

# LINKFRESH PROVIDES VALLEY GROWN SALADS WITH SIGNIFICANT EFFICIENCY GAINS

This month, we take a look at how the deployment of the Microsoft Dynamics NAV based LINKFresh solution from Anglia Business Solutions has helped boost efficiency at Essex-based salad supplier Valley Grown Salads

**VALLEY GROWN** Salads (VGS), based at Roydon in Essex, supplies locally grown and imported tomatoes, peppers, aubergines and cucumbers to three leading supermarkets.

The company occupies a 30,000sqft packhouse on a 2.5-acre site in Roydon, with a further 10a of glasshouses in the Lea Valley and 600a of growing area in south-east Spain. This ensures year-round supply of produce to its customers. VGS operates its own fleet of refrigerated transport and is LEAF marque accredited.

The firm's main business need was to use information technology as an aid to productivity throughout the business. Its legacy systems were struggling to cope with the regulatory and traceability issues now demanded of the food industry.

The company operated a variety of disparate paper and electronic applications to manage the movement of produce throughout the organisation. This led to significant duplication of data. Apart from the increasing administration costs, it was becoming difficult to gain access to useful management information on customers and products. The ideal scenario was to have rapid access to stock information in real time. In addition, there was a need to monitor the performance of growers as a means of improving quality. Furthermore, the company wished to reduce waste and increase efficiency.

Having carried out an extensive market evaluation, VGS chose the Microsoft Dynamics NAV based LINKFresh solution from Microsoft Gold Certified Partner, Anglia Business Solutions. The solution encompassed the LINKFresh modules for foundation, supply chain and logistics during the initial phase. These were augmented during the second phase by the integration of advanced mobility applications. These dynamically recorded all stock transactions as the produce moved through the supply chain.

The previous method of sales order processing represented a major challenge to the VGS administrative team. As there was no interface from the EDI system with any of VGS's systems, these were re-entered manually to the required areas of the business. This highly labour-intensive, error-prone manual process was replaced by the sophisticated order-handling facilities within the

LINKFresh suite. The solution directly links to the EDI system and a single data entry automatically disseminates information throughout the company.

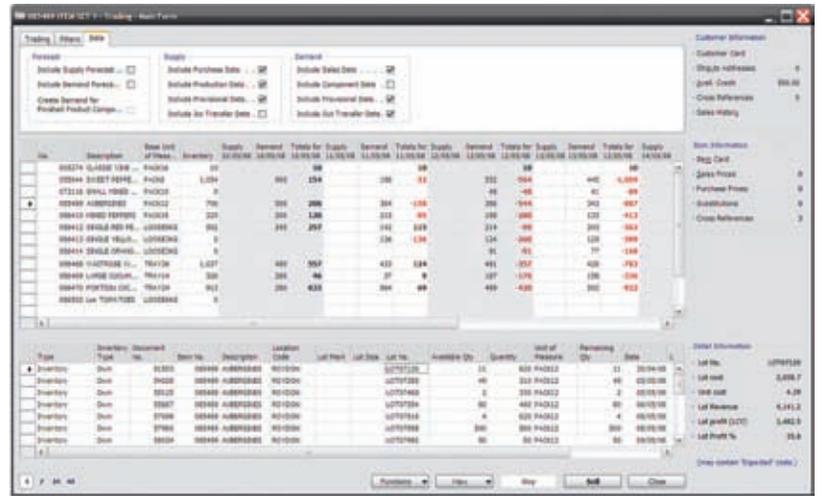
A key element of the VGS procurement, sales and production cycle was the VGS stock control sheet. This Microsoft-Excel based system was used to collate all the required operational stock information for each week. While the sheets provided the required critical operational information for each week, it was a static information grid. There was no integration with any of VGS's other data systems and it had to be updated manually. The management of this spreadsheet took up a significant part of each employee's day. Anglia deployed its LINKFresh Warehouse Management module to replace all manual and paper-based systems.

The Microsoft Dynamics NAV based LINKFresh Mobile Warehouse Management solution was implemented to refine this vital element of the supply chain.

VGS sends small quantities of produce to market for market trade at open price. Although making up a small percentage of the firm's total business, it was time-consuming to administer, as recording was manual. Today, the LINKFresh solution provides a sophisticated but easy-to-use application for the open price sale of consignments to the market trade. This enables VGS to manage, monitor and report profitability on all of its market trade operations. Additionally, designated suppliers can also supply VGS on an open price basis. The LINKFresh Trading Board shows all inbound and outbound stock movements and current stock position on a single screen, while facilitating the buying and selling of stock.

Ian Parrott, VGS operations director, said: "Visibility of dynamic stock information on the trading screen has provided us with a very useful aid in reducing waste. We can immediately see when we have to react to potential stock surpluses and reduce our write-off exposure."

Prior to the introduction of the LINKFresh suite, the production department had no software-based operational system. To meet the production challenges within VGS, the standard LINKFresh Supply Chain and Operations Granules were



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deployed for the full data capture and automation of the production cycle.

These replaced the various paper-based processes with a single, fully integrated solution. The production manager can see all of the day's orders from the production summary screen. This information can be for a single day or customer or a range of days or customers.

VGS is required to deliver daily to between four and 12 depots. It undertakes the haulage of both its own and third-party produce. Previously, all logistics were planned by hand and processed manually. The LINKFresh Logistics Module was deployed to provide for all load planning and transport schedule requirements. The transport manager can see all of the 'requests for transport' from the sales team.

"The integrated LINKFresh logistics system has greatly improved how we manage our delivery processes," said Parrott. "Better planning means fewer road journeys. This has minimised our expensive fuel costs, while helping the environment."

To manage its financial system needs, the VGS finance department previously used the intellect financial system. However, the system was not integrated with VGS's other systems or processes. It was estimated that an additional five to six hours a week were consumed in the re-keying of invoices.

The implementation of the Microsoft Dynamics NAV Core Financials totally eliminated all requirements for duplicate entry. The financial solution has also provided comprehensive reporting and

management accounts information in real time.

The introduction of the warehouse management and trading board element has enabled VGS to significantly reduce wastage and to manage stock more efficiently. Parrott said: "Replacing the VGS stock control sheet has completely removed the requirement for duplicate data entry. Our stock controller previously spent 25 per cent of his time manually managing the Excel Stock Control Sheet. The introduction of the LINKFresh solution has eliminated this workload."

"VGS also wanted to make its operations as environment-friendly as possible. The LINKFresh Transport Management and Logistics Module allows us to ensure that every time one of our vehicles takes to the road, its load is optimised for the maximum number of deliveries using the most efficient route possible."

Parrott added: "The LINKFresh solution has enabled us to greatly improve efficiency. We have reduced administration costs, improved stock management, refined our packhouse operations and become more environment-friendly."

VGS managing director Jimmy Russo said: "Changing our whole internal way of operating to become more efficient was never going to be an easy task. However, the partnership between David Williams, VGS IT manager, and Anglia worked tirelessly to achieve an excellent business-led solution that was delivered within budget. We are now very well placed to compete in a very demanding sector, using LINKFresh as a commercial aid." ○