

SYSTECH GASPACE ANALYSER SAVES THE BACON

Tulip International's Cooked Meats Division at Thetford, Norfolk is one of the largest producers of pre-packed bacon in the UK. Part of the Danish Bacon Farmers' Cooperative, Tulip has 23% of the £13M UK bacon market. Every week, the Thetford plant converts 800 tonnes of bacon into 1.5 million packs of rashers to be sold under its own Danepack brand and supermarket own label brands.



Although some of the output is vacuum packed, around 60% is packed in rigid, modified atmosphere packs (MAP) because the product looks more attractive and is easier to display and store. With the automatic slicing and packing equipment producing a 200 gram, MAP pack every two seconds, it is essential that the nitrogen and carbon dioxide atmosphere in the packs is maintained within specification at less than 0.3% oxygen. To ensure that all production is within specification, between three and eight packs, depending on pack size, are tested at start-up and then every hour using SysTech Gaspace 2 headspace gas analysers. If the oxygen content of the gas mix atmosphere is out of specification, the whole of the previous hour's production has to be repacked.

Tulip's Quality Auditor, Brian Viccars, says, "Gaspace 2 is the ideal instrument for the job as the test is simply a matter of inserting the probe into the pack and pressing a button. The result, shown in less than five seconds on the LED display, gives the percentage of oxygen, carbon dioxide and nitrogen and needs no interpretation. It's either in spec or it's not."

With its 23% of the UK market to protect, Tulip cannot afford to take chances with quality and, according to Senior Technical Manager, Richard Weal, the six SysTech Gaspace 2 instruments are a vital part of the company's quality assurance regime.

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