit the company's sorting lines in the adaptation process. A month-long validation process was completed, which evidenced the high added value of the BSI+ technology. The eleven Nimbus BSI+ machines' installation for the eight production lines (of which three double lines for more complex products) was carried out during July, August, and September of 2020. The eleven Nimbus BSI+ machines are dedicated to the final sorting process of deep-frozen vegetables and other mixed products that the company sells to supermarket chains.

The company operates eight specialty centers in Murcia (El Raal, Santomera), Badajoz, Segovia, Zaragoza, La Rioja, and Navarre (Azagra, Cortes, Funes). It also has an international presence in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, the USA, Portugal, and Brazil. It offers a wide product range that extends beyond frozen vegetables to include pulses, fruits, vegetable mixes, rice, pasta, cereals, and other vegetable-based dishes.

**Nimbus BSI+: Maximum efficiency, minimum false rejection**

In the words of Francisco Casas, in charge of sorting at VIRTO GROUP: "We've always had good machines, but we wanted to get close to 100% efficiency. With the BSI+ technology, we achieve good results with a simple to program machine and delivers minimal false rejection. TOMRA's BSI+ technology shows great potential – and we are only at the beginning, having just completed the installation. We have a way to fulfill the units' full potential, achieving the best possible performance with the lowest possible rejection rate. The reality is that the new TOMRA units can do some things that were complicated before we had them. These machines provide a better solution to our needs."

José Antonio Baldero, Technical Manager at VIRTO GROUP, also explains why TOMRA was chosen: "Our main objective was to take a quantum leap in new technologies for foreign material sorting. More specifically, we wanted to be able to offer even better product quality to our customers. We opted for TOMRA because we saw that their BSI+ technology had greater potential and was more advanced than the competition's technology. When TOMRA loaned us a machine for testing, we saw that this was the technology that best suited our situation and specific needs – and this is true not only for the detection of foreign materials because with TOMRA's technology, we have expanded to other product specifications."

Alejandro Palacios, Area Sales Manager at TOMRA Food for Spain and Portugal, states: "We did a lot of internal tests, and we saw that this technology worked very well with deep-frozen vegetables, so we agreed with VIRTO to conduct an on-site validation. At the beginning of 2020, we gave them a Nimbus BSI+, and they tested it for a month. We were able to confirm that this equipment did everything we thought it would and that it worked really well. It was an effective technology for detecting foreign bodies and foreign plant matter (even dangerous plants like jimsonweed). Also, there was minimal false rejection. TOMRA's BSI+ technology brings added value to the frozen vegetable sector, as it achieves what other machines cannot."

**Versatile technology and traceability**

The Nimbus BSI+ works by detecting objects' biometric characteristics and is capable of removing a large number of foreign bodies and unwanted plant matter. As Francisco Casas explains: "In our case, the difficulty lies in the enormous variety and quantity of products that we have. Each product has its specific characteristics and its unique origin: plant, animal, marine. The fact that we are not working with a single product means that we have to make changes in the programming continually. That's why the ease with which the Nimbus BSI+ can be configured is an advantage for us. Fine-tuning all the programs will take a while, but we're already getting better results, especially with products that contain the more complex ingredient blends."

"As for the potential of the BSI+ technology, when we were validating the machine, we were surprised by the fact that the Nimbus was delivering very similar results when working with a single product and with ingredient blends. While the machine's behavior is already good, I am convinced that the results in the next few months will be even better. Without a doubt, this technology gives us a competitive edge," says Alejandro Palacios.

In addition to the advantages of the Nimbus BSI+, it is worth noting the further added value of TOMRA Insight. This cloud-based data platform unlocks valuable and innovative opportunities for users of TOMRA sorting machines. It turns the sorting process into a strategic management tool that allows users to make decisions based on real data collected from TOMRA units at every step of the value and production chain.

With TOMRA Insight, the machine generates data throughout the process, which is stored in the cloud. "It is one of the greatest added values of BSI+ technology. Knowing what the machine is doing will be very important when optimizing performance. It enables us to make informed decisions, such as tracing the types of foreign materials that are being discarded and determining good and bad farming areas, whether we should expand in one or the other, etc. It is a very powerful tool for real-time monitoring and decision-making to improve the business," assures José Antonio Baldero.

**Good cooperation in difficult times**

Despite the mobility difficulties due to the pandemic, TOMRA's team was present throughout the process and has followed the development of this exciting project very closely. The two companies have worked side by side in the installation and commissioning of the machines. "We have had the physical presence of TOMRA technicians, as the company sent us staff from their Belgium headquarters. We want to thank them for making this effort in such difficult times. When the mobility situation became more complicated, support was provided by TOMRA Food Spain, so there was no need to use remote assistance," states Francisco Casas.

"The situation was complicated for both parties, but the support from TOMRA has been excellent. They have paid a lot of attention to the project, so it has been a success – even with the complexities arising from COVID-19," adds José Antonio Baldero.

Alejandro Palacios concludes: "I would like to thank VIRTO for trusting TOMRA and its BSI+ technology. With them, we have proved the high level of efficiency in detecting plant matter and foreign bodies with a minimal false rejection rate. This increases the performance of deep-frozen vegetable production lines. It was a successful collaboration. We have worked very well together throughout the validation process."

**ABOUT TOMRA FOOD**

TOMRA Food designs and manufactures sensor-based sorting machines and integrated post-harvest solutions for the food industry, using the world’s most advanced grading, sorting, peeling and analytical technology. Over 8,000 units are installed at food growers, packers and processors around the world for fruits, nuts, vegetables, potato products, grains and seeds, dried fruit, meat and seafood. The company’s mission is to enable its customers to improve returns, gain operational efficiencies, and ensure a safe food supply via smart, useable technologies. To achieve this, TOMRA Food operates centers of excellence, regional offices and manufacturing locations within the United States, Europe, South America, Asia, Africa and Australasia.

TOMRA Food is a member of the TOMRA Group that was founded on innovation in 1972 that began with the design, manufacture and sale of reverse vending machines (RVMs) for automated collection of used beverage containers. Today TOMRA provides technology-led solutions that enable the circular economy with advanced collection and sorting systems that optimize resource recovery and minimize waste in the food, recycling and mining industries.

TOMRA has ~100,000 installations in over 80 markets worldwide and had total revenues of ~9,3 billion NOK in 2019. The Group employs ~4,500 globally and is publicly listed on the Oslo Stock Exchange (OSE: TOM). For further information about TOMRA, please see [www.tomra.com](http://www.tomra.com/)

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