

PACIFIC BUSINESS NEWS

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New assembly line for Island Princess

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The Honolulu food company **Island Princess** has acquired a new high-speed packaging machine and hired 10 more employees to roll out new product lines.

The machine is called a VFFS, which stands for "Vertical Form, Fill and Seal." Produced by Hayssen Co., it takes a flat roll of film, stamps it into a tube, then after the tube is filled with product it cuts the tubes into segments and seals them into bags. It can produce two bags of macadamia nuts per second, cutting costs and dramatically increasing capacity.

"We can produce in one hour, and at half speed, what we used to package by hand in one day," said **Island Princess President Michael Purdy**. "A lot of our business is for export and the snack market is highly competitive."

The new assembly line also includes scales by the Japanese machinery company Yamato which maintains the desired weight of each bag within a tolerance of less than a tenth of a gram. Food is fed on a dual split conveyers, allowing the option of putting two kinds of product into one bag.

A solid steel mezzanine that completely surrounds the upper part of the machine was built by Island Princess' own machine shop staff. The cost of all the new equipment was approximately half a million dollars.

The first new product line launched with the machine -- actually a collection of products -- is half-ounce bags of macadamia nuts in six flavors: lightly salted, Maui onion, curry, nori, sweet chili and honey roasted. Half-ounce bags are the size of free snacks handed out on airplanes.

"We could not have launched the new product without this brand new high-tech bagging machine," Purdy said. "In fact, the huge jump in our production capabilities required the hiring of 10 new employees."

The **Island Princess** factory, which has an outlet store attached, is on Ualena St. in Mapunapuna. The equipment in the new bagging line was built exclusively for this factory, based on the company's product specifications and the specific space limitations in the factory.

"The process of purchasing the equipment line took nearly a full year from the time of contacting the various suppliers to the time of actual installation and start up," Purdy said.

Island Princess has gotten orders from the 250-store Mainland chain Cost Plus for 2.5 oz. Flavored Macadamia Nuts and

Wasabi Macadamia Nuts and Purdy said two Japanese importers are now looking at products that will come off the new assembly line.