Case study : Traceability in Fresh Foods
Traceability implementation at AL SHAMS in Egypt

The accurate and timely traceability of products and activities in the supply chain has become a new factor in food and agriculture business. Increasingly, consumers in many parts of the world demand for verifiable evidence of traceability as important criteria of food product quality/safety. A major feature of any traceable supply chain is the ability to trace-back the history and consistently track the physical location of the products in the overall supply chain. To achieve these, accurate labeling is essential

Goals and Objectives

GS1 Egypt helped Al Shams Agro Group to set up an automated traceability system which enabled them to be on top of the ever increasing demand for accurate, swift product traceability and produce quality control.
The dedicated food safety / traceability system tracks and traces all fresh produce shipped from Al Shams packing houses till it reaches its final destination.

Partners involved

The following parties were involved in the project facilitated by GS1 Egypt:

• Al Shams Agro Group was established in 1993 with a vision to be a pioneer in the Egyptian fresh produce industry. Although the company is considered small in size but their sharp focus on utilizing the latest technologies in farm and packing house automation has given them the competitive advantage to be one of the best citrus brands in the Mediterranean. (www.al-shams-group.com.eg)

• The Egyptian Traceability Centre for Agro-Industrial Exports (Etrace) is a joint project between the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), and the Egyptian Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI). Etrace is focused on improving the capability of Egyptian farmers, growers and pack houses along the food value chain to meet European and international food quality, safety and traceability standards. Their objective is to ensure that products are safe for consumption and do not encounter barriers to trade. Etrace provides financial and technical assistance to support agro-industrial enterprises in applying traceability systems, upgrading their technology and management systems and in acquiring certification for their exports.

Description of the application

Al Shams receives the fresh produce from their own farms or from external suppliers. All the lots of raw produce are uniquely identified with a lot code. Another unique identifier is given to trace the source of the produce - whether from an external supplier or from their own plot of land. All the other information related to the processing and preparation of the produce like the different batches that were treated together, the cleaning agents / waxes used labour, quality / grading data, packaging material, produced quantities are recorded during each production batch. All this information is linked to each carton produced and subsequently to the pallets shipped to customers all around the world.

GS1 Standards used

The Global Traceability Standard is used to design the traceability system and determine data requirements at each traceability actor, GTIN on all the final consumer packages, GLN for supplier and farm plots identification, SSCC for pallet identification, GS1-128 for carton labels carrying the traceability data like batch number, expiry, harvest dates, carton serial, product identification.

Next Steps

Al Shams Agro Group will work on the consolidation of all their food safety and quality certifications under the same system and migrate from their old paper based quality record keeping. This will add further benefits to Al shams in terms of cost savings and utilization of real time, high quality data in their system.

About GS1 Traceability

The GS1 Traceability solution provides a powerful tool kit for implementing traceability in the supply chain based on the GS1 System of standards.

Benefits and Results

- Strengthening Al Shams competitive position as one of wthe highest quality citrus producers in the Mediterranean.
- Improved Customer satisfaction through reducing number of complaints and the time needed to handle them by more than 75%
- Compliance with the Egyptian traceability agency (E-trace) requirements, EU traceability requirements and other international customer requirements thanks to the use of GS1 standards.
- Automating all operational book keeping in the company like material control, stock taking, labour productivity reporting, production scheduling, inbound and out bound logistics data recording etc.
- Enforcing FIFO rule inside warehouses and distribution centres through system allocation of pallet ids that need to be picked leading to the decrease of expired / spoiled products.
- Return on investment was achieved in two exporting seasons

The GS1 Global Traceability Standard (GTS) is a process standard that defines the Traceability business process and the minimum data management requirements for all traceability systems independently from the technology. It enables companies to implement tracking and tracing of products as they move between companies, whatever the language and tools chosen by each stakeholder.

With special thanks to :

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