Versatile lupins on the rise
A high-speed, flexible robotic packing solution helps an Australian food manufacturer meet rising global demand.

Text & Photos: ABB

A round the world, lupins – part of the legume family that includes the likes of soybeans, peas and lentils – are experiencing incredible growth in consumer demand. They are a rich natural source of protein and fiber, are easily digestible, cholesterol-free and provide a convenient and healthy option for consumers who have celiac disease or simply want to follow a gluten-free diet.

In Australia, lupins play a vital role in the ecological balance of agriculture. West Australian manufacturer, Lupin Foods Australia, specializes in a range of foods based on Australian sweet lupin, which has been developed to meet the growing demand.

Lupin Foods Australia, a wholly-owned subsidiary of global farmer cooperative CBH Group, now exports packaged lupin
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"We feel we have been able to provide a reliable and flexible system that not only allows the customer to keep their costs down, but truly offers the ability to be tailored to the client’s needs," says Woodhouse.

“Accessing high-quality food manufacturing labor has traditionally been a real challenge for us in Western Australia. However, using the solution we’ve developed around the robot, training is now simple. While it has given us the ability to reduce our labor requirements, we have also been able to mitigate health and safety risks associated with lifting 20 kilogram bags – because injuries to staff are the last thing we’d ever want,” he adds.

Robotic Solutions WA specializes in robot-based automation solutions for palletizing, materials handling, assembly, welding, painting and inspection in a variety of manufacturing sectors. The company offers in-house system design, engineering, manufacturing and testing facilities, and also provides all necessary training, technical support and aftersales service.

Robotic Solutions WA Director, David Woodhouse says the company has been an ABB Authorized value provider for eight years.

“We only use ABB robots. They’re very reliable, and there’s a huge range which makes selecting a robot for any application very easy.”

David Woodhouse, Robotic Solutions WA Director

Lupin Foods Australia also required a high-speed, efficient system with the capacity to adapt as the business grew.

“We developed a solution that allows us to produce 900 20-kilogram bags per hour, and stack them in such a way as to minimize our freight costs. The system has allowed us to remove wooden pallets from our process entirely, and therefore take advantage of the full capacity of our shipping containers. It also eliminates damage to our bags,” Fienberg says.

Lupin Foods Australia has enjoyed a number of operational improvements since employing the ABB robot, including increased packing speed and productivity, mitigation of health and safety risks and simplified worker training.

“The ABB robot is very quick, its maintenance is extremely low, and the addition of PLCs makes it really simple to use. The equipment is reliable, and we are able to adapt it to the business as we go,” says Fienberg.

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Click here to see the solution at Lupin Foods, Australia.