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An Innovative Solution — Aegis Xtreme-Duty

This is how a well-built American-made product, an innovative salesman and an insightful produce supply company worked together "outside the box" to create a forward-thinking, profit-driven solution for an age-old industry.

The Salinas Valley in northern California has earned the nickname "The Salad Bowl of the World" because of the diversity of crops its fertile soil and unique mild climate can produce year-round. Most of the salad greens consumed in the United States are grown here, including many varieties of lettuce and peppers, broccoli, strawberries, grapes, spinach, cauliflower and celery. Because of the nature of its produce and a nearly continual growing season, the harvesting techniques used in the Salinas differ greatly from those employed in the Midwest and southern regions of the country, where automated machinery performs most of the field work. In the valley, it is safe to say that most crops are still harvested by hand.



The cost for hand-harvesting operations has steadily increased over the years without regard to the delivered-in price that growers receive. Growers spend more money on harvesting operations than for all other production costs combined, including fertilizers, sprays, irrigation and weed control. This cost squeeze, created by increasing costs and a constant or decreasing price for produce, results in diminishing profit margins for growers.

The harvesting process in the Salinas typically works like this. Crops are picked, packaged onto pallets or crates, loaded onto flatbed trucks and taken to local produce suppliers who process the goods into a variety of different ready-to-eat products. Produce suppliers in the valley compete for the best produce the growers have to offer. Almost all the product suppliers have truck scales that they use for the transaction of goods between themselves and the growers. The weight of the produce is extremely important because grower compensation is based solely on weight.

In 2013, a new supplier breaking into the Salinas Valley market contacted a number of scale company representatives to discuss weighing equipment as they began setting up their operation. Among these was Fairbanks Scales' Area Sales Manager Nick Cillino. Initial conversations centered on truck scale products, but after hearing the supplier's insights into the agriculture industry, and more specifically the cost squeeze on the Salinas Valley growers, Cillino and the supplier devised an innovative weighing solution with an alternative scale product and cycle of operation to give the new supplier an edge that also benefited local growers.

Most produce suppliers use a similar cycle of operation. Fully-loaded trucks arrive at their facility, weigh on a truck scale, then forklifts remove the pallets or crates from the trucks to a temporary holding location. These operations often run 24-hours a day, seven days a week, to process crops at peak freshness. Typically, truck scales are situated near the entrance to the supplier's property. The entry and exit areas around the scale routinely get backed-up, causing costly delays as the truck drivers can't get in and out and back to the fields to transport more product.



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With the input from the produce supplier and Fairbanks' expertise, a new solution was implemented to make this process more efficient. Fairbanks suggested using the Aegis Xtreme-Duty Floor Scale instead of a traditional truck scale. Since the floor scale weighs more precisely than a truck scale, growers receive more money for their crops. Fairbanks' Aegis Xtreme-Duty floor scale has a smaller division size of 5 pounds rather than 20 pounds, which is standard for a legal-for-trade, certified truck scale. Additionally, Cillino and the supplier found the Aegis Xtreme-Duty accelerated the wholesaler's process time. This accelerated cycle of operation streamlined the process and made transactions faster not only for the wholesaler, but for the grower delivering produce.

Fairbanks Scales new produce supply customer decided to take a slightly different approach. Instead of using a truck scale, their crews remove the pallets/crates immediately off the trucks with forklifts, make a quick pit-stop on their 10' x 12', 20,000 pound capacity Fairbanks' Xtreme-Duty Floor Scale to capture the weight, then continue on to the temporary holding location. The Aegis Xtreme-Duty dimensional size is large enough to handle forklift loads often consisting of multiple pallets simultaneously. This unique process eliminates any back-up at a truck scale and it keeps the dynamic work environment flowing.

Even considering the time and money as this new cycle of operation saved the supplier; it wasn't the biggest advantage the Aegis Xtreme-Duty scale provided. As noted earlier, produce suppliers using a truck scale compensate the growers based on +/- 20 pounds, while the Aegis Xtreme-Duty allows growers to get paid based on +/- 5 pounds. Fairbanks' produce supply customer marketed the advantages of the Aegis Xtreme-Duty's tighter tolerance to the local growers. The result was increased confidence between themselves and the growers, the best produce Salinas Valley offered in 2013, and immediate recognition as a premier produce supplier for this region.

Product information

Fairbanks Scales' Aegis Xtreme-Duty floor scale is a commercially approved scale ranging in size from 3' x 3' to 12' x 15' with capacities from 2,500 pounds up to 95,000 pounds. The scale is designed for extremely rugged and harsh environments, including fast-paced applications with forklift traffic.

For further information, visit our [Aegis Xtreme-Duty web page](#).



To learn more, contact Fairbanks Scales at 816-451-4107 or visit us on the Web at www.Fairbanks.com.