

Case Study: Alway

2025

SEW-EURODRIVE UK helps Alway to create an innovative blue cheese piercing solution

Alway is a leading manufacturer and supplier of bespoke stainless-steel equipment and machinery, and has been providing specialist turnkey engineering solutions since 1985. The firm operates from a state-of-the-art engineering facility in Loughborough, offering a diverse range of customer-focused services and solutions, from sheet metal fabrication to the design and manufacture of complex systems.

One of the complex systems designed by Alway is the HSP9000 cheese piercing solution, the first product of Alway's HSP (High-Speed Piercer) brand. Cheese piercers are used by Stilton manufacturers and manufacturers of other blue cheeses to pierce the cheese - a process where long thin metal needles are inserted into the cheese to allow oxygen to activate the *Penicillium roqueforti* that has been added to the milk, in turn changing texture, adding flavour, and making the familiar blue streaks.

With an aim to create an innovative solution for cheese piercing that maintained product quality and increased efficiency for a leading Stilton manufacturer, Alway turned to SEW-EURODRIVE UK for help with the HSP9000.

**40 years**

SEW-EURODRIVE has worked with Alway for 40 years

8000

The automated system increases efficiency, piercing 8,000 full cheeses per day

24/7

SEW-EURODRIVE engineers are available 24/7 for callout or queries



Challenge

Alway had a series of existing cheese piercing models which were all mechanically driven. The push for automation and market demand for new solutions led them to exploring the options for an up-to-date modern system with servo-drives, which they turned to SEW-EURODRIVE to help provide.

The challenge entailed turning the age-old manufacturing process of forming Stilton into an automated operation, ensuring the cheese would remain authentically Stilton by having blue veins radiating from the centre.

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1 Initial consultation and development of the idea

After Alway came up with the ingenious design concept to achieve everything without manual intervention, SEW explored all suitable products to fit the criteria of the planned system. The hardware needed was identified, and SEW's applications team was then on hand to help implement the MOVIKIT® software, which gives operators access to all control functions within a single interface.

2

Complete automation while retaining authenticity

Cheese has to be pierced in a certain way to allow it to develop as blue cheese. The solution developed by Alway and SEW-EURODRIVE is entirely automated, fitting with the new industry demand for automation. Although the piercer is automated, it pierces the blue cheese in the same way one would do mechanically or by hand, retaining the cheese's authenticity. The HSP9000 pierces 8,000 full cheeses per day, showing incredible efficiency, and its piercing precision reduces waste, as it ensures a uniform distribution of mould cultures every time.

3

Ease for the end-user

For the end-customer, the system is more dynamic, efficient, reliable and flexible, resulting in near double the product output per hour due to SEW's automated solution. Rather than a mechanical machine on the production line, the fully automated system offers more adaptability than the more traditional production method. Interactive recipes are displayed on the SEW DOP HMI for different products, coupled to the 6 axis SEW MOVI-C Movidrive Modular and UHX motion controller. This drives the CMS electric cylinders and CM3C servo geared motors, allowing customers the option to adjust the machine's settings based on the products that are being produced.

Business Impact

SEW-EURODRIVE has worked with Alway for around 40 years on a number of projects alongside the HSP9000 system, including a new tinning conveyor system for a bakery, which SEW provided the drives for.

With engineers across the world ready to give advice or head out on call-outs 24/7, SEW-EURODRIVE can help Alway and its customers solve any issues with a timely response, ensuring operations can keep running.



"When we were developing our innovative HSP9000 system, we were excited to turn to SEW-EURODRIVE to help us develop the perfect automated solution.

"Together with SEW, we worked to build a system which ensures piercing precision every time, whilst also massively increasing the efficiency of the large-scale production lines of our customers.

"Through the HSP9000, we've been able to set new standards for efficiency within the world of blue cheese processing, positioning both ourselves and SEW-EURODRIVE at the forefront of innovation."

Reece Taylor, Director of Group Operations, Alway

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