

AFA Systems Ships New Stick Pack Cartoner

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AFA Systems Ltd (www.afasystemsinc.com) has developed a new cartoner with unique innovations designed to handle product in stick packs. The MK-STK Intermittent Motion Stick Pack Cartoner includes features that maximize efficiency and product presentation. Share

In development for several years, the machine was recently shipped to Nature's Sunshine for packaging the Solstic Energy drink mix, says Eric Langen, sales and marketing representative, AFA Systems.

An on-demand rotary feeder accurately places cartons onto a main conveyor which transfers them to the loading area of the cartoner, which is integrated with a stick pack filling machine.

The MK-STK features a Subo Automation two-axis gantry robot that suction-picks the stick packs from an eight-lane conveyor, and groups them into a loading chamber for end-loading into a standard carton.

The robot can be programmed to handle any product count. Product can be transferred to a staging platform as the robot only releases product needed to complete a given count.

In grouping packs to the loading chamber, the gantry robot creates a neater presentation of the sticks in the carton, as well as supports efficiency. "(The robot) ensures the product is on pitch so when it is pushed into the carton there are no catch points. In a system where you are just dropping the sticks into a bucket you lose control of the stick packs and risk them getting jammed in the carton," Langen says.



Overhead confiners keep packs in place in the loading funnel. In a patented Sure-Load Carton Closing System, a series of walls keep the open face of the carton closed, ensuring that product counts remain in the carton during machine indexing.

"When you are intermittently indexing light (weight) product at higher speeds, our experience has been that product can fall out. The Sure-Load Carton Closing System remedies that concern," Langen says.

After a cylinder closing system seals cartons after glue application, loaded cartons move to a check weigher with auto reject system. Nature's Sunshine is packaging a 90-count carton with one loader pushing product to one carton. Two loaders push product into two cartons for the customer's 28 and 30 count sizes.

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