

Under the skin

ACHIEVING HIGHER YIELDS WITH LESS LABOR, PRIME EQUIPMENT GROUP'S AUTOMATIC CHICKEN SKINNERS ARE JUST WHAT ONE PROCESSOR NEEDED.

By Ann Bagel,
managing editor

Boneless, skinless chicken breasts are some of the most popular products on the market today, which means Petit Jean Poultry has an important job to do. The company's plant in Buffalo, Mo., does contract deboning for industry giants like Tyson Foods, processing 2.5 million pounds of front halves weekly, more than half of which also is skinned.

Petit Jean had been skinning product manually, but in November 2004 the company decided to invest in automatic skimmers for its facility in Buffalo as well as for two plants in Arkansas. After shopping around a bit, Petit Jean chose the model CSK-12-1 chicken skimmer from Columbus, Ohio-based Prime Equipment Group, and so far, plant management couldn't be happier with the machine's performance. "I've been in the poultry business for close to 20 years," says Buffalo Plant Manager Frank Sanderson. "I've not seen a machine skin any better or as good."

No blades

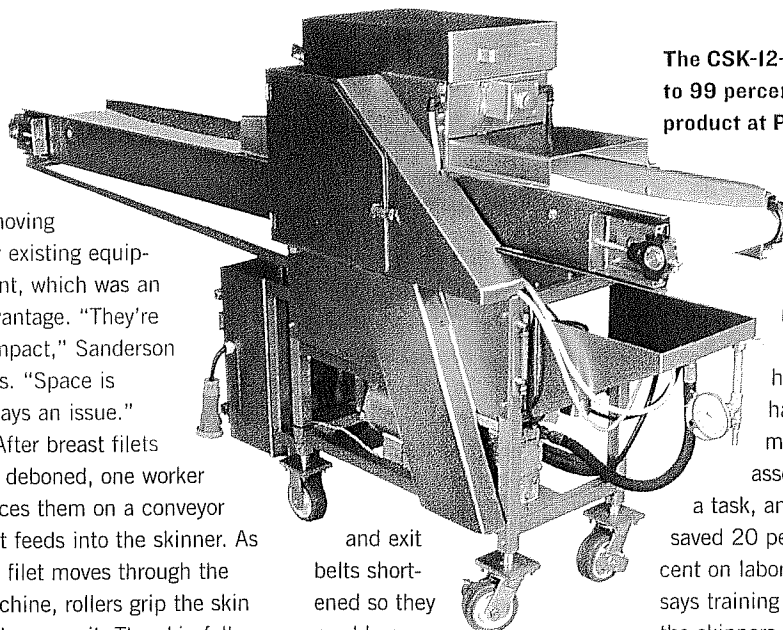
Petit Jean installed eight of the CSK-12-1 skimmers at its Buffalo facility on the front half debone lines without moving or

removing any existing equipment, which was an advantage. "They're compact," Sanderson says. "Space is always an issue."

After breast filets are deboned, one worker places them on a conveyor that feeds into the skimmer. As the filet moves through the machine, rollers grip the skin and remove it. The skin falls down a chute and is carried away as offal while the filet exits the opposite end of the skimmer. A second worker inspects the product after it emerges from the machine.

One of the most unique aspects of the CSK-12-1 is that, thanks to its rollers, the machine uses no blades to remove skin. "On other machines that blade is a critical item," Sanderson explains. "The risk you run is a piece of that blade might break off. You don't want metal contaminating your product."

Prime Equipment Group also was able to accommodate Petit Jean's specific needs for the skimmers. For example, the Buffalo plant wanted the length of the machines' entrance



The CSK-12-1 has removed up to 99 percent of skin from product at Petit Jean Poultry.

not adulterate the meat." Plus, by eliminating the need for workers to skin product by hand, they don't have the repetitive-motion stress often associated with such

and exit belts shortened so they would consume less space, and Prime Equipment Group was able to deliver.

Higher yields more efficiently

With any equipment, the proof is in the final product, and according to Sanderson, the CSK-12-1 skimmers remove 98 percent to 99 percent of the skin from breast filets, which is better than what workers could achieve removing skin manually. In addition, he says the plant is enjoying higher yields with automated skimmers. "By hand, you're pulling off the smaller pieces [of meat] when you pull the skin off," says Sanderson. "With the skimmers, you don't. They'll skin a piece the size of a silver dollar and

a task, and Petit Jean has saved 20 percent to 25 percent on labor costs. Sanderson says training employees to use the skimmers is simple, and the machines are low maintenance. "You may buy equipment for a lesser dollar," he says, "but you're going to wind up spending a chunk on maintenance. That's a factor that we have not seen here."

Overall, Petit Jean has been very pleased with the CSK-12-1 skimmers, but you don't have to take the company's word for it. Sanderson says he's hosted a number of visitors interested in seeing the machines in action, and he's heard nothing but positive reviews. "Everybody I've shown them to has been impressed," he says. **POULTRY**

Editor's note: For more information about the CSK-12-1 chicken skimmer, ☎ Joe Gasbarro at 614/253-8590, ext. 13.