

# ERGONOMICS MATTER FOR FOOD PRODUCTION FACILITIES

A White Paper by Unifiller Systems Inc.





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 01 Introduction
- 02 Food Production is a High Risk Work Environment
- 03 Automated Equipment can Help Prevent Employee Injuries – and Much More
- 04 Final Note



## INTRODUCTION

People who work in bakeries and food plants face many physical stressors on a daily basis. Lifting heavy weights, repetitive motions, bending over pans and trays, and walking steps from station to station (often while carrying heavy items) are just a few of the tasks that can cause musculoskeletal injuries in the body.

It's every facility's responsibility to provide a comfortable and safe work environment for their employees. The repercussions of employee injuries can be felt not just by the person who sustained the injury, but also by the establishment itself.

This whitepaper will take a closer look at why food production facilities and bakeries of all sizes need an ergonomically-friendly work environment and how using automated equipment can help achieve that.



## FOOD PRODUCTION IS A HIGH-RISK WORK ENVIRONMENT

In 2020, the [injury rate in the food manufacturing sector](#) was above average at 5.1 per 100 employees (Across all industries, the injury rate was 2.9 per 100 workers). In December 2021, Baking and Snack magazine shared that the [injury rate of commercial bakeries](#) was even higher at 5.4 for every 100 employees.

This high risk of injury in food production plants is no surprise when you consider the strenuous—and often repetitive—physical labor involved in shift work. Even the seemingly innocuous act of scooping product can be harmful to workers' health.

According to one individual working in the food sector:

“Scooping [product] involves applying force against the wrist when gripping the handle of the scooper against [the product] and applying force in and around the thumb muscles when releasing the scooper. Scooping for hours daily can lead to injuries like carpal tunnel syndrome or tendinitis. It's detrimental to workers' overall health and long-term well-being.”





### AUTOMATED EQUIPMENT CAN HELP PREVENT EMPLOYEE INJURIES—AND MUCH MORE

There are many benefits to using automated food & bakery equipment. Whether you're looking at using a stand-alone machine like [Unifiller's iSpot depositor](#) to deposit sauces or even a [full-scale production line](#) to decorate cakes, automated equipment enables bakeries of all sizes to improve production efficiency while liberating workers from tasks that require repetitive motions and heavy lifting. Unifiller's portioning equipment automates pumping, portioning and decorating with compact and easy to use machines. Food pumps assist in transferring batters, sauces and more from a bowl, kettle or containers directly into a depositor without any heavy lifting which usually results in back or neck strain. Depositors like the Compact or Universal automate batter, cream or sauce portioning to accurate portions quickly with the flip of a trigger or press of a pedal. While decorating equipment like the COM can top and side a full cake in 1.3 seconds thereby eliminating the need to repetitively squeeze a pastry bag.

Automated equipment, especially machines designed specifically with ergonomics in mind, are an excellent solution for protecting businesses from the following:

#### LABOR SHORTAGES

For employees, working in discomfort and sustaining injuries can quickly turn into low job satisfaction, if not burnout. From this point onward, it's an easy decision to find work elsewhere. Management who do not intervene to address this problem will find themselves struggling with high employee turnover—which comes at a [high cost](#).

#### HIGH LABOR COSTS

Labor costs are the most direct measure of ergonomics' ROI. They are the sum of several different expenses, such as hiring costs (to fill spots vacated by employees who quit or are on medical leave due to injury), training costs, and medical benefits paid to employees. According to [Investopedia](#), the cost of replacing an \$8/hour employee can cost a business around \$3,500.

#### LOSS OF PRODUCTIVITY

From an operational standpoint, workplace injuries equate to lost days of work. And every bakery that has been short staffed knows that a smaller available workforce equates to a drop in overall productivity and efficiency. This drop causes a trickle-down effect, and can lead to major problems like increased downtime, product loss, and quality control issues—all of which impact the bottom line.

### FINAL NOTE

It's more important than ever for establishments to provide a safe and comfortable working environment for their employees. Many facilities are operating with a smaller-than-ideal staff due to the ongoing issues, and the remaining available workers are left even more susceptible to injuries from managing the larger workloads and longer hours.

Start protecting your people and business today. [Contact a Unifiller representative](#) to take the first step.



#### Sources:

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