

Ventura Foods Manufacturing Automates Pallet Handling

Automatic Guided Vehicles Improve Throughput at California Facility

Ventura Foods, LLC made the decision to consolidate three of its Southern California plants into one, moving operations to its new 675,000 sq ft facility located in Ontario, California in the fall of 2007.



Ventura Foods processes a broad range of branded and private label products. With several plants strategically located throughout the U.S., Ventura Foods specializes in manufacturing a select group of related products including edible oils, shortenings, dressings, margarine, sauces and flavor bases. The Webb Company was asked by Ventura Foods to review its operations and conduct a feasibility study that would provide recommendations on how to achieve Ventura's goals to reduce operating costs, streamline processes and increase productivity.



The feasibility study determined the most efficient method to move Finished Goods from production to the warehouse (1400 ft) while comparing conveyors, forklifts and Automatic Guided Vehicles (AGVs). The study also consisted of equipment layouts, equipment quantities, time studies and pros and cons of each option. Webb recommended automating the plant warehouse by utilizing AGVs for several reasons – no building modifications required, additional AGVs can be added at anytime, path is flexible and easy to modify, the software simplifies future expansion

and integrates with WMS, and the AGV choice provides continuous service throughout. Overall, AGVs will save Ventura Foods labor hours, allow flexibility of changing layout and minimize floor space.





“We came into Ontario with the understanding that this is going to be a nightmare so we better start with it, so we did. The only thing I can say if we didn’t have them (AGVs) there would be a lot more traffic and lot more potential safety issues,” said Tom Rochester, maintenance operator, Ventura Foods LLC.

Ventura Foods uses AGVs in a basic set up, moving from point A (spot drop off) to point B (other AGVs). The system operates in two shifts (16 hours a day) and moves about 200 million pounds each year. The system includes five AGVs with dual-load roller beds and one fork-style AGV. The dual-load AGVs transport two

2,500-pound pallets of salad dressings and oils one quarter of a mile to a temporary storage area. The fork-style AGV moves single pallets from the production line to the stretch wrapper. Ventura Foods now has the latest technology in automation while also solving their challenges they were previously having.

“There is a point where there’s a huge improvement in cost savings that goes with the Automatic Guided Vehicle,” said Tom Rochester, maintenance operator, Ventura Foods LLC. “Assuming the scope of project is large enough, it makes a lot sense to go with AGVs.”

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- Tom Rochester, Maintenance Operator