Vandemoortele uses cobot to load filling line

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Peter ten Haaf

To increase production efficiency, Vandemoortele decided to automate, having already gained experience with industrial robots. Cobots were still unknown territory and the company wanted to change that. It therefore took part in the user group of the ColRobFood project, which investigates the use of cobots in the food industry and asks companies to submit proof-of-concept proposals.

Vandemoortele wanted to check whether a cobot could load the machine with empty tubs at the beginning of the two margarine filling lines. This task is currently performed by an operator, who is responsible for a variety of tasks.

Test set-up and implementation

Sirris set up a testing protocol at its application laboratory. Although it is not yet completely flawless, the tests showed that potential of using a cobot for the application Vandemoortele wished to automate.

These findings convinced Vandemoortele to seek a partner who could further develop and implement the solution. A suitable partner was found in the integration company KoMotion in East Flanders. Based on input from Sirris, KoMotion built a new test setup in their own workshop. The setup was then tested at the Vandemoortele factory, followed by implementation on one of the two filling lines.

Safety was also taken into account: in conjunction with Pilz, a specialist in safe automation technology, a scanner was placed near the cobot and several access zones were installed around it.

The cobot is now operational and Vandemoortele is considering equipping the second line with another cobot, meaning that only one operator would be required to supply tubs to both lines. Given the cobot’s assistance to the operator, the filling speed can be increased, which was what Vandemoortele was ultimately looking for.

Authors



Peter ten Haaf