

Del Campo Supreme Tracks From Field To Fork

Del Campo Supreme is the first Mexican shipper to use HarvestMark's traceability solution, says Jim Cathey, general manager of the company's Nogales, AZ, distribution center. The installation was completed recently and Cathey anticipates the solution's instantaneous and granular traceability back to which farm grew the produce in which field.

The company produces about 10 million cases annually of greenhouse and field-grown Roman, grape, cluster and beefsteak tomatoes, and red, yellow and orange peppers.

Before implementing the system, Del Campo had an in-house system that traced at the case and pallet levels. "But we wanted to get to the next level in traceability," Cathey says. He notes the salmonella problems last year when produce moved

on to re-packers. "Once they start changing the pack styles and make consumer packs, they can hit a wall in traceability and the trail goes cold very quickly."

At the field level, the HarvestMark code is scanned on boxes of clamshell grape tomatoes; then 12 clamshells are packed to a case, which is scanned again.

The data is collected in the company's ERP system and shows which field the tomatoes were harvested from and who packed them. Cases are put on pallets and pallet tags are scanned.

"When the truckload of produce arrives here in our distribution facility, we scan the pallet tag again with handhelds and we have all the data collected while the pro-

duce was in transit to our facility," explains Cathey. "Then when the produce leaves here, we scan it again."



Through these processes at the ranch and at the DC, the collected data can tie products from individual clamshells to the case and the pallet it was shipped on enroute to the DC. "We have the time and date products were unloaded here, and the time and date it was unloaded onto a truck to be delivered and who it was shipped to so we can walk it all the way back through where it was packed in the field," explains Cathey.

"All of these efforts mean true commitment to consumers," continues Cathey. "It means we made the effort to promote food safety before it was legislated." —A.T.

of the application development community."

Furthermore, RFID could enhance the inspection process if the FDA would invest not only in its visual inspections, but in technology to detect microbial and chemical contaminants inspectors cannot see, advises Ryan. "RFID sensors could potentially talk to an RFID backbone and issue real-time alerts if they detect any contaminants so those contaminants can be captured and destroyed."

Web-Delivered Barcode: YottaMark in Redwood City, CA, offers its HarvestMark traceability solution, compatible with PTI and with GS1 standards. The Web-delivered service uses barcode format and collects supply-chain data in its server. The solution can also integrate into an ERP system, as it does with its Mexican grower/packer/shipper/re-packer, Del Campo (see sidebar, above).

"It provides one-up and one-back traceability," explains Elliott Grant, chief marketing officer and founder. This is accomplished with the database information containing GTINs, lot numbers and the shipper's name.

In the event of bad products, the first thing the CDC wants is good data, says Grant. "They can look for commonalities such as discovering all the sickened people ate cantaloupes from a particular GTIN and lot number. It quickly narrows down the problem to a particular lot number or farm. The key is all the other cantaloupes on the market can continue to be sold."

Traceability: A Holistic Endeavor

In the final analysis, brand owners need to take more responsibility for monitoring product quality of their suppliers, advises AMR's Cecere. "Brand owners should require their suppliers to be sharing quality data with them on a near real-time basis so they can track more effectively."

Yet another factor plays into this discussion. The No. 1 pressure in the market about two years ago related to how pain-focused companies are as they aimed to reduce the cost of adverse events and recalls, notes Littlefield at Aberdeen. "Our customers told us this can really hurt their business. But today, there is a transition to be more customer- and quality-focused. For some leading companies, traceability is now more than just

focused on eliminating the pain of a recall event; these companies also want to be more holistic and to improve the quality of the customer experience and customer loyalty." ❖

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