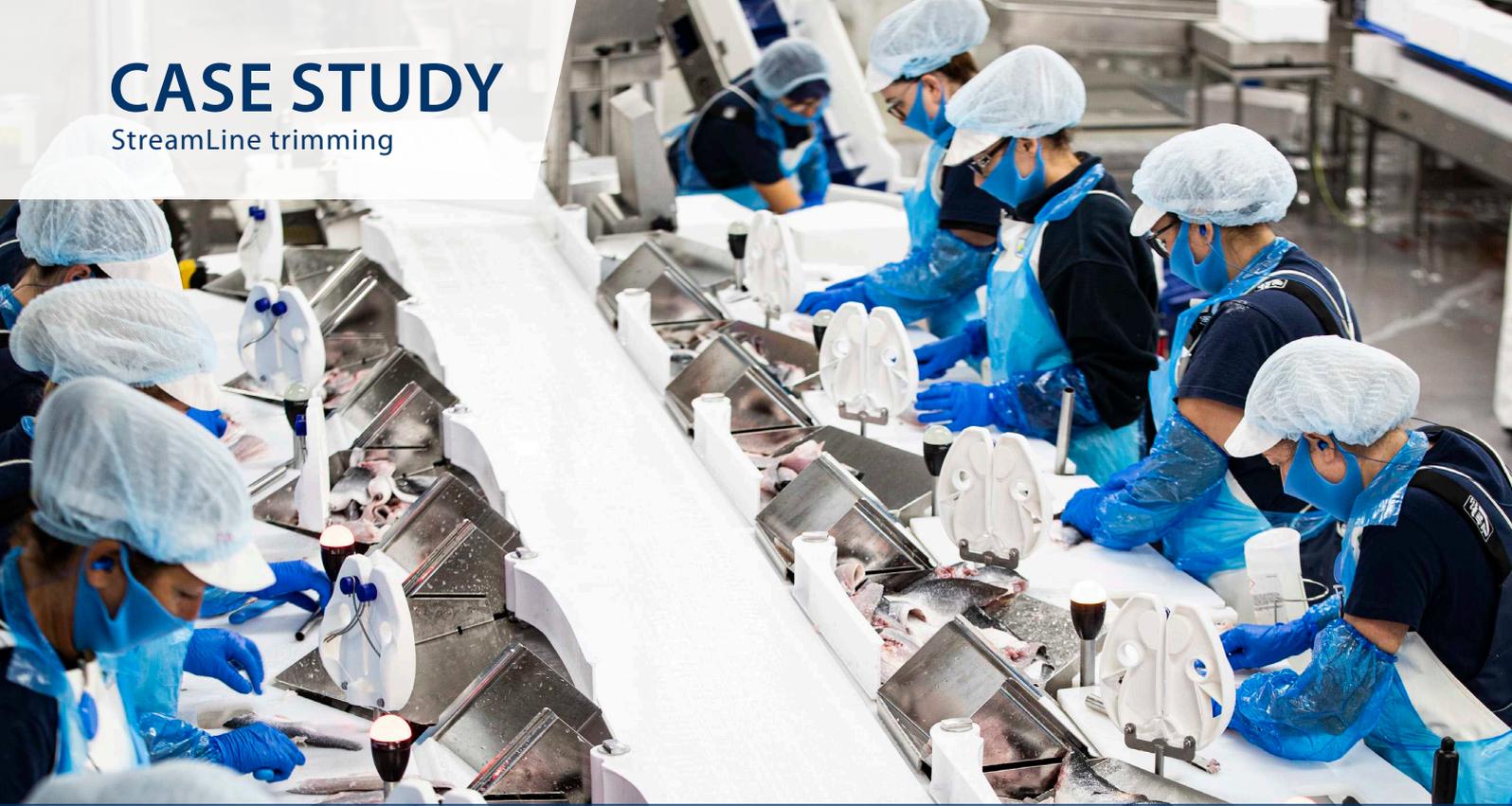


CASE STUDY

StreamLine trimming



“We could see the value of the StreamLine very quickly, almost from the first day,” says Salas.

INSTALLATION ADVANCES FILLETING PROCESS AT CULMÁREX

When Culmárex installed a StreamLine intelligent trimming solution at their seabass and seabream processing facility, they noticed improvements in productivity, yield and quality right away.

Culmárex Group is a leading Spanish seabass and seabream farmer and processor that was founded in 1986 in Águilas, southern Spain, where its headquarters remain. They produce bulk fillets – from 90 to 200 g – primarily for the European market.

After Cooke Aquaculture bought Culmárex in 2011, the company expanded its Águilas plant facility by 2,000 m² in 2014, making it the largest fish packing plant of sea bass and sea bream in the Mediterranean Region.

Expanding horizons

Early in 2019, Culmárex announced it would be expanding its marine farming facilities to increase production incrementally. Their processing facility would need to be ready for this jump in production volumes too.

As well as increasing throughput, they would need greater production control and high yield and quality – while keeping production costs as low as possible.

A 12-station StreamLine intelligent trimming concept from Marel has delivered these benefits at Culmárex. “The new

StreamLine offers us control in real time of the filleting process,” explains Emilio Salas García, Production Manager at the Águilas factory. “We don’t have to wait to the end of the production to know what has happened during the day. Additionally, it offers us performance data of each operator.”

The decision to invest in a StreamLine was made after Salas visited Marel’s stand at the annual Brussels Seafood Expo and discussed the company’s needs with Diego Lages, Sales Director for Marel’s fish division.

“This isn’t the first time we’ve teamed up with Culmárex, and it’s a real treat to work with customers over years – sometimes decades! – and grow with them,” said Lages after signing the 2019 contract with Ana María Jorquera Sánchez, General Manager of Culmárex.

Culmárex chose the new StreamLine for whitefish in order to achieve more efficient flow, throughput and quality, to reduce labor dependence and maximize yield. Soon after the installation, they were running 5,000 kg of fillets through the StreamLine per week.



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Real-time data

The StreamLine’s real-time production data gives Culmárex the tools needed to make adjustments for maximizing the value of their production. Before installing the StreamLine in Águilas, manual filleting and trimming was done at tables, so productivity, yield and quality were much more difficult to control, measure and improve.

“The StreamLine has given us better results in all these aspects,” says Salas, “and the operator performance control allows us to provide our operators with better training so they can improve.”

Individual control

Real-time performance monitoring encourages operators to perform at their best. Accurate tracking also makes it possible for managers to install bonus payments as an additional incentive.

“StreamLine gives operators individual control and that helps improve throughput and yield,” Salas explains.

Importantly, employees have welcomed the new system and are enjoying the greater transparency of their own performance. Friendly rivalry between coworkers has boosted both results and morale, with top performers rewarded with the respect – and sometimes even the applause! – of their colleagues.

In addition to better training and real-time performance monitoring, the StreamLine takes a lot of the strain out of filleting. “In our opinion, the most relevant advantages of using a StreamLine are ergonomics, individual operator control and cost saving,” Salas says.

When it was first up and running, the main problem was that the usual volume of fish no longer kept operators busy for long enough. This was soon remedied as volumes increased, and Salas expects this cycle will repeat when the capacity increases once more: “We have the option of upgrading to a 20-station StreamLine,” he explains, “And we expect to take advantage of that option.”

Always looking to the future

Culmárex are using Marel’s StreamLine production control software, which is a major element of the StreamLine system, designed to help monitor raw material and suppliers. Being able to monitor suppliers early on in the process means producers can get production information by periods and make comparisons.

Salas says that the best way to get control of production in real time and avoid errors is to secure real-time monitoring. They’ve already seen good improvements in cost savings, and look forward to being able to set benchmarks for their suppliers too.

The bottom line

Improving the process was key, but the solution also needed to offer lower production costs in order to safeguard the company’s competitive edge and maximize profits. “This investment was essential for our production, making it possible for us to offer our customers a better product with a higher profit for us,” says Salas.

“We are producing the same products as before, but we are more competitive now in both quality and price,” says Salas. He says the StreamLine has enabled the company to reduce the cost/kg, thereby putting them ahead of their competitors in price/kg.

Marel is the leading global provider of advanced equipment and systems for the fish, meat and poultry industries.