



Case Study

Barcode Printing with
Pouch Feeder and
Thermal Transfer Printer



Biltong Company Customises Pouches with Offline Coding System From PrintSafe



Cruga, part of the MeatSnacks Group, is Europe's largest biltong producer. It processes between eight and nine tonnes of fresh beef silverside every week, supplying around eight million bags of biltong each year to the major supermarket retailers. It also packs Jerky for its partner company, The Jerky Group.

A KBA-Metronic feeding system, fitted with an ICE Zodiac thermal transfer printer is helping the company to improve production efficiency and reduce packaging costs.

Cruga Biltong was founded in 1998 when owner, David Low, started producing premium biltong to an authentic South African recipe. Since then, the biltong market has evolved from a South African niche area to a significant segment of the UK meat snacks market.

In 2014, Cruga took the decision to put its product into pouches, replacing its Vertical Form Fill & Seal (VFFS) packaging machines with two pouch fillers provided by its long-term machinery supplier.

To reduce packaging costs, Cruga uses a range of generic pouches that it overprints with a barcode

and data denoting product-specific information. This gives it the flexibility to respond to changes in customer orders while minimising wastage.

“We needed...to convert our generic packaging for specific products”

When using the previous VFFS system, Cruga was able to print this information on to the film before filling. David Low explains: “With the change in packaging machinery, it was not possible to do this. We could print date, batch and time information with inkjet printers integrated in the pouch fillers, but barcodes could not be printed to the standard required.

“We needed a separate printer that would allow us to convert our generic packaging for specific products.”

David explains: “Our Engineering Manager found the udaFORMAXX and visited PrintSafe where they successfully tested a range of pouch types and sizes. He was impressed by the build quality and simplicity of operation.”

The udaFORMAXX is available with two different feeding mechanisms – a narrow belt-grip or wide conveyor belt.

Cruga is using the narrow-belt model, where the pouches are fed past the thermal transfer printer using a tight grip belt conveyor to ensure that there is no pouch movement. In addition the pack is paused briefly so that it is stationary at the moment of printing, increasing accuracy and reducing wear on the print head.



// -...a top quality printer unit that can print thousands of pouches per hour with virtually no rejects and operated by only one operator. //

“The machine grips the pouch firmly along one side”

David says: “These two factors made all the difference. The machine grips the pouch firmly along one side and prints while stationary.

Add to this the build quality and ease of use, and you have a top quality printer unit that can print thousands of pouches per hour with virtually no rejects and operated by one operator.”



PrintSafe supplied the system fitted with an ICE Zodiac thermal transfer printer.

David explains that there are a number of operational advantages: “The pouch feeders are fast and reliable. Alongside the feeding mechanism and build quality, there are countless other benefits. One of these is the ease-of-use of the ICE Zodiac thermal transfer printer. Our non-English-speaking operators have absolutely no problem running the machines. My experience with other thermal transfer printers is that you need a PHD in maze solving just to change the ribbon. With the ICE Zodiac, you just drop the ribbon spool in and off you go.”

“The touchscreen control is also excellent. It even tells you on a readout how much ribbon you have got left so that you can plan changeover.”

“The pouch feeders are fast and reliable”

Confident in the long-term performance, Cruga has since placed

an order for a second machine. David says: “Our operators are extremely happy. With the udaFORMAXX; wastage is negligible and I am confident that one operator will easily be able to run two printers.”

“Our operators are extremely happy”

Fast Facts

- KBA-Metronic udaFORMAXX feeding system with ICE Zodiac thermal transfer printer
- Printing product-specific bar codes to customise generic pouches
- Thousands of pouches per hour
- Accurate placement and high-quality print

About PrintSafe

PrintSafe is a coding and marking specialist serving manufacturing companies throughout the UK and Ireland with a comprehensive range of coding equipment and after-sales services. PrintSafe is the UK distributor for KBA-Metronic GmbH. As the UK specialist in offline coding and labelling systems, PrintSafe has helped hundreds of customers to cut the cost of handling products and packaging that cannot be coded or labelled within main production.

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