

LINKFRESH DEPLOYMENT ACHIEVES PRODUCTIVITY IMPROVEMENTS FOR LFP

Anglia Business Solutions reports on an integrated solution deployed within four months and to budget

SPALDING-BASED Lincolnshire Field Products Ltd (LFP) is one of the UK's leading fresh produce growers and producers. The company has an annual turnover of £100 million and farms in excess of 12,000 acres. LFP is principally focused on the production, procurement, packing and distribution of fresh vegetables to a range of high street retailers.

It had invested significant resources in refining its legacy system to meet specific needs. However, LFP felt the technology was no longer capable of responding quickly enough to the business challenges of a rapidly growing organisation. As a result, many processes were handled outside of the core business management system, which led to duplication of data, increased administration costs and inefficient working practices.

The business need was to free up valuable manpower from the task of running a variety of disparate systems to enable them to add value to the customer experience. By focusing on quality assurance, purchasing control, price negotiation and closer monitoring of stock movements, LFP could ensure that it could improve customer service, while protecting the commercial interests of the company.

LFP IT manager Paul Witherington explains: "What we wanted was to incorporate all of our disparate systems and processes into one centralised information system. Our overall aim was to improve efficiency while taking cost out of the business. The solution also had to be flexible enough to meet our current needs, while enabling us to respond quickly to changes in our customer requirements. We also needed a system that could be rapidly implemented and within budget. We had some aggressive milestones to achieve that we didn't want to miss given the seasonal nature of our business.

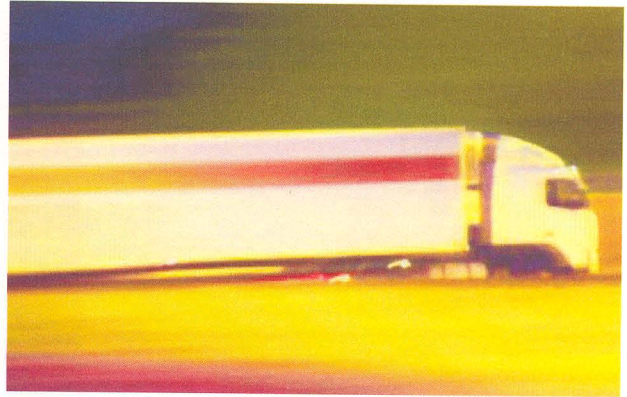
"We went through an extensive two year evaluation period where we assessed a wide variety of alternative options before selecting the LINKFresh suite," he says. "What impressed us was the depth of specific fresh produce functionality incorporated within the package. It was clear that it would meet most of our requirements within the standard LINKFresh and Microsoft Dynamics NAV functionality. The system could also be rapidly configured to cope with our way of working. This was

important as we wanted to take the opportunity to change the previous business processes imposed by the legacy system to reflect best industry practice as part of the new solution."

A combination of powerful LINKFresh fresh produce functionality seamlessly integrated with the global leading Dynamics NAV ERP suite from Microsoft were used to meet the full requirements of the company. The LINKFresh deployment handles all of LFP's financial and supply chain requirements in one central, fully integrated and easy-to-use solution. LFP needed to manage and track stock information. Simple user-friendly interfaces were configured that allowed LFP personnel to rapidly book in produce arriving from the field. This captured details on the grower, field, plot and gang labour. This provided LFP with the required information to be able to self-bill and track and trace receipts of produce at any time.

The introduction of the LINKFresh Supply Chain modules allowed LFP's supply personnel to manage supply and demand more efficiently. The functionality within this powerful application facilitates the raising of cut instructions, complete with 'display until' and bagging instructions for pack in the field. The solution also provides for the automation of all required documentation directly from the core system. In addition, using LINKFresh Consignments and Purchase Order Management, LFP are now able to manage their total supply chain, both from their own farm and field. This covers their extensive range of UK contract farms and growers, and their many overseas suppliers. It also facilitates the traceability of produce down to the level of lot, consignment, grower, field and plot.

The deployment of the LINKFresh Replenishment functionality enabled LFP to completely automate the allocation of their sales order demand across their extensive network of both internal and external packhouses and suppliers. The replenishment granule allows LFP to pre-specify a series of sophisticated rules which determine how sales order demand will be allocated to its various supply channels. "Alternate Rules" specified by date range to allow for seasonal variations, and "Daily Exception Rules" to cater for one-off variances is



also incorporated.

This has enabled LFP to completely define its replenishment and fulfillment business logic.

The company has now automated their EDI sales order processing. As orders are received late each evening, LINKFresh EDI order processing imports the raw EDI order file. According to a number of optional settings, the system automatically translates and splits the orders according to delivery depots and replenishment requirements.

It also releases the orders, issues requirements to the pack houses via email, raises purchase and packing orders and receipt goods into the warehouse.

This degree of automation has had a significant impact on productivity, Witherington says: "The process of managing and processing the incoming EDI orders was a major daily task. It occupied most of the working day for both the supply managers and other members of the sales team. Most of it is now done automatically in a matter of seconds, and has released the team to focus on client service initiatives."

In addition to the implementation of the LINKFresh solution, LFP had a number of financial and administrative requirements. The solution was enhanced to provide an invoice register and management system, and a number of configured facilities. These include supplier self bill, packhouse labour self-bill, consolidated payment runs and a host of other features.

"The financial aspects of the system have helped enormously," explains managing director Robin Hancox. "Cash management is so much easier; reporting much quicker and getting

information to our growers has been greatly improved.

"In addition, periodic reporting is simpler, which has provided us with access to information that was not available with the legacy system. In an industry littered with failed system implementations, it is gratifying to report that the solution was successfully delivered within budget and against a very challenging deadline."

The company now has a leading-edge modern centralised business management solution that manages all of its operational processes, says ABS.

This has replaced a variety of disparate systems that were expensive and difficult to manage. The main benefit has been a significant reduction in data duplication resulting in reduced administration costs.

Overall, the LFP solution has provided the company with an extensive range of product and customer information directly from the system. This level of management information has enabled the company to quickly react to client or product trends issues.

"The previous LFP system had been significantly tailored over a period of 10 years to meet the very specific needs of the company," commented Anglia's managing director David Hurley. "To totally replace and subsequently exceed the requirements of such a system operating in a £100 million business in less than four months, on time and within budget, has been a major achievement.

"It is a tribute to the LFP team and the innovation and deployment expertise of Anglia that such a solution could be successfully implemented in such a short period." ○