

Revolutionizing fresh logistics for 4 million Berliners

REWE, one of Germany's leading grocery retailers, has taken a major leap in distribution efficiency, quality and workplace wellbeing by partnering with Cimcorp to automate its fresh and chilled goods logistics center in Oranienburg. This facility is the critical supply hub for over 370 supermarkets and around 580 stores in the fast-paced metropolitan region north of Berlin.

The challenge

With Berlin's population nearing four million, the pressure on REWE's logistics has never been greater. Every day, up to 650,000 units of produce move through the Oranienburg facility, destined for retailers that expect punctual and precise deliveries.

For General Manager Matthias Menzel, the stakes are high:

"In Berlin, timing is everything. Missing the delivery window means a significant financial loss. For us, reliability is our daily reality," he explains.

REWE ALSO FACED a growing challenge in workforce management. "It was becoming more difficult to recruit people for the physically demanding work in fresh produce logistics, moving up to five tonnes per person per shift and stacking goods up to two meters high or more," says Menzel. "We needed to make this work more sustainable, safe and attractive if we wanted to secure our future."

The solution

Cimcorp's automatic order-picking system was deployed to meet these dual challenges: **boosting throughput while securing work ergonomics.** The solution handles the intralogistics chain, with every unit of produce traceable and every process managed for efficiency and quality.

INBOUND GOODS arrive on standardized Euro pallets, which are automatically registered and scanned. Manual unwrapping and quality checks ensure that only compliant goods enter the system. Cimcorp's robots then depalletize stacks, buffer them and manage their storage using FIFO (First In, First Out) or FEFO (First Expired, First Out) inventory strategies.

THE FULLY INTEGRATED Cimcorp Warehouse Control System (WCS) orchestrates picking, manages workload balancing among robot cells, and coordinates outbound pallet building and dispatch. The system is designed with redundancy – dual robot cells and transfer cars ensure continuous operation, even in rare outage scenarios. ↗



Matthias Menzel

TRACEABILITY is guaranteed at every stage. Each reusable plastic crate (RPC), pallet and SKU is automatically scanned and tracked, with every movement and event logged in the WCS database. Pallet handling follows GS1 barcode standards, allowing instant visibility from receiving to order fulfillment.

With Cimcorp automation, strenuous manual picking is replaced by system oversight, process management and quality checks.

This change is not only compliant with EU and German ergonomic regulations (e.g. for maximum lifting weights), but also positions REWE as an attractive employer in retail logistics, where retaining skilled team members is a must to remain competitive.

Results: more than just speed

The impact has been profound. The automation has drastically reduced the physical demands on staff and enabled the balancing of workloads across shifts.

OPERATIONAL ERRORS have dropped, with the precision of automation ensuring fewer mistakes in order assembly.

COMPLIANCE WITH EU and German ergonomic guidelines is built in, supporting workplace well-being and long-term retention. Food safety and traceability have been elevated, with real-time dashboards supporting both continuous improvement and fast response to recalls or incidents.

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“Our jobs are just changing,” says Menzel. “In the future, people who used to pick will instead check control devices and manage systems. There is no longer any fear that automation will take jobs; instead, we have less overtime and more stable, attractive roles.”

REWE is one of Germany's leading food retail companies, supplying over 3,700 supermarkets nationwide. The Oranienburg logistics center represents its largest hub for fresh and chilled products in the region.

Future-proof your supply chain with Cimcorp's Dreamfield!

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