

Meeting sector's needs

► Hugh de Lacy

Offering a complete service, from design through to the factory production of machinery for the fruit sector, is the point of difference for Hastings company CR Automation.

The company specialises in industrial automation across a variety of industries, and post-harvest technology for clients that grow and pack a range of fruits, including apples, kiwifruit, citrus, stone fruit, avocados and berries, and typical of its products is the high-pressure apple washer used by many of the large apple exporters. The apple washer removes apple moth curling midges and other pests from the fruit, enabling it to be sold into the high-value overseas markets.

But that's just one of CR Automation's products, with another highly successful machine being its end-of-the-line palletising system, incorporating a single ABB Industrial robot that can be adapted to any existing plant, product or throughput rate, giving it the ability to service a range of product lines with high machine outputs on a small footprint.

There is also a multi-produce brush bed system, believed to be the most hygienic and cost-effective of its kind in the world.

"We can offer a complete turn-key system by providing our modular products with engineered and automated solutions," CR Automation chief executive Perry Field says.

"Other companies can offer design or production facilities, but we're able to produce the complete package, from conception and design right through to installation in the client's packing-house.

"We're then able to support our harvest solutions with regular servicing and maintenance, and also upgrade existing systems

to ensure the operation meets the changing needs of businesses."

CR Automation is based in a 1000sqm factory, supported by a 500sqm office block, in the Hastings suburb of Makora, with a staff of 30.

"Our strength is that we're able to consult with our clients, who often have a problem or process they want to improve but don't know how to go about it," Perry says.

"One example of this is the machine safety assessment service that we offer to help companies manage compliance with machine safety standards.

"We like to spend time with our clients, getting to know and understand their particular requirements, and then to produce customised machines that make their operations more efficient."

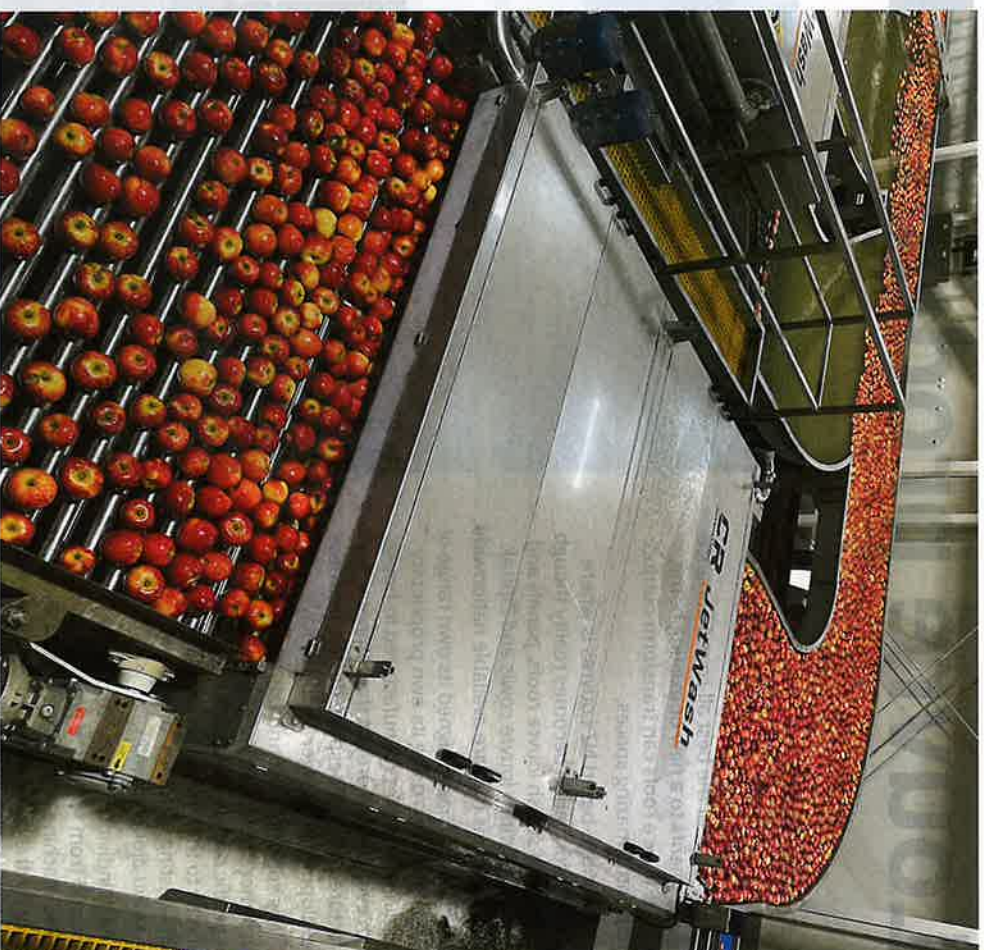
CR Automation sells its post-harvest products to fruit producers all round the country, and it is developing an export market in Australia in association with J-Tech Industries in Albury, between New South Wales and Victoria.

As yet, the export part of the business is in its infancy, but the company expects to build steadily on this over the years.

J-Tech is owned by New Zealand's Jenkins Group, which is also half-owner of CR Automation, founded 22 years ago by business partners Peter Richards and John Crossman.

Peter took full ownership of the company in 2016 and rebranded it to CR Automation. In addition, 2016 saw the establishment of a Mechatronics team bringing in mechanical designers, fitters, procurement and management personnel.

Today Peter continues to serve as sales director while Perry manages the overall business.



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