

U.S.-based fruit company Diamond Fruit Growers has invested in what it says is the world's first pear line, which addresses the fruit's specific characteristics.

In what he called “investing for the success of the future”, Diamond Fruit Growers Chairman Scott Halliday unveiled the Unitec line on July 16 at a ceremony in Hood River, Oregon.

Also present at the ceremony were Unitec CEO Angelo Benedetti along with Diamond president David Garcia and Brett Reasor and Scott Marboe of Starr Ranch Growers, which formed an exclusive sales partnership with Diamond Fruit Growers in 2008 to create the Diamond Starr Growers brand.

Halliday said Unitec had designed “the biggest, baddest pear line in the world.”

The new 18-lane sizer will run 100 bins per hour, replacing two presizing machines. Garcia said that 12-15 employees can run the machine each shift, compared to 75 employees per shift with the previous line.

Shrink is expected to be reduced by half with the gentler handling.

“This is the first pear line in the world to flip pears over from one side to the other,” Garcia said. “All other lines roll them through like an apple.”

Garcia explained that pear lines have in the past been converted from apple lines, and said that in 2010 that the company initiated a project to find and install machinery made just for pears.



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“We wanted to be here another 100 years,” Garcia said of the century-old operation. “And [in the search for a specific line] we quickly discovered there was not a lot of new technology in pears.”

A research team traveled to Europe and found an apple line that had been adapted for pears in the Netherlands using optic sorting.

Garcia said the team then went to Unitec, which said that while there was no such line in operation, there were ideas for one. Within about a year Unitec had preliminary plans for a start-to-finish pear line.

The full design took a couple of years, and a prototype was used by Diamond for the 2017 season. This year the fully operational line is running and it kicked off the pear season the week of July 16.

“This gives us a method to keep product consistent and providing the consumer with a better product,” Reasor said.

Marboe added: “We are excited to have this new line for our customers, growers and the industry. The technology behind it with the optical sorting, sizing and other capabilities is going to help keep the pear category growing in the right direction now and the future.”



Diamond Fruit Growers chairman Scott Halliday (left), Diamond President David Garcia and Unitec CEO Angelo Benedetti cut the ribbon at the packing facility in Hood River, OR.