

# DS Smith helps Stoffels Tomato Farm Achieve More Efficient Self-service, Greater Convenience & Improved Hygiene on the Shop Floor

*In 20 years, Stoffels Tomato Farm in Rijkevorsel has grown into one of the most modern tomato farms in Belgium. The company not only harvests colourful and tasty tomatoes, but also receives praise for the unique character of the crop and the innovative way in which the assortment is marketed.*

In 2016, Stoffels received the Innovation Award at Fruit Logistica in Berlin for Automato, their latest invention. According to Petra Stoffels-Veldman, co-owner of the successful family business, the Automato is the result of good common sense and a keen eye for trends in the retail landscape. "Years ago we noticed that consumers were looking for more self-service in the supermarket, and since then a lot has changed in this area. Now you can select your own sweets, and fruit juices can often be fresh-pressed in the store. Other notable trends include the growing interest in healthy food and 'the rise of the vending machines' - all of this lead us to the idea for the Automato."

## **Hygiene on the shop floor**

The Automato has been specially developed for cherry tomatoes and is extremely easy to use. The Automato is based on the Pick & Mix principle: you can determine how many cherry tomatoes you buy and from which colour. One twist of the Automato wheel causes six



tomatoes to fall into a cup (and, therefore, not on the ground!). The dispenser consists of several units, each containing its own colour of cherry tomatoes. "The choice is yours," says Stoffels. "And this all happens in a hygienic manner. The tomatoes in the Automato are packed in a special Toma'box, so no one touches them with their fingers. Unfortunately, this is often not the case with other fresh produce. At Stoffels, however, we have very strict food safety requirements and with the Automato we are now also setting the standard for this on the shop floor.

### **Simple refilling in the store**

Refilling the Automato is simple and hygienic. "You simply change the Toma'box dispenser", says Stoffels. "These can also be taken home by the consumer in its entirety and placed as a home dispenser in the kitchen or on the table. Tomatoes as tasty, healthy snacks are quickly gaining in popularity, even for children."

### **Successful thanks to DS Smith's PackRight Centre**

The packaging of the tomatoes was vital to get the Automato practical and working. Stoffels continues, "We spoke to a number of packaging strategists and DS Smith

was the best, especially in terms of the decisive thinking power of DS Smith's packaging experts. In collaboration with their PackRight Centre, our team of product developers created this handy dispenser, which refills the tomatoes in the Automato, and also looks great at home on the countertop."

Jan Vandewalle, Manager of DS Smith's PackRight Centre, is also enthusiastic about the collaboration with Stoffels, "This is an example of a project where the full insight of the supply chain and thus the expertise of our packaging designers is shown to their full advantage. "The dual function of the Toma'Box was the challenge here: it had to fit well into the Automato, but at the same time had to have a totally different function if taken home and used by the consumer. Very technical functions must be combined with ease of use for the final consumer alongside an aesthetic product presentation.

