

## Dataprocess Stevens reduces fresh produce giveaway to almost zero



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Agroleaf Limited (Newby Farm) specialise in the farming and packaging of strawberries and raspberries, selling their product to large supermarket chains.

Plant Biology graduate Chris Hoggard has been operating a commercial strawberry and raspberry farm at Huggate, East Yorkshire, since 1994, supplying large supermarket chains and smaller local farm shops with freshly grown strawberries and raspberries. In 1997 Chris won his first order from ASDA (Walmart UK) and has continued to supply them to the present day. In addition Co-Op has joined his expanding group of nationwide supermarket chains selling his delicious products. Chris has also capitalised on the 'pick your own' sites around the East Yorkshire areas of Driffield and Beverley. The company now has an annual turnover of approximately £2m. They have eight full time employees, however when the season begins they have around 30 plus employees rising to a peak of 200 plus at the height of the season.

The Stevens Group have extensive knowledge and experience in the area of fresh produce weighing across the UK and USA and the installation of the DAWS 'Vantage' (Dynamic Average Weight System) allows legal conformity of the finished packed product whilst virtually eliminating giveaway.

Operators are required to weigh each product on a scale as they are guided through an ultra responsive and quick weighing system. The six weighing systems are networked to a management PC where the traceability and yield information is stored for Average Weight conformity.

As Average Weight legislation requires that the batch average must be at least the weight of the declared weight, DAWS allows the target weights to be

continually adjusted in accordance with the legislation to ensure giveaway is reduced to 'almost zero'. The fruit and vegetable packing process has been considered to be an area of huge technological advances but despite this progress, the key part of the process - the packaging process, is still reliant on the operators and their 'personal target weights'. The inconsistent nature of fruit and vegetables in terms of weight, shape and size mean that packaging can be a complex process. Lots of packaging facilities are now packaging in accordance with the Average Weight legislation (e mark) and at the same time, making every effort to reduce giveaway. Even a few grams on each pack can produce a significant financial loss for the packaging site. In Chris Hoggard's case, he has reduced his seven per cent annual over usage to almost zero. Chris originally purchased four 'Vantage' DAWS Systems but has recently added a further 2 systems to the line as the investment was totally self financing.

The 'Vantage' DAWS System can produce an impressive range of reports, giving a detailed and instant view of the operation at any given time. Typical reporting data relates to operator performance, line efficiency, product performance plus a variety of traceability reports for legal purposes.

Chris Hoggard explains the benefits his company has seen since the implementation of the system: "In addition to providing legal compliance, traceability and stock data, Stevens have enabled us to turn our production yield goals and ambitions into reality. Like us, they are a company who pride themselves on being flexible. They took a standard product and moulded it to fit our process exactly and we're delighted with the financial improvement which DAWS has had on our bottom line."

