

For release:

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Flower power:

lilies of the valley sorted at 40,000 stems per hour!

A revolution - these pretty white flowers are traditionally sold on the streets and in florists all over France on May 1 as part of May Day festivities. Up until now, the sorting of these important flowers had to be done by hand.

French companies Sterkelec, Avi and Mecaflor have worked together to develop a new generation of machines for the automated sorting of lilies of the valley. In doing so they have revolutionized the sorting process that was always par for the course. This is seasonal activity that is far from easy when you consider the fragile nature of these flowers. While this activity is very brief and a considerable investment, lily of the valley producers have been seduced by the machine's performance and the almost immediate return on investment.

Colour vision makes the difference

The machine is equipped with the DVT 535C, a colour vision system from Cognex, thus performing the sorting of the flowers. Dealing with such a delicate living organism makes this a tricky operation.

The vision system is not limited to a single machine vision function such as colour sorting, but can handle a much broader range of applications with a complete set of color tools for sorting, color match and defect detection.

Currently operating in Nantes in France, this sorting machine relies on vision technology to perform and is capable of sorting up to 40,000 stems per hour. The flowers are sorted into 7 categories – including extra, super, first choice, second choice and so on.

For the superior crop of 2007, Sterkelec and Avi developed new vision algorithms that allowed them to optimize the relevance and speed of the sorting by relying on the colour cameras from Cognex. The system is not sensitive to variations in colour in the stems which are more or less quite pale. The system measures the width of the stem and the differences between the leaves and the flowers as well as detecting any wilted flower heads.

Now for the good news...

This vision system and machine developed by the 3 companies can be used for other applications and is available all year round!

About Cognex

Cognex Corporation designs, develops, manufactures, and markets machine vision sensors and systems, or devices that can "see." Cognex vision sensors are used in factories around the world to automate the manufacture of a wide range of items and to assure their quality. Cognex is the world's leader in the machine vision industry, having shipped more than 350,000 machine vision systems, representing over \$2 billion in cumulative revenue, since the company's founding in 1981. In addition to its corporate headquarters in Natick, Massachusetts, Cognex also has regional offices and distributors located throughout North America, Japan, Europe, Asia, and Latin America. Visit Cognex on-line at <http://www.cognex.com>.

Images: 1_Sterkelec_hires.JPG
2_Sterkelec_hires.JPG

