

# Pick of the crop for SA as TFI brings in hi-tech help

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QUALITY SA potatoes will get to market quicker after a multimillion-dollar investment by Thomas Foods International.

The company recently unveiled its new Spectrim potato grading line, which is part of major enhancements to its Penfield Gardens-based production facility.

Thomas Foods International Fresh Produce chief executive Rod Knight said the multimillion-dollar Compac potato sorting and grading technology would help supermarket retailers, and the company's export partners, deliver the most accurately graded potatoes into the hands of consumers. "The fully-automated Compac sorting machine offers a maximum production capacity of 45 tonnes per hour," he said.

"The streamlined sorting and packaging time frame enables delivery to SA-based retail distribution centres on the very same day they are processed.

"It also allows us to sort, pack and deliver potatoes to Victoria and New South Wales overnight and as quick as two days to Queensland."

The upgraded facility at Penfield Gardens features a 12-lane Compac sorter with Spectrim grading technology, advanced packing equipment and automated pallet weighing, packing and wrapping processes.

Spectrim, with nine cameras on each of the 12 lanes, inspects each potato using multiple colour and infra-red wavelengths. The hi-tech grading technology means each potato is scanned for even minor damage, such as early rots or bruises, which has been difficult for the industry to detect using previous technologies or the naked eye.

"More than 200 images of every potato are taken by Spectrim sensors and cameras," Mr Knight said.

"The increased grading accuracy has benefits for our supply chain by enabling us to expand our previous quality control reporting. This information can then be used to provide detailed defect and yield information to assist farm planning and agronomy."

Thomas Foods International Fresh Produce processes more than 60,000 tonnes of potatoes a year, which are then sent to Coles, Woolworths and other major distribution centres across Australia, along with the export market.



PERFECT PICK: Primary Industries Minister Tim Whetstone with Thomas Foods' Rod Knight and Tomray Compac's Damien Gibson.