

25% higher productivity to accelerate expansion into Africa and the Middle East

Herba Ricemills optimises storage capacity with the Automated Pallet Shuttle system and Easy WMS warehouse management software.

Country: **Spain** | Sector: **food & beverage**



CHALLENGES

- Lower operating costs to strengthen competitiveness.
- Increase throughput and reduce picking errors for shipments to dozens of countries.
- Maximise rice storage capacity while minimising handling times.

SOLUTION

- Automated Pallet Shuttle with a stacker crane.
- Easy WMS Warehouse Management System.
- Semi-automated Pallet Shuttle.
- Pallet Flow Racking.

BENEFITS

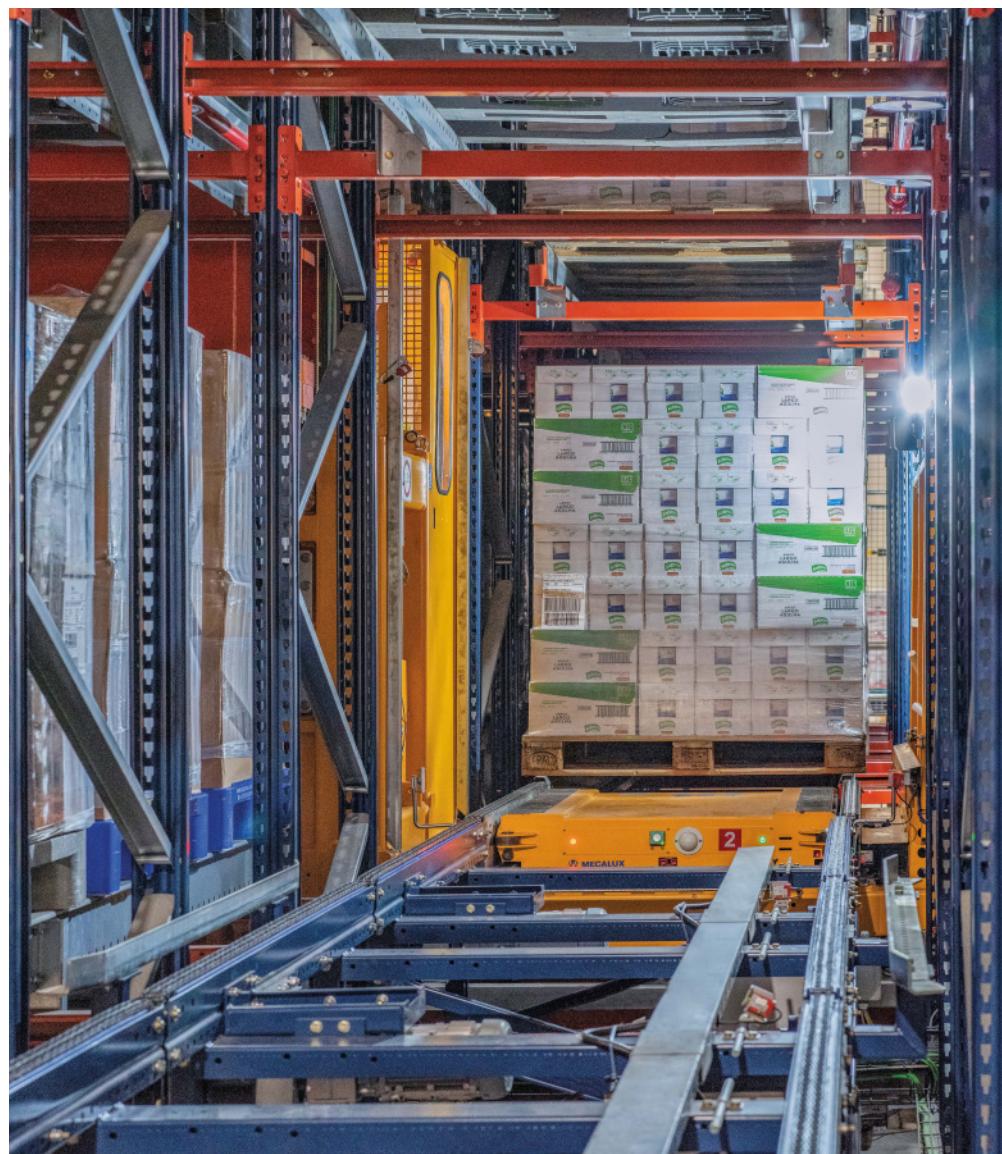
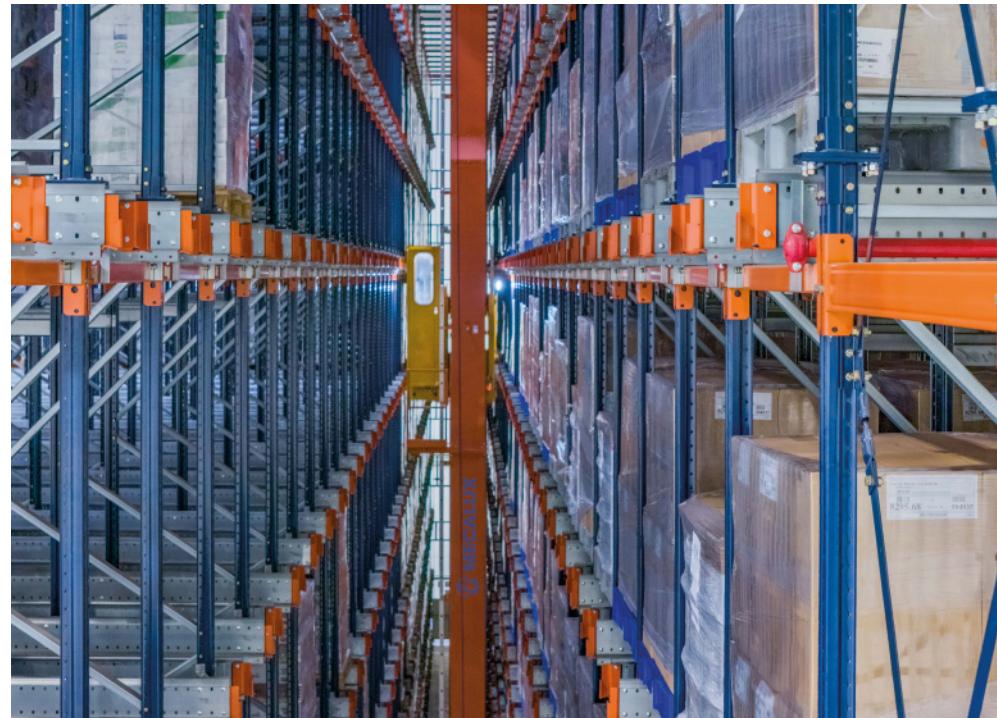
- 25% productivity increase.
- 95% reduction in picking errors.
- Optimised storage capacity.

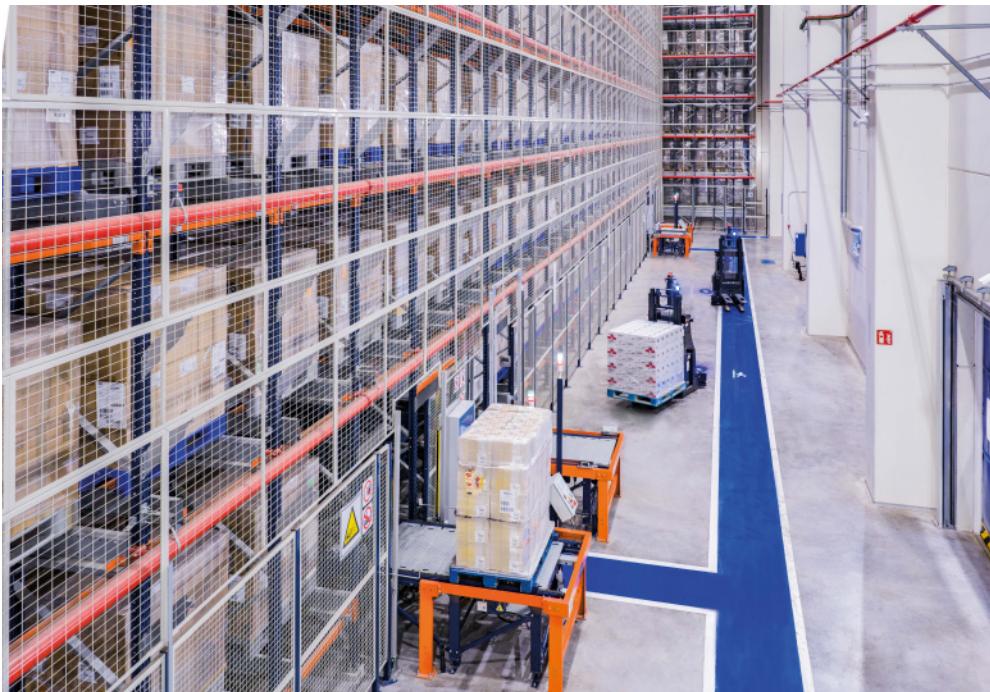
Herba Ricemills products can be found in millions of kitchens worldwide. Founded in the province of Seville, the business has cultivated rice in the Guadalquivir marshlands since the 1950s. In 1989, it joined the multinational Ebro Group, a global leader in the rice industry and Spain's top food company. At its San José de la Rinconada plant (Seville), Herba Ricemills produces its domestic brands Brillante and Sabroz in addition to export brands such as Cigala for Portugal, Minute for the US and Lassie for the Dutch market.

- » **No. of employees: 5,300**
- » **Distribution: 61+ countries**
- » **Production: 16+ countries**

As demand for ready meals continues to rise, rice producer Herba Ricemills is preparing to expand into Africa and the Middle East while scaling sales in its established markets. To support this growth, the company commissioned an automated storage and retrieval system (AS/RS) designed by Mecalux at its San José de la Rinconada plant (Seville). This site manufactures ready-to-serve cooked rice products and ships brands such as Minute to North America, Lassie to the Netherlands, Cigala to Portugal, and Brillante and Sabroz domestically.

"After implementing the system, productivity increased by around 25%, while picking errors dropped by more than 95%," says Manuel Matías Martínez, Head of Warehousing and Logistics Management at





The Easy WMS-controlled AS/RS has streamlined Herba Ricemills' operations while reducing operating costs

Herba Ricemills' San José de la Rinconada facility.

To raise storage density and streamline movements, the company installed Mecalux's Automated Pallet Shuttle with a stacker crane. Standing 18.5 m tall, this AS/RS has significantly expanded capacity. Moreover, it has accelerated inbound and outbound flows through an electric shuttle that autonomously loads and unloads pallets within the racking. By making better use of available space, Herba Ricemills can now store up to 5,400 pallets. "Ebro Foods' international, multi-brand strategy involves a high number of SKUs, each with a substantial volume. This scenario clearly warranted the implementation of an AS/RS," says Juan Pedro Álvarez, Director of Ebro Foods' Ready to Serve division in Spain.

Before this upgrade, the company managed inventory with its ERP system, with operators manually placing goods on shelves or directly on the floor. "That setup required greater flow coordination, used space less efficiently and increased the likelihood of picking mistakes. We needed a system that would maximise capacity, shorten handling times and ensure complete traceability," says Álvarez.

Herba Ricemills' facility also incorporates racking equipped with the semi-automated Pallet Shuttle, well-suited for working with very high volumes of same-SKU pallets.

Operators supervise all these storage solutions through Mecalux's warehouse management system. "Easy WMS provides us

with end-to-end, real-time control over our facility. We now track locations, inventory status and product flows accurately. Training was straightforward, and the team gained full autonomy quickly," says Matías.

A constant material flow

The ingredients and auxiliary materials Herba Ricemills uses in rice production arrive at the docks and enter the automated warehouse through three inbound inspection stations along the side of the building. A fleet of AGVs transports the loads to a pallet conveyor. This then feeds the goods into the Automated Pallet Shuttle system, where the stacker crane stores them in the racking. The coordination between these technologies enables a 100% automated flow without manual intervention.



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“To remain competitive, implementing the latest technologies is essential. It's no longer a luxury — it's an imperative. The time for innovation is now.”

Juan Pedro Álvarez
Director, Ready to Serve Division,
Ebro Foods (Spain)

A transfer car sorts outbound SKUs into a series of flow channels as directed by Easy WMS and the company's ERP system. The Herba Ricemills facility is also outfitted with pallet flow racking to hold goods in quarantine for inspection and quality control. This setup minimises travel distances, shortens forklift manoeuvring times and speeds up pallet retrieval.

Herba Ricemills' team rates the AS/RS highly for the productivity gains achieved at the plant. “We aimed to take a technological leap to enhance efficiency and operational reliability. We've reached zero errors, reduced order fulfilment times, optimised space and now maintain a steady material flow,” says

Matías. The implemented solutions have also strengthened traceability, a key requirement in the rice industry. “We need to know the origin, batch and destination of every product unit at all times. The AS/RS and Easy WMS ensure end-to-end tracking from receipt through to dispatch. In addition to lowering errors, they support regulatory compliance and reinforce client trust.”

Ebro Foods' commitment to service excellence highlighted the need for automation, which has considerably cut operating costs. “To remain competitive, implementing the latest technologies is essential. It's no longer a luxury — it's an imperative. The time for innovation is now,” says Álvarez.

