

Quality and Efficiency: Goals Achieved at True Leaf Farms



Quality has always been a critical priority to True Leaf Farms, a supplier of fresh-cut arugula, spinach and spring mix products. When growing demand prompted the company to look for a new processing line last year, they approached [Key Technology](#) to help produce a superior product.

True Leaf Farms knew they had to eliminate the accumulation of wet product, a common problem on traditional fresh-cut processing lines. They were looking to eliminate the causes of product damage—the staging and storage of wet product, overfilled hoppers and the “hay-ball effect” of product on transfer and elevating belts.



Key's DirectStream meters and gently washes tender leaf product in a continuous flow process at True Leaf Farms.



True Leaf Farms spinach transfers from the second stage DirectStream washing to drying.

Plant management at True Leaf Farms searched for an alternative and installed [Freshline DirectStream™](#), an integrated multi-stage wash and automatic drying system. This unique bin-to-bag turnkey system brings a new level of automation and process control to fresh-cut processors that handle 1,000 to over 20,000 pounds per hour.

“With our new processing line, the dryer controls the infeed of product to the wash system,” said Jared Gill, Plant Manager at True Leaf Farms. “A weigh-belt near the front of the line meters the product into the processing line, depending on what the bagger at the end of the line can handle.”

Continuous streaming assures that product is layered evenly throughout the system, which eliminates the staging of wet product and the damage that often results. The even stream further improves product quality by maintaining consistent wash pressure and dryness levels.



True Leaf Farms system operator selects a new recipe to switch between product batch types on Key's ADR980 Automatic Dryer.

"This integrated system helps us produce the highest quality product while at the same time, we've reduced labor and improved production efficiencies," said Gill.

To achieve a thorough wash, True Leaf Farms selected a double direct-stream wash system, which ensures that all surfaces of the product are submerged and that foreign material is gently separated from the product.

"Prior to installing the new line, we only had experience using batch dryers. With the new automatic dryers, we've doubled throughput in half the floorspace. Where we needed three guys to operate the batch dryers, we don't need anybody on the automatic dryers," noted Gill.

True Leaf Farms selected a [Freshline ADR980 automatic dryer](#), which features a four-drum configuration that allows the dryer to continuously handle a constant flow of product. Spiral layering of product within the dryer results in efficient drying while smooth, uninterrupted drum loading and unloading reduces product damage.

"Each product has different characteristics. Even within one product category, we see product textures that are stronger or weaker over time, based on conditions in the field. Depending on the product and its characteristics, we simply adjust the dryer," explained Gill. "In addition to assuring the highest product quality, we make sure we are as efficient as possible in every way. Our new processing line helps us achieve our goals."



Key's four-drum automatic dryer provides a continuous flow of dried tender leaf, maximizing volume and minimizing damage

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