

CONVEYING NEWS

Tax Savings Help Offset Automation Costs

As many food manufacturers struggle to fill vacancies there is a drive to increase levels of automation to allow lines to be run with lower staffing levels. At WMH we are seeing a trend towards automation and projects that had previously been put on ice due to budget restraints are being resurrected as factories strive to maintain production levels with reduced labour.

According to government figures the level of investment in capital equipment in the UK has for many years been at lower levels than our European counterparts. This was further reduced by a significant drop of almost 12% between 2019 and 2020. To stimulate the economy and encourage investment in new capital equipment the government has introduced generous tax allowances which you may be able to take advantage of to offset the cost of capital equipment purchased between April 2021 and March 2023.

During the qualifying period businesses will be able to claim 130% tax relief on investments in plant and machinery. The scheme also introduces a 50% first-year allowance and an Annual Investment Allowance up to £1m until December 2021. In real terms this means that for every £10,000 spent on equipment businesses can save £2,470 in taxes.

As a manufacturer of capital equipment WMH welcomes this new tax allowance which allows our

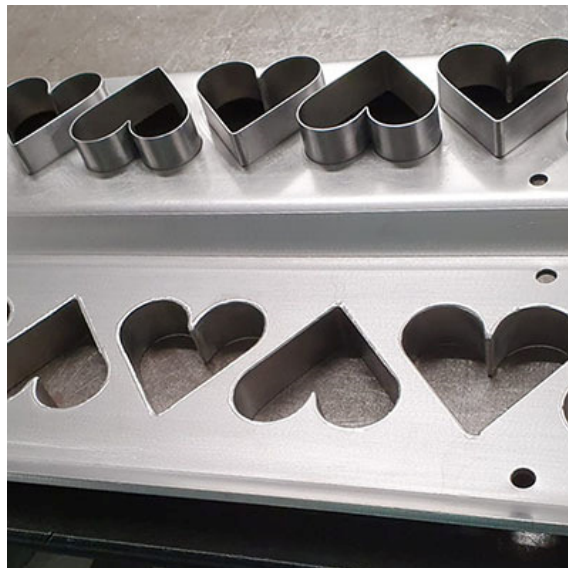


customers to offset some of the costs incurred in capital equipment and automation projects against their tax liabilities. This will be particularly helpful for some smaller businesses that may have found the cost of automation a barrier in the past.

If you are considering automation, WMH sales engineers will be happy to discuss the options and signpost you to further information about the government scheme.

For more information, please call 01579 383788 or email enquiries@wmh-uk-ltd.com.

Something a Little Different



From time to time a small fabrication project comes along that gives our welder-fabricators chance to get creative and do something a little different to the usual.

Unable to source seasonal cutters of robust enough quality the client approached WMH to see if it was possible for them to create the bespoke cutters for them. The first cutter was for a heart profile designed to cut seven inter-leafed shapes at a time across a width of dough and integrate with an automated production line. As this worked well the client returned before easter for a single hand-cutter for bunny shapes.

“Although this type of work is not our main lie of work we are keen to help our customers with small projects like this that make a big difference to their production.” Said a spokesman for WMH.

Tips for Choosing Conveyor Belts

Over the past 25 years the variety of conveyor belting types has grown exponentially. While this choice allows conveyor manufacturers greater choice to better specify belting to suit the products they are asked to handle. The array of belts can appear daunting to the uninitiated. Below we will discuss some of the different belting options available and look at their main characteristics and their suitability for specific products and applications.

Fabric Belts are manufactured from a base fabric topped with a variety of plastic materials which give the belt its characteristic look. Physical characteristics differ from material to material with some offering low friction surfaces where products need to slide or more grippy options for incline or decline applications. Fabric belts are highly popular in the bakery and dairy industries with the high levels of hygiene they offer, particularly with fully sealed options available. Fabric belts are straight running and drive is via a driven roller beneath the belt. The integration of built-in flights or side guides can make these belts suitable for granular products as well as more solid products. Small transfer diameters are possible with fabric belting which makes them suitable for small products like biscuits. If your product needs to go around a bend or a dedicated turn unit with fabric belts, there are options available.

Wire Belts as the name suggests are manufactured from woven or interlocking strands of stainless-steel wire. Different pitches and wire gauges are available making them suitable for a wide range of applications. Wire belts offer high levels of hygiene and are easy to clean having a high percentage of open area. Wire belts are perfectly suited to high temperature applications in grills, fryers and ovens. They are also perfect for applications where the product needs to drain such as after a fryer or under glazing or enrobing units. Wire belts are positively driven with driven sprockets and small transfer diameters are possible, particularly with the smaller pitch belts. Wire belts are either straight running or for curves belts of a fixed turn radius are available.

The range of **Modular Plastic Belts** on the market nowadays is vast, with belts to suit the majority of products. Available as straight running, side-flexing or fixed pitch turn these belts are manufactured from plastic modules linked together with pins. These belts are positively driven with sprockets that mesh with the belt modules. The module design for each manufacturer's belt is unique to them so components and sprockets are not interchangeable. For this reason, it may be worth considering only using one type of modular plastic belt on site so you can minimise your spares stock holding.

Early concerns over the cleanability of these belts has largely dispersed since manufacturers have sought to make their products easier to clean.

Straight running belts are available in a range of pitches from ½" to 2", the smaller pitch belts are suitable for bakery applications with small transfer diameters. The

larger pitch belts are more suited to packing halls for handling crates and cartons. Some small pitch belts have an open area of nearly 50% which makes them comparable to wire belts for some applications.

Side-flexing belts sit in the middle of the size range which means they have larger transfer diameters making them less suitable for small products. But their flexible nature allows them to turn corners with long straights which reduces the number of transfers needed. The addition of high friction modules and flights also makes these belts suitable for incline and decline applications.

There many **Points to consider when choosing a belt.** are as not all will be suitable for your application and a mixture of types will be necessary, particularly through different stages of your manufacturing process.

When choosing a belt, first consider the product, the size, weight, and throughput. Are you handling unwrapped product, is it in a carrier or are you handling packaged products in cartons or crates? How stable is your product? Flat rectangular products transfer between conveyors better than top heavy pots with narrow bases.

The next thing to consider is the production environment, do you need to wind in and out of existing machinery, or change levels. Are you working in a very hot or a chilled environment? Do you need to move product on the belt, for example merging lanes or does the product need to be stay in a set position?

Once you understand nature of your product and the processing requirements you can begin to focus down the choice of belting.

Conclusion

While the expansion of belting choice can at first seem daunting, with a little knowledge and consideration of your product you can focus down your search to find the perfect match for your needs.

