

SUPPLIERS SLOW TO TOSS OUT THE PAPER

As suppliers to supermarkets and foodservice operators feel the pressure to manage error-free traceability systems, there has never been a greater incentive to leave the paper behind

MANY ORGANISATIONS in the fresh produce industry still operate manual paper-based traceability systems where data is handwritten onto batch sheets.

However, apart from being highly labour-intensive, there is a growing concern around such systems from customers, such as supermarkets and foodservice organisations. In this article, Anglia Business Solutions looks at the hidden benefits than can

have significant hidden benefits.

The main advantage of having full product traceability built into your electronic business processes is visibility of stock movements by batch. In manual paper-bound processes, the data is only available to people with access to the physical paperwork. With its electronic equivalent, the captured data can immediately be shared with the wider workforce.

“The issue with manual records is that the process of analysing the data becomes a logistical nightmare where large volumes of data are involved.”

be gained from automating this process.

The key business issue is one of customer confidence. What bothers them most is how quickly and efficiently the supplier can provide them with reliable data in the event of a problem with any product. The issue with manual records is that the process of analysing the data becomes a logistical nightmare where large volumes of data are involved.

The requirement is for a system that provides comprehensive traceability information at the touch of a button. The desired deliverable is a full, paperless audit trail of raw material traceable by lot and batch number.

While this may seem like an unnecessary overhead for the business to bear, the reality is that legislation and customer demands are likely to force companies to adopt these practices sooner rather than later. Pre-empting this by tackling the issue before it becomes mandatory could

This can assist in flagging problems, such as quality issues or order shortages as they occur. The advantage is that it can enable the management to take rapid pre-emptive action to head off a potential customer relationship issue. The real benefit, however, is having the flexibility to respond promptly to changes in customer demands. In the fresh produce sector, orders are constantly changed at very short notice in response to consumer buying trends. The recent Short Order Lead Time (SOLT) initiative by Tesco is a taste of things to come.

To optimise sales in the supermarkets, suppliers of perishable goods are likely to come under more rather than less pressure where product deliveries are concerned. With access to accurate dynamic electronic data, it becomes feasible to meet those demands without employing a small army of administrators.

Entry Date	Document	Item No.	Quantity	Unit of	Lot No.	Posting	Source To	Location	Order No.
14/10/05	14078	3010	1.000	BCK12	LF000005				10001-PO
26/10/05	4508	3010	-1	C48E12	LF000005				

Natures Way Marketing provides a useful example of this theory in action. Prior to implementing its LINKFresh solution, the company was reliant on a variety of disparate applications and processes to run its business.

These made product visibility and

reportedly impressed one of its major clients, which should lead to a welcome increase in turnover with this organisation.

The reality is that the availability of full lot traceability will become the norm in future for any supplier to the major retailers. The greater prize is

“To optimise supermarket sales, suppliers of perishable goods are likely to come under more rather than less pressure where product deliveries are concerned.”

traceability difficult to say the least. Having transferred to the new solution, the business benefits were quite significant. The introduction of live stock coupled with full lot traceability has brought major benefits to the organisation. It now has total control over the movement of stock across the organisation. This has

the improvement in efficiency and agility that it brings to the implementing organisation.

The benefits to the company can range from increased turnover to improved margins. This can make the difference between surviving and thriving in the cut-throat world of the electronic information age. ○