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Tomra dives into augmented reality

Tomra Visual Assist virtually places experts in front of a customer's machine, enabling a fast response and ensuring safety



Fresh produce sorting machinery specialist Tomra has announced the launch of Visual Assist, its new Augmented Reality tool that enables remote experts to provide specialist support on-site, as if they were standing in front of the machine.

According to Tomra, the new technology enables it to solve a broader range of problems of varying degrees of complexity remotely, the result being more uptime and better machine performance for customers while reducing the need for in-person visits.

"This advantage is particularly valuable in addressing the travel restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic and ensuring food safety in this situation," explained Andreas Reddemann, vice-president and head of global service at Tomra Food, Aftermarket and Service. "Fast response time is critical for our customers, who deal mostly in perishable goods.

"Machine downtime for them may result in a deterioration in the quality of

their product," Reddeman continued. "During the harvesting season, they receive a constant flow of material and have to process high volumes, so uptime is vital. That's why, at Tomra Food, we have an ongoing focus on responding as fast as possible and in a way that is practical for them.

"When you have such a diverse geographic spread of customers as we have, it is not always possible to have the right field service engineer immediately on site. Tomra Visual Assist addresses this gap between being advised of an issue and being able to be there to support physically."

Tomra Visual Assist requires no equipment other than a mobile phone with a camera. When the customer requests support through a message, email, or phone call, the Tomra field service engineer sends an invitation to initiate the session.

When the app opens, it links through to a call with the Tomra expert best suited to help them with the specific challenge

they are facing, and when connected, they communicate through voice and video.

The field service engineer can direct the customer to point the camera of their mobile phone to show what they need to see. With Tomra Visual Assist, they can also share with the customer documents and annotate images to explain and clarify directions.

"TOMRA Visual Assist enables a greater level of clarity in the communication and information transfer between the person on-site and the expert providing guidance remotely. It acts as the local eyes of the remote Tomra expert," Reddeman outlined.

"With this tool, the customer's technician gets the support they need to resolve the issue immediately, bringing the machine back in operation. If a repair requires replacing a part, Tomra's expert can easily identify it and ensure the right spare is sent, increasing the first-time fix rate."

<http://www.fruitnet.com/americafruit/article/1474/parts-of-san-diego-quarantined-as-psyllid-count-mounts>

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The augmented reality system also connects the group's experts on specific applications or technical issues with the field service engineer on site, enabling them to quickly resolve a broad range of issues with the expert's additional support.

"With Tomra Visual Assist,

our most skilled and experienced staff can spread their knowledge more broadly than they ever could if they had to travel to every site," said Reddemann.

"For example, once a field service engineer has completed maintenance on a machine, they can connect to our technical expert who knows

the customer's application and the mapping profiles of their product. This will help the on-site Field Service Engineer ensure the appropriate grading profile of that specific product."