

DESIGN OF PACKAGING PLANT

ABOUT MS PRODUCE LLC. MS Produce, LLC is an agricultural company founded in 2016 by agronomist Moises Soto in the town of Guánica. With only 7 acres, this entrepreneur started the development of his business managing all the functional areas of the company with the support of his family. Currently, the company has 14 jobs providing fresh produce to Puerto Rican families through wholesale distribution in local supermarkets under the Soto Farm brand. In addition, it has managed to expand its farmland by more than 200 acres, allowing it to increase its sales and acquire new stores.

THE CHALLENGE. As a food company with growing demand, MS Produce management needed to evaluate planning for facilities where it can carry out cleaning, packaging and storing its products effectively and in compliance with regulatory agencies such as USDA and FDA. MS Produce also needed to automate the packaging of their products. This company has a history with PRIMEX, part of the MEP National Network™, due to its previous participation in other initiatives and programs offered by the PR MEP center, and contacted PRIMEX for help.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. In July 2021, PRIMEX engineers carried out an initial evaluation at the company where they were able to confirm the absence of adequate facilities for cleaning and packing operations; these facilities were under initial phase of construction. In addition, the company shared preliminary information related to machines for automatically packing fresh coriander in bags. Through engineering and process automation services, the company was provided with a conceptual design for the new packaging plant following the principles of lean manufacturing and advice on finding machinery for the automation of two packaging lines for cilantro and cucumber, respectively.

Prior to the intervention of the PRIMEX staff, management was inclined towards a packer that did not have a sensor to detect the presence of the product, which would cause waste due to empty sealed bags. Thanks to the advice provided by MEP-PR, the company avoided the acquisition of inadequate equipment and expenses for waste.

"When we started our company ran into many difficulties, challenges that we had as goals that we could not achieve since we did not have knowledge or experience in the new regulations in agribusiness, thanks to the help of PRIMEX we have been able to establish parameters in the industry. From having a small area to transforming ourselves into one with production lines, meeting all the requirements, it helps to have an added value in our product, increasing sales by an additional 125%. PRIMEX transformed our website, created our marketing plan and developed a new logo for our brand, giving us an extraordinary position in the market. The Business Continuity Plan, Earthquake and Covid, were essential at the time of the disaster and the pandemic, in order to continue operating."

-Moises Soto, President

RESULTS



16 created or retained jobs



\$689,000 in new or retained sales



\$150,000 in new investment



\$65,000 in cost savings

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