



Project Autopack Summary

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Rialtas na hÉireann
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Cómhainithe ag an
Aontas Eorpach

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Project Aim:

This project focused on technologies aimed at automating the post-pack end-of-line stages of retail-oriented seafood product manufacturing (as shown in figure 1). This was identified as a processing stage for the Irish seafood sector which could benefit from automation. Automation solutions were researched and information and insights on automation solutions are provided in the report. Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) gathered industry feedback and engaged directly with equipment and technology suppliers to identify the most relevant solutions.

Introduction:

The Irish seafood sector has faced significant labour challenges in recent years and according to a survey conducted by Price Waterhouse Cooper (PWC) Ireland, 50% of food producers list labour shortages as a continuing threat for future businesses growth (PWC Ireland, 2023). One of the main issues has been shortages of skilled and experienced workers, particularly in the processing sector. This has been attributed in part to competition for labour from other sectors, as well as the impact of Brexit and COVID-19 on the availability of workers (Collins, 2022). In addition to the shortage of skilled workers, the sector has also struggled with high levels of staff turnover and difficulties in attracting and retaining workers in remote and rural areas where many seafood processing plants are located.

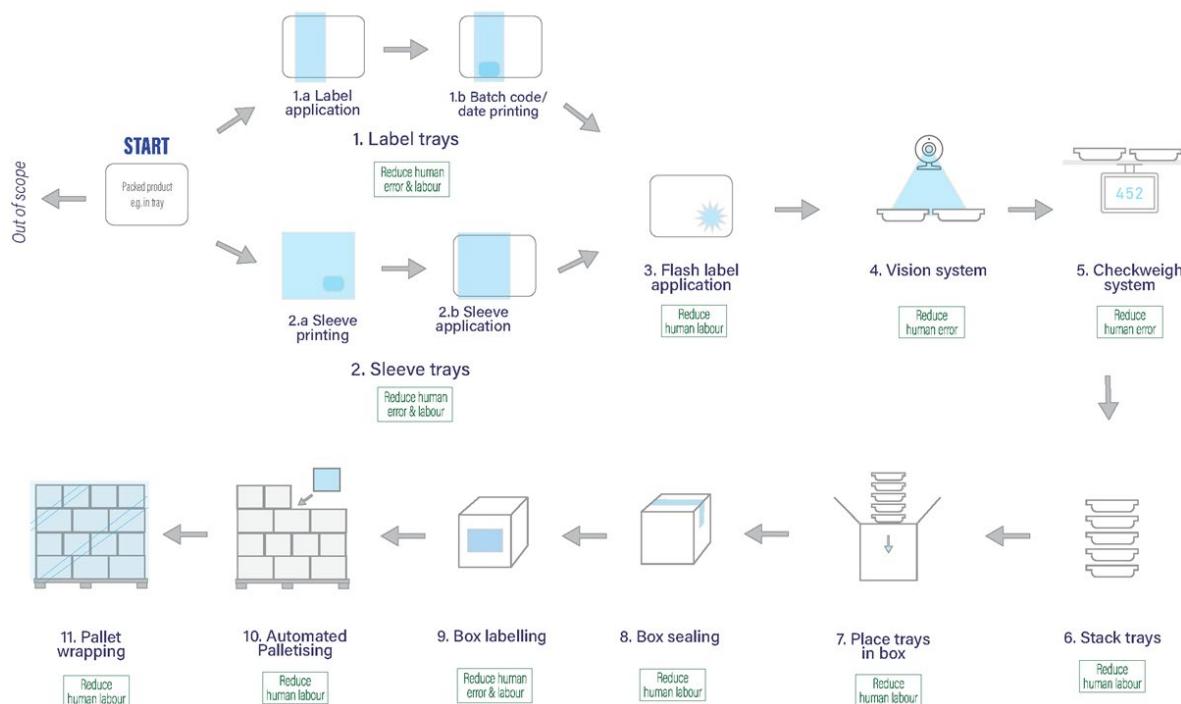
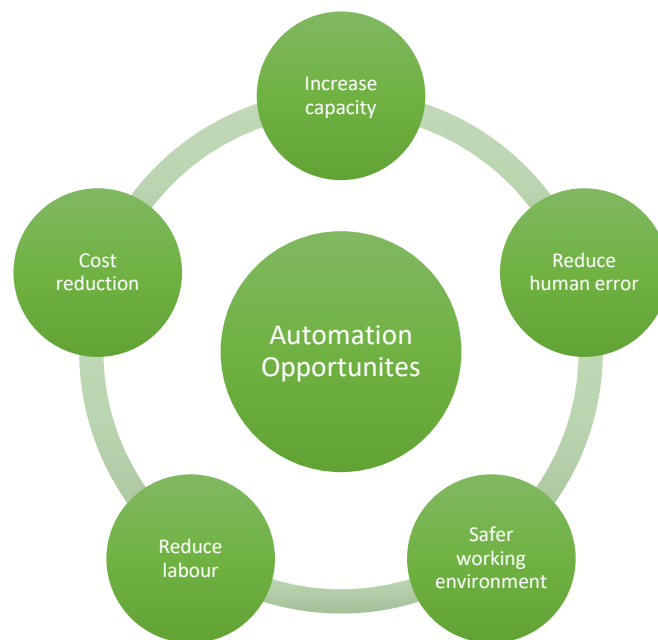


Figure 1 A typical post pack process for retail seafood products

Mislabelling is also challenge for companies as they can cause both financial and reputational damage. While there could be any number of causes, even with a double sign off check with production and quality, mislabelling errors can make it on to finished product. This can cause dispatch delays, lost time for rectification if caught before leaving the site, retail customer complaints and even product recalls if it reaches the retail shelf.

Automation and technology can be a solution to help seafood processors to address labour shortage and mislabelling issues as well as increasing capacity, potentially reducing production costs and creating a safer working environment for staff.



Report Sections:

This report is divided into different sections.

- **Section One:** An overview of the current constraints affecting seafood processors in relation to packaging.
- **Section Two:** An overview of post-pack automation solutions and the associated technologies are outlined, including solutions for each step. This is not a definitive list of solutions and other solution providers are available.
- **Section Three:** Detailed investment parameters are outlined which should be considered prior to integrating any potential technology into a facility.

If you are interested in discussing these technologies further or if you wish to seek support in developing a specific business case, contact the Seafood Innovation Hub at info@bim.ie or 01 2144100.

