

Optical Sorting for the Coffee Industry

S. BEE

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SUMMARY

Sortex' optical sorting machines are designed to remove foreign material and add value to coffee, by removal of blemished product. Sortex have been designing and manufacturing optical sorting machines for bulk inspection and grading of foodstuffs for over 50 years.

Removal of foreign material (sticks, stones, insects etc) is now a basic prerequisite prior to processing. Simultaneously, consumers are also demanding increased quality through cosmetic enhancement of fresh pack coffee by removal of blemished and discoloured beans. Coffee taste is safeguarded by selective removal of beans that can affect flavour, such as "stinkers," over-roast or over-fermented beans. An optical sorting machine can maintain a far greater level of consistency than hand sorting and also reduces labour costs (Anon, 1987). In recent years, tighter EU and American Food and Drug Administration standards on food quality have been implemented. Optical sorting of coffee beans allows users the opportunity to strengthen their competitive position by providing a premium quality product at an increased margin.