EASING BELT WEAR

The FGP Primary Cleaner is engineered with a simple-to-adjust spring tensioning unit that ensures optimal blade-to-belt contact. This made it an obvious solution for dealing with the sugary breakfast pastry frosting in our other real world scenario. The Flexco cleaner helped extend the manufacturer's belt life by removing the abrasive sugar carryback, keeping it from accumulating on the rollers and other components, reducing excessive wear and belt mistracking.

FACILITATING EASY SANITISATION, USDA CERTIFICATION

Engineered solutions such as the FGP Primary Cleaner from Flexco are designed for ease of use, including quick disassembly (under a minute for the FGP) for sanitisation. The FGP is actually the only engineered solution to have earned USDA certification, with minimal crevices to harbor bacteria or other contaminants, a 32 Ra surface finish, only FDA-approved materials and designed using only rounded interior angles to make sanitation easier.

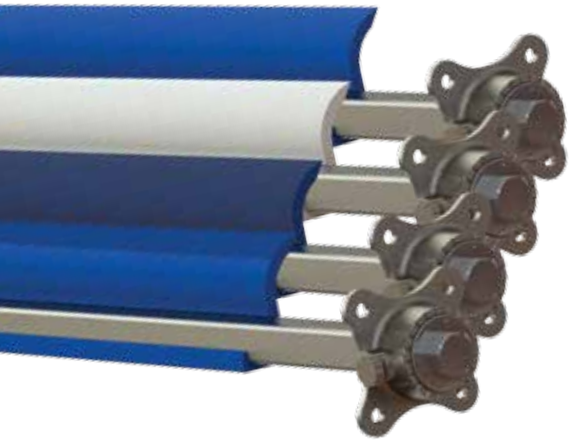
The only USDA-certified food grade precleaner

REDUCING MAINTENANCE TIME

The FGP's quick disassembly/reassembly helps reduce the time and cost of overall maintenance. In addition, the blade snaps off and back into place without removing any other parts, reducing the time it takes to clean or replace the blade. The FGP is also designed with stand-offs that allow cleaning without the need to remove the end plates.

ACHIEVING PROACTIVE COMPLIANCE

As discussed earlier, the recently enacted FSMA will make it incumbent upon food manufacturers to adopt a proactive stance on food safety. Employing certified equipment, such as the USDA Certified FGP Food Grade Primary Cleaner from Flexco, will assist in reaching compliance with FSMA regulations, ease the regular inspection process, and reduce liability should issues nonetheless arise.



Flexco FGP available with blue, white, dual durometer blue, and metal detectable blue blades

FLEXCO COST SAVINGS EXCEED PURCHASE COSTS

As you can see, by reducing or eliminating product carryback, cost savings will begin to add up, more than offsetting the cost of purchasing an engineered cleaner.

This leads to:

- Reduced product waste
- Less belt damage due to mistracking or abrasion
- Fewer employee injuries from slipping in spilled product
- Minimised maintenance and sanitation costs
- Proactive compliance with FSMA

For more information on this or any of our other food processing solutions, visit **www.flexco.com**.

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ADDING UP THE TRUE COST OF YOUR HOMEMADE CONVEYOR BELT CLEANER

It's no secret that food manufacturing is an inherently messy business, particularly in the area of keeping conveyor lines clean and free of product carryback. Carryback occurs when material transported along conveyor belts adheres to the underside of the belt instead of being cleaned off or released. When not managed appropriately, the risks of carryback can be measured in immediate terms that include loss of product, excessive downtime and cleanup costs. Over the long term, it can lead to even more costly issues, such as product contamination, or sizable fines resulting from regulatory noncompliance.

All of these issues ultimately translate into lost revenue, which can impact your ability to effectively compete in a tight market.

Many food manufacturers choose to mitigate their carryback issues with homemade belt cleaners, assuming they're in the best position to contrive a cleaner that will conform perfectly to their conveyor system. Such assumptions, however, can be misguided.

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STICKY SCENARIOS

Let's take a look at some actual industry scenarios in which product carryback presented a significant challenge.

For one leading food manufacturer, the problem was the sticky frosting drizzled over its breakfast pastries—which also stuck to its conveyor belts, gummed up its rollers and generally created a sanitation and cleaning nightmare. Additionally, the sticky buildup caused belts to mistrack, while the abrasive sugar in the frosting was causing them premature wear. The company's crew tried employing a homemade belt cleaner, but still found themselves replacing damaged belts every two weeks.

In another sticky situation, a snack food producer's homemade cleaner was proving unsuccessful at cleaning up residue from the wet, sticky snack chip dough that was sprayed onto the belt during one stage of processing. Not only was this a constant, stubborn mess, but also resulted in significant product loss.

GNAWING AWAY AT PROFITS

As these real world examples illustrate, the failure to effectively control product carryback could be gnawing away at your profitability. Extended downtime—whether for belt repair, sanitation of the line, or excessive maintenance—means lost productivity. Similarly, manually scraping and scrubbing off product that has adhered to your belts and rollers is a time-consuming process. Spillage that ends up on your plant floor is not only wasted product, but also a potential slipping hazard for your workers.

SANITATION IS CRITICAL

Proper sanitation is a process issue that cannot be given anything short of 100% effort—the potential consequences are far too dire. The possibility of product contamination is very real, and a single recall has the potential to bring down a manufacturing organisation.

While homemade cleaning devices may be well-intentioned, it is quite likely they are not designed to meet important USDA requirements. If the cleaner is created with material having a rough surface finish, for example, or has small or hidden crevices, product can accumulate in these spaces and provide a growth medium for bacteria.

THE PROBLEMS WITH HOMEMADE CLEANERS

In each of the scenarios above, an attempt was made to resolve the carryback issue with makeshift conveyor belt scrapers. These homemade devices can be seductively inexpensive at first glance, cobbled together in-house from spare pieces and parts, and with the intent of being custom-fit to your belt system. But most operations find that their homemade cleaners actually cost more than they save in the long run, after factoring in performance and other key variables.

For a device to provide efficient and effective cleaning, it must exert just the right amount of pressure on the belt, so proper tensioning is a critical factor. Many homemade scrapers apply too much pressure and cause damage to the belt or splice, clearly a counterproductive result. Belt damage can also occur if the cleaner's blade material is too rigid.

Other homemade cleaners do not apply enough pressure to the belt to remove all excess product, instead allowing it to accumulate on the belt and conveyor components. If a cleaner is present but not doing its job, it may be providing a false sense of security.

Additionally, some conveyor systems have variations in the belt or pulley that render a rigid tensioning system ineffective altogether. For such systems, only a device engineered to provide consistent blade-to-belt contact will effectively prevent product carryback.

IN PLANT MAINTENANCE, TIME = MONEY

The ability to easily clean the cleaning device also may not have been considered in a homemade design. If a device is complicated to disassemble for cleaning, downtime will necessarily be increased, as will potential food safety risks. As cleaner blades experience edge degradation and need to be replaced, or when the cleaner needs to be removed as part of general plant maintenance, complicated cleaner construction will again impact downtime and productivity.

ENGINEERED CLEANERS: DESIGNED FOR PERFORMANCE

Engineered conveyor belt cleaners can provide an easy, effective and often surprisingly affordable alternative to homemade solutions. First and foremost, these engineered solutions do what they're designed to do: eliminate conveyor belt carryback. By employing cleaners that thoroughly remove excess product from their belts, plants experience a reduced need to manually clean their belts, rollers, etc. to remove what homemade cleaners miss.

REDUCING SCRAP LOSSES

Eliminating carryback will result in far less product scrap. The snack food manufacturer in our earlier scenario decided to try an engineered solution for food manufacturers in place of their homemade cleaner: the FGP from Flexco, the only food grade primary cleaner that's USDA certified. Designed for the toughest food applications, FGP's spring tensioner was easily adjusted to ensure optimal blade-to-belt contact, maximising its cleaning capabilities. By significantly reducing carryback of the snack chip dough, they were able to reduce scrap losses by 60% compared with their homemade cleaner.

Reducing Scrap Losses by 60%

FOOD SAFETY MODERNIZATION ACT

Food Safety Regulatory compliance for all food manufacturing equipment is becoming increasingly critical, particularly with the passage and recent timeline clarifications of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). The Act is intended to alter the nation's food safety paradigm from reactive to preventive, thus strengthening the food safety system to better protect public health. Noncompliance with the FSMA may result in food manufacturers being assessed significant fines, impacting overall profitability.