



Sacramento Valley Walnut Relies on Optyx[®] with Raptor to Maximize Product Quality

Sacramento Valley Walnut Growers

Sacramento Valley Walnut Growers, LLC (SVWG), a grower-owned processor and marketer of shelled walnuts, is focused on providing superior quality product. Consistently hitting high product specifications is key to their success. They recently installed Optyx® with Raptor, a sorter from Key Technology that combines lasers and color cameras on one platform to achieve the most complete sort.

“Before we selected Key, we looked at sorters from three different suppliers. We knew we wanted a laser sorter because it had to be effective in removing foreign material and shell. Two of the laser sorters we looked at did one or two things well but the Key sorter did everything well,” noted Mike Procnier, Operations Manager at SVWG. “Because Optyx with Raptor uses cameras as well as lasers, it can sort for size and shape, including detecting a broken shoulder; the others can not. And Optyx is the only one that can do a reverse sort where good product is ejected instead of bad, which helps us recover good product during re-work. These were the deciding factors. It was an easy decision.”



SVWG selected Key’s Optyx 6795 with Raptor, which features top and bottom lasers and two top-mounted color cameras inspecting product within a 48-inch wide scan area. Using color cameras, Optyx analyzes each object’s size and shape as well millions of subtle color differences to detect and remove defects. The Raptor laser reliably detects foreign matter based on differences in the structural properties of the objects. The Optyx 6000 with Raptor can sort up to 20,000 lb of walnuts per hour.

“Shelled walnuts are graded by size, color, and shell count,” explained Procnier. “With our old sorter, we incurred greater hand sorting costs to achieve our desired specs, with the Key we have been able to set higher specifications for customers that require them. At the same time the lasers are looking for shells, fibers, membranes, and other foreign material, the cameras inspect color, size, and shape. In addition to detecting defects, the cameras allow us to identify broken shoulders so our halves are both cleaned and sized in one pass through the sorter.



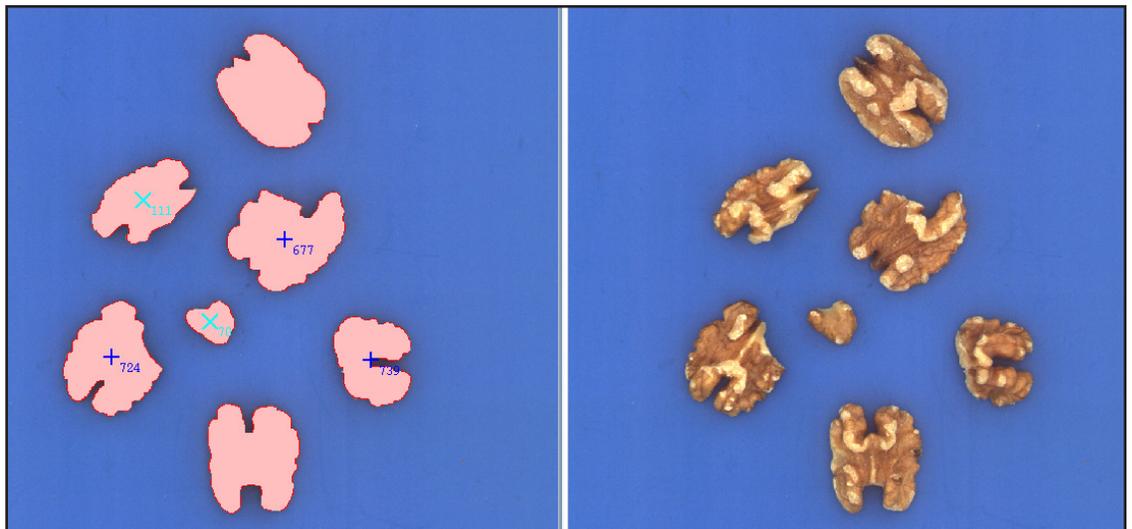


“Breakage was a serious problem with our old sorter. To make grade, we had to send the product through four times, then follow that up with hand sorting. The problem with that approach, in addition to it hurting productivity, is that every time we turned a bin through the old sorter, walnuts would slam against metal and break,” noted Proconier. “With Optyx, we’re producing product that is five times cleaner in one pass. One person can sort three to four times more product

in the same amount of time and we’re not destroying our walnuts in the process. Not only are we turning the bins less, but product slides through the new sorter without breaking.

“We try to pack to one specification as long as we can, but changing is easy enough to do on Optyx. It only takes one minute. It’s so user friendly, my four year old could do it,” said Proconier. “Overall, in terms of operation, maintenance, and sanitation, this is the easiest piece of equipment. The only thing we have to do is clean the lenses.”

“With Optyx, we’re more efficient with fewer people and we’re getting better product. Our growers are happy because the quality we’re producing is opening doors to new business opportunities,” concluded Proconier. “Having the right people, good growers and good nuts allows us to preach about quality.”



Optyx image of walnuts demonstrating shape and size sorting.

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