

ORCHARD'S INNOVATOR

California's Jas Thiara thrives on making the best even better

Jas Thiara approaches manufacturing a bit differently than mainstream manufacturers. He openly admits to being a square peg in a round hole — a concept reflected in his company logo.



Thiara is a thinker, and his unique approach is revealed in his vision and skill to turn what may seem mechanically impossible into a high-functioning machine. "The phrase 'it can't be done,' doesn't exist in our vocabulary," says Thiara. Need to improve efficiency? Thiara possesses the engineering expertise to make something operate better than ever.

His experience welding and fabricating machines goes back to his youth building orchard equipment alongside his father in northern California. "I've been building equipment since I was 19, when I built my first bin carrier," recalls Thiara.

Three decades later, Thiara still builds bin carriers, plus a whole lot more. As the owner and operator of Mechanical & Irrigation Solutions (MIS), Inc. in Yuba City, California, Thiara has taken a lifetime of learning with hands-on experience and rolled it into a business that creates customized solutions — helping farming operations become more time efficient and streamlined "the way modern-day farming is done," says Thiara.

With several locations in California, MIS rents farm equipment, sells parts, performs repairs, and offers a wide range of services from ripping and excavating to stump grinding.

In 2015, the company bought the Kilby brand of bin carriers, nut sweepers, and shaker/receivers. MIS has re-engineered them to improve efficiencies and continues to expand the line, fabricating orchard machines — many of them powered by John Deere engines.

His most recent project was a new shaker and receiver called the Kilby P.E.A.C.H. Special. P.E.A.C.H. stands for "Precisely Engineered Angle Control Harvester," and Thiara launched the first prototype in July after receiving a grant from the California Canning Peach Association.

The industry wanted a shaker head with a gentler shake to extend the life of peach and cherry trees. This led Thiara to develop a new shaker head for the Kilby P.E.A.C.H. Special called the Black Mamba, named after an African snake. It features center-balanced



MIS, Inc. showcases its Kilby orchard machines at the Colusa Farm Show in California.

weights on the shaking arm that produces a more controlled shake through a twisting motion (rather than a swinging motion) to reduce harm to the fruit.

“We believe the gentler shake is not only easier on the tree and the harvested fruit, but it also reduces the amount of tree debris falling onto the receiver during harvest,” explains Thiara. The new head also produces less wear and tear on the shaker. “We wanted to get the shaking weight as close to the tree as possible so that the horsepower goes to the tree, not to the machine.”

John Deere PowerTech™ E 4.5L engines power the hydraulics on both the shaker and receiver. In fact, Thiara has been powering irrigation equipment and harvesting machines with John Deere engines for the past seven years. “John Deere engines are the simplest and easiest engines to work on. Parts are readily available, and downtime is almost nil. Anyone who’s been around this valley realizes that my competitors use John Deere engines, too. It’s a quality product.”

Mechanical & Irrigation Solutions purchases the engines from Rich Carroll of Western Power Products. “You could call that guy seven days a week, 24 hours a day. You can’t find a better group than at Western Power.”



Jas Thiara (left) and his son, Manik, display a new 2017 Tag-A-Long that travels behind a receiver when harvesting peaches.

“I’ve been building equipment since I was 16, when I built my first bin carrier.”

— Jas Thiara, Mechanical & Irrigation Solutions

In the coming months, Thiara will team with Western Power Products and develop orchard machines with John Deere Final Tier 4/Stage IV engines. As this transition progresses, Thiara plans to incorporate innovative features into the machines that will ease service and diagnostics. For example, Thiara recently developed the Americas System, an

electronic diagnostic tool comprised of three “red, white, and blue” hydraulic test ports. “You could be operating the machine anywhere in the world, and with these three test ports, we can diagnose the hydraulic functions of your machine.”

Thiara says he’s always keeping the needs of the driver and the mechanic at the forefront of his mind. “Just by working on farms myself, I know how to make equipment more efficient, productive, comfortable, and simple to maintain. Fortunately, we have the foresight and engineering capability to do it.”

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