

# Ishida's collaborative approach maximises success for Maple Leaf Foods



## Case Study / Maple Leaf Foods

In partnership with its customer Maple Leaf Foods, one of Canada's leading prepared meat and poultry producers, Ishida Europe has played a key role in the establishment of Maple Leaf Foods' recently-opened C\$772 million poultry processing plant in London, Ontario.

## Facts and figures



Maple Leaf has installed 12 Flex Graders and four IX-G2 X-ray inspection systems and RobotGraders as part of a 27,500 BPH greenfield poultry processing plant in London, Ontario (Canada)



Ishida was selected for the weighing and grading of poultry pieces thanks to the company's proven experience and success in poultry packing solutions



The high level of collaboration and service and support delivered by Ishida has been a key success factor for Maple Leaf



A major requirement for the grading and packing lines was to reduce manual operation, to maximise speeds and efficiencies and to deliver higher volumes at faster rates



A key benefit of the Ishida equipment is its adaptability to simultaneously handle a wide variety of packaging formats



One of the most technologically advanced facilities in the world, the London Poultry Plant features 12 Ishida Flex Grader systems and four Ishida RobotGraders, working in conjunction with four Ishida IX-G2 X-ray inspection systems. The Ishida equipment is able to handle and pack all the cut-up components from the 27,500 birds processed every hour, delivering around 270,000 retail trays each day across the 16 grading and packing lines.

Nevertheless, according to Maple Leaf Foods' Taimur Aslam, who directed the entire new factory building project, alongside the excellent performance of the Ishida machines, what has made this such a successful and stand-out project has been the high levels of collaboration and consistently exemplary service and support delivered by Ishida.

He said: "I can safely say that I have never experienced this level of collaboration from a company throughout such a huge flagship project. With Ishida I have enjoyed one of the best working relationships, a true partnership where we co-operated fully and at the same time challenged each other at every stage. This made it easy for us to push the boundaries of what we could achieve."

The London Poultry Plant was first conceived in 2018 when Maple Leaf Foods sought to combine four of its legacy poultry processing operations into a new 'super' factory. The facility would help the company meet its commitments to be a carbon neutral food business, and to deliver better nutrition, safer food and workplaces, more humane animal care, and sustainability efforts to protect the planet.

Ishida was selected as a partner for the weighing and grading of poultry pieces in 2019, thanks to the company's proven experience and success in poultry packing solutions.

"We knew that with Ishida we would not get an out-of-the box offering but one that was fully customised to our specific requirements," said Taimur. "And as well as this bespoke solution, we received full technical support throughout the project, with high levels of expertise from Ishida and the supplier partners who worked with them."

"Ishida had personnel on hand during the installation and dry and wet testing, carried out upgrades where necessary, and once we were up and running continued with a permanent site presence for fine-tuning to get the best performance from the machines from the start, as well as ongoing training."

A major requirement for the grading and packing lines was to reduce what had previously been a very labour-intensive manual operation in order to maximise speeds and efficiencies and deliver higher volumes at faster rates.

A key benefit of the Ishida equipment is its adaptability to real life production scenarios, enabling the machines to handle a wide variety of packaging formats simultaneously. As a minimum, each production line can produce to tray pack, bulk pack (5kg or 20kg) or combo bulk (500kg) in unison.

Importantly, the intuitive operation of the equipment has been matched to the look and feel of other equipment on the line, including a line control system that integrates with Maple Leaf Foods' order management systems. This means that operators can easily be moved around the factory as required. The ergonomic design of the Ishida graders was also essential to support Maple Leaf Foods' commitment to the highest standards of health and safety.

The Ishida Flex Graders grade product to fixed weight, fixed pieces count, or a combination of both. At Maple Leaf Foods, they are grading and packing whole legs at 120 pieces per minute, and thighs and drums at up to 400 pieces per minute.

The Ishida RobotGraders combine weighing and pick-and-place technologies to grade the chicken fillets of varying weights and pack them at a fixed number of pieces per pack directly into trays at high speeds, as well as fixed weight bulk packaging and combo bulk grading. Two-fillet trays, for example, are packed at around 500 trays per minute across the four lines. Every fillet has already passed through an Ishida IX-G2-4027-F X-ray inspection system, whose advanced dual energy technology is able to identify low density foreign bodies including bone fragments, to allow efficient rework of contaminated fillets.

Both Ishida grader models offer a robust construction that ensures reliable operation, with a simple to use touch screen remote control for fast set-up and product changeovers. The easy-clean open frame design minimises downtime for cleaning and product changeovers.

"We are delighted with the performance of all the Ishida equipment, which has delivered what we required in terms of efficiency, throughput and reliability to enable us to increase capacity and respond quickly to market demands," concluded Taimur.

"What has singled this project out, however, has been the journey that Maple Leaf Foods and Ishida have taken together. Good relationships are fundamental to a project of this size. Ishida fully integrated with the Maple Leaf Foods' culture and became an indispensable part of our operation as we took the London Poultry Plant from vision to reality. The company made things easy for us and the proof of the pudding is that we would do it all again."

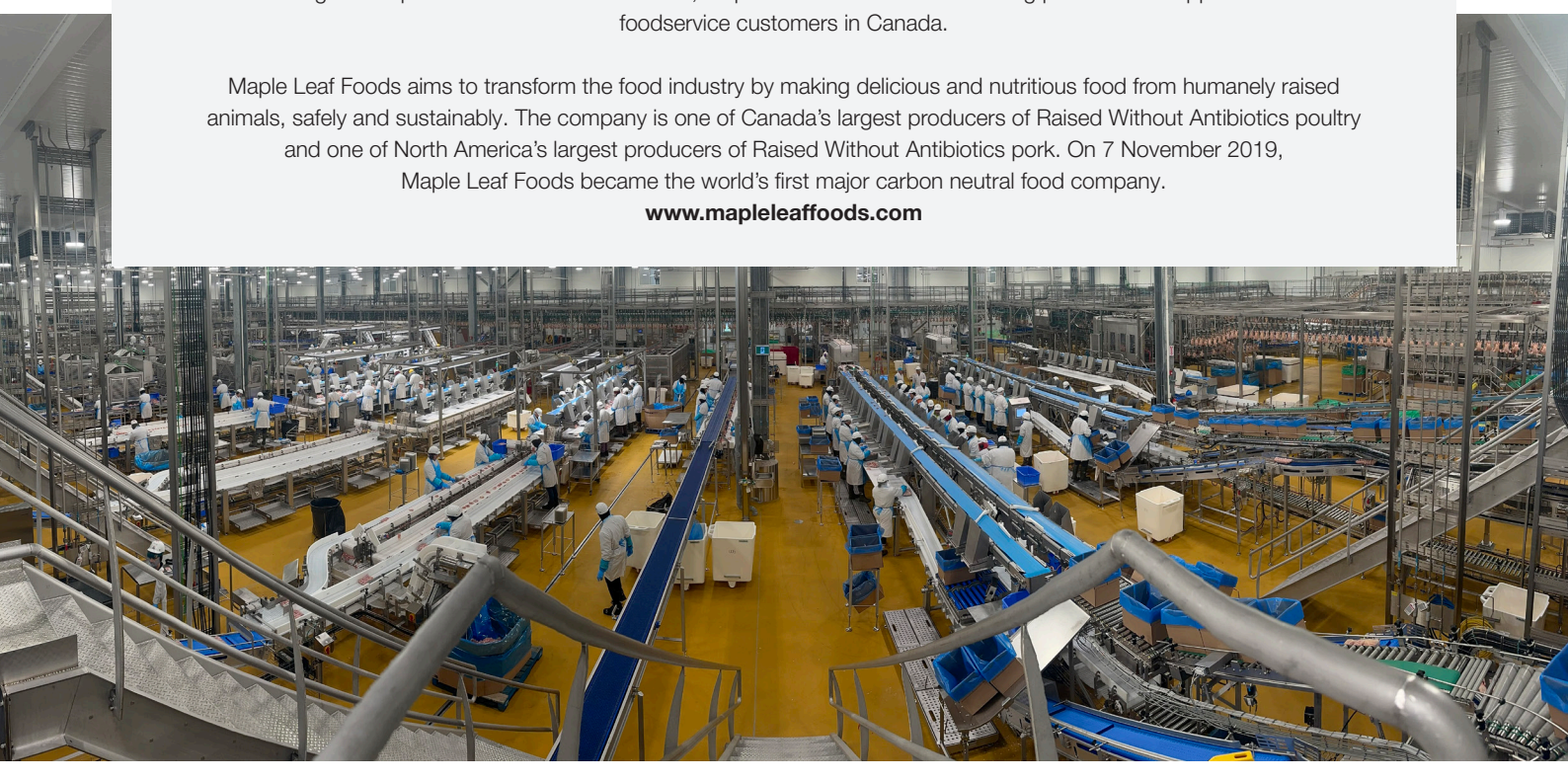


## The customer

Although Maple Leaf Foods can trace its origins back more than 180 years, the current business was formed in 1991, when Maple Leaf Mills Limited joined Canada Packers Inc. to create Maple Leaf Foods. Today the company is one of Canada's leading food processors with 23 manufacturing facilities, 13,500 team members and sales of C\$4.9 billion in 2023. Alongside its portfolio of well-known brands, Maple Leaf Foods is also a leading private label supplier to retail and foodservice customers in Canada.

Maple Leaf Foods aims to transform the food industry by making delicious and nutritious food from humanely raised animals, safely and sustainably. The company is one of Canada's largest producers of Raised Without Antibiotics poultry and one of North America's largest producers of Raised Without Antibiotics pork. On 7 November 2019, Maple Leaf Foods became the world's first major carbon neutral food company.

[www.mapleleaffoods.com](http://www.mapleleaffoods.com)



## The overview



Ishida has played a key role in the establishment of Maple Leaf Foods' recently-opened C\$772 million poultry processing plant in London, Ontario



The Ishida equipment is able to handle and pack all the cut-up components from the 27,500 birds processed every hour



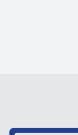
The high level of collaboration and support delivered by Ishida has been a key success factor for Maple Leaf



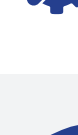
With Ishida's bespoke solution, we received full technical support throughout the project, with high levels of expertise



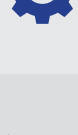
Ishida had a site presence for fine-tuning to get the best performance from the machines from the start, as well as ongoing training



A major requirement for the grading and packing lines was to reduce manual operation, to maximise speeds and efficiencies



As a minimum, each production line can produce to tray pack, bulk pack (5kg or 20kg) or combo bulk (500kg) in unison



The Ishida Flex Graders are grading and packing whole legs at 120 pieces per minute, and thighs and drums at up to 400 pieces per minute



Dual energy X-ray technology is ideal for identifying low density contaminants in chicken fillets, to allow efficient rework



Both Ishida grader models offer a robust construction that ensures reliable operation, with a simple to use touch screen remote control



The easy-clean open frame design minimises downtime for cleaning and product changeovers



Ishida fully integrated with the Maple Leaf Foods' culture and became an indispensable part of our operation

## Speak to an Ishida expert

Every business has its own challenges; ours is to help you overcome yours. Working smarter, faster, together, we can help you achieve higher standards and get your products retail ready quicker.

[Make an enquiry](#)