



Sacramento Valley Walnut Growers

invest to meet uppermost quality and safety standards

Bühler has long been a leading provider of expertise and exceptional optical sorting solutions to California's top quality nut processing businesses. They rely on Sortex solutions to achieve outstanding sort quality that can meet the most stringent international standards.

Another key reason for Bühler's success is the unrivalled flexibility of its optical sorters, which means they can quickly and easily be adjusted to suit seasonal product variation. Processors can also gain from split configuration, with each machine module able to perform different tasks as required. This can save sorting businesses a lot of money, because greater flexibility means they need to invest in fewer sorters.



Sacramento Valley Walnut Growers, LLC

The same technology and know-how, that has transformed the almond industry, is now enabling Bühler to win customers and loyal advocates among the Golden State's foremost walnut processors, with Sacramento Valley Walnut Growers (SVWG) being a prime example.

Its state-of-the-art processing facility in Yuba City is in the heart of one of California's largest walnut-producing regions. "We are a grower-owned business processing and marketing walnuts for growers throughout California," explains CEO, Keith Wehri. "We sort seven varieties of walnuts for export and sale in the US, whether in-shell walnuts or walnut kernels."

Wehri's 30-year career began in seed processing, before he moved into nuts, and for most of that time he's used Sortex sorters. "Sortex has always been at the cutting edge of sorting technologies for as long as I've known them," he recalls. "Their machines are highly dependable; their performance is unbeatable; and their camera technology is far superior. But Bühler is so much more than a machine manufacturer: they're a partner that we value and trust."

Matter of quality

Most recently, SVWG has invested in Bühler's best-in-class Sortex F Series optical sorters – running four simultaneous and independently controlled sorting operations on only two sorters – while also using a SORTEX E to ensure excellent quality and safety.

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Creating long-lasting partnerships.



"Once the nuts arrive at our optical sorters, typical remaining foreign material includes small fragments of shell, the fibre that holds the walnut halves together or small debris from the field, which are all removed," Wehri explains. "Nuts can also be defective, either because they're shrivelled due to lack of water or they're too dark because of sunburn. These, too, are removed."

Although consistently high sort quality is required, standards can vary from market to market, as Wehri explains: "US Department of Agriculture specs allow for some shell, but in Japan and Korea, only very low shell counts are permitted. We must achieve a sort quality of no more than five pieces of shell per tonne to sell in the Far East, where product will be double-checked by hand. In Japan, an entire container of walnuts – not just a sample – may be checked by hand. If you fail that test, you can lose a customer and seriously damage your reputation."

Key business benefits

SVWG is a year round supplier of walnuts. "Because customers keep demanding higher and higher quality, we must continue to invest in the very best technology," Wehri stresses.

Helping to also set SVWG apart from its competitors is its use of a natural pasteurisation system, making it one of only half a dozen processors in the whole walnut industry to have one. "We pasteurize our own kernels as requested and provide it as a service to other handlers. Pasteurization is not mandated, but more and more customers are requiring it and it's a critical step in food safety, and our commitment to responding to our customers' needs."

SVWG sets itself apart from its competitors in three key ways, says Wehri. "We're grower-owned, so we understand the needs of other growers. And our focus on food safety is second to none. Thirdly, we're totally committed to quality. We want to ensure that customers get the quality they need each and every time – no matter which international market we sell to."

Rising to the challenge

SVWG has been using sorting technology for over a decade. It's a strategy that has ensured that sort quality has increased dramatically, while costs have decreased significantly. "Historically, we've tested and tried many types of technology, but we've found SORTEX to be far superior."

"The camera systems are amazing and they can easily be adjusted to take care of new, seasonal or more challenging defects. When it comes to detection, SORTEX sorters can do things that competitor machines simply cannot do."

Wehri also describes the sorters as "very easy to operate, adjust and clean". Moreover very little training is required to use them. "And – they're ultra-reliable, which is crucial to our business," he stresses.

"We also have a great relationship with Westlink [Bühler's local representative and distributor]: they're available any time we call. Their service team is the best – they offer superb customer support. I've been working with SORTEX optical sorting technology over 20 years, and during that time I've given it many challenges. But it's never failed to deliver. I've long been a big fan," he smiles.

Contact Us

If you have any questions or would like to find out more Bühler's SORTEX experts are available in your region to give you advice on how to improve your productivity and your profit with our highly efficient line of optical sorters.

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