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By Carl Collen

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Harvest Croo develops strawberry picker

Robotics company approved for crucial 'Pitzer Wheel' patent



Harvest Croo Robotics is developing and testing the latest technology for agricultural robotics, an automated strawberry picker to help alleviate the labor shortage the industry is facing.

The group's first US patent approval marks one of Harvest Croo's milestone accomplishments, the Pitzer Wheel, named after co-founder and inventor Bob Pitzer, which is an autonomous and continuous picking wheel on the apparatus.

"Our biggest differentiator has always been that growers will not have to change the way they currently grow strawberries," said Gary Wishnatzki, co-founder of Harvest Croo and owner of Wish Farms. "Now, with

the patent of the Pitzer Wheel, what I believe to be the heart of the invention, we have another strong distinguishing factor."

The picking wheel uses conservation of motion as opposed to a "pick and move" motion. It picks the initial berry, then rotates to expose the next claw to pick another berry at a rapid rate. Once a strawberry is picked by one of the six food-grade silicon claws, it is rotated to the top of the wheel. From here, the berry is carefully placed into a cup that will then be transferred to a central location on the machine, to be inspected for a second time, before placing into consumer packs. This is all done without human intervention. For a video of the Pitzer Wheel, [click here](#).

"By reaching this milestone to protect the intellectual property of one of the key components of our machine, we are steps closer in our mission to revolutionizing the ag-tech industry," said Wishnatzki.

Since the start of the project, Harvest Croo has filed a total of six patents. Current patent-pending applications include GPS navigation techniques, an altitude control system and leaf manipulation concepts for harvest. The company's breakthrough vision technology, used to identify the perfect ripe berry, is being held as a trade secret.

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