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Packing perfection

Red Rich Fruits has geared up its new state-of-the-art packhouse to provide improved efficiency and greater quality control to its expanding operation.

by Matthew Jones

Leading Australian fresh fruit company Red Rich Fruits has opened its new, purpose-built packing and distribution centre in Coldstream, Victoria.

The 12,000m² facility – which will primarily be used to handle apples and pears – has the capacity to pack 50,000 bins of fruit each year, doubling the company's packing capacity in the region, while creating new employment opportunities.

The fit-out includes Maf Roda's Globalscan G7 optical grader (see

p28), a 13-lane water pre-sizer, internal defect sorter, and a speed packer for apple punnets.

More than just the sum of its parts, the walled structure itself is at the cutting-edge of innovation. Constructed by Swan Hill-based group Entegra, the facility's internal width measures 80 metres, with not one internal post propping it up.

"To the best of our knowledge this is the largest clear-span building in Australia in the horticultural industry. Eliminating the need for

posts inside buildings like this maximises the usable space and provides absolute flexibility for adjustments to the layout of plant and equipment at any time," says Entegra's operations manager, Laurie McCalman.

"Clear-spanning is Entegra's specialty, we have been raising the bar now for 35 years and are ready for the next challenge."

Red Rich Fruits' owner and director, Michael Napoleone, says the new facility will further improve the company's ability to supply consistently high-quality product as it moves into the future.

"Our commitment to quality, reliability and customer satisfaction has been at the heart of everything we do at Red Rich Fruits since we planted our first orchards in Wandin in 1948," says Napoleon. "Our new facility and state-of-the-art equipment will enable us to pack more fruit faster, while improving on quality, as the business continues to grow."

Built on a greenfield site along the Maroondah Highway, the facility neighbours the company's main apple, pear and stonefruit orchard blocks. The land skirting the perimeter of the packhouse will soon be planted to the WA38 apple cultivar (marketed as Cosmic Crisp, see p34).

It's also within a short drive of the company's



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previous packhouse facility in Wandin, which will remain operational for the foreseeable future.

To help promote traceability and improve tracking across its whole operation, Red Rich Fruits is utilising FreshPack software developed by New Zealand-based group Radfords.

"We're proud to help enable the Red Rich Fruits team through our FreshPack software to leverage its wider investment in technology, not only at the Coldstream site, but also to deliver efficiencies whilst boosting accuracy and traceability of inventory across all sites," says Radfords' chief executive Adam Cuming.

"In turn, this will contribute toward Red Rich Fruits' goal to build stronger relationships with customers and growers alike."

(PICTURE 01 & 02) The clear-span structure was built by Swan Hill-based group Entegra
PHOTOS: Entegra

(PICTURE 03 & 04) The facility has the capacity to pack up to 50,000 bins of fruit per year

(PICTURE 05) Apples and pears continue to be core lines for Red Rich Fruits

(PICTURE 06) Michael Napoleone (right) with his son Jack



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ENTEGRA

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