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CINDY GARRETT | DIRECTOR OF IT

Caito Foods

Produce distributor enhances food traceability, improves efficiency in the warehouse and delivers exceptional customer service with RFgen Mobile Solutions.

At a glance...

Industry

Food distribution

Applications

PO Processing
Inventory Management
Sales Order Processing
License Plating
Voice Picking

Environment

Oracle's JD Edwards
EnterpriseOne 8.XE
(upgrading to 9.1)

Founded in 1965, Caito Foods operates four distribution centers that send fresh produce to multiple states in the Eastern, Midwest and Southeastern United States. As a distributor, the company wants to ensure that it delivers safe, high-quality produce to its customers. That means being able to trace products through the supply chain and providing grocery retailers with the product information they need to sell produce to the public.

The Challenge

“New legislation required our customers to identify the country of origin on their sales floor signage for the produce they sell. As their supplier, we needed to be able to give them that information. Before we implemented RFgen, we were using a paper-based system,” explained Byron Swails, Caito Foods' Director of Operations. Soon, retailers will also be required to keep track of a unique product identifier known as a Global Trade Item Number—or GTIN code. This code will identify individual farms and enable food professionals to trace produce from “field to fork.”

In the food industry, distributors use third-party audits to demonstrate traceability to customers. “Auditors will come in and give us an item number. They'll say ‘we want to see the period that you sold this item number.’ Usually it's a week or several days,” explained Director of IT, Cindy Garrett.

“We used to have to go out and look for the date range they gave us and pull the information out of our system. We'd first determine our quantity on hand at that time. Then we'd look at our purchase orders and it was kind of a rough estimate. If we had three purchase orders

come in and our quantity on hand never went to zero, we'd have to show all three of the purchase orders, not just the contaminated ones.” There were two problems with this method. First, it took too much time to look up all of the paperwork. Today, food safety agencies expect food companies to be able to conduct traceability audits in hours—not days. Second, Caito Foods' paper-based system was not precise enough to pinpoint only the contaminated material, so in a recall, the company would have to destroy good food with bad.

The Solution

Caito Foods evaluated several data collection solutions and implemented RFgen Mobile Foundations for Oracle's JD Edwards with License Plating and the RFgen-Vocollect Voice Solution. “We selected RFgen due to its ease of working with JD Edwards,” said Swails. RFgen integration is validated by Oracle for JD Edwards EnterpriseOne and JD Edwards World.

RFgen is version independent and does not install on the JD Edwards server or modify its environment. With zero impact to the ERP, RFgen does not cause any hassles when it's time to upgrade—something Caito Foods is in the middle of doing right now. “Upgrading from XE to version 9.1 will be easier since RFgen is on its own server and does not impact the environment,” said Garrett.

“RFgen's expertise is so valuable to us because RFgen has already helped customers convert to the new version of JD Edwards multiple times. The value of that support is second to none,” she added.

The Result

When asked why they chose RFgen, Swails quickly said, "It was all about traceability." In addition RFgen has also added efficiency and accuracy throughout the warehouse.

Using RFgen has enabled Caito Foods to:

- Trace produce from suppliers throughout internal operations and on to grocery retailers, with the capability of instituting full field-to-fork GTIN tracking.
- Improve the efficiency of receiving, put away and inventory replenishment processes.
- Easily combine and repackage products without losing traceability information for ingredients.
- Fully automate intercompany branch transfers, saving time and reducing paperwork.
- Speed up picking and shipping with voice picking.
- Reduce the learning curve for new warehouse workers from three months to just three weeks.
- Deliver country of origin information to customers, improving customer service and competitiveness.

Flawless Traceability

RFgen's License Plating Solution helps create efficient, traceable transactions throughout the warehouse. PO Receiving creates a new record of each preprinted license plate and the license plate label is attached to the pallets. "The license plates are created in receiving as soon as we put product on a pallet," said Richard Heady, WMS Coordinator.

During receiving, warehouse workers capture country of origin and certain quality parameters. They can scan any existing UPC or GTIN barcodes, or RFgen can add codes to the JD Edwards X-Ref table if they do not already exist.

A recent audit confirmed that Caito Foods can track product information quickly and completely, from receiving to shipping. "Now with RFgen every item number has a license plate attached to it with the customer that it went out on. We can bring up the item number in the date range and create a report within minutes to show auditors the actual purchase order that it came in on," Garrett said.

More Efficient Warehouse Operations

After the receiving process has been completed, RFgen creates a Put Away suggestion that forklift drivers receive on onboard screens. RFgen continually monitors the quantity at each picking location and creates a replenishment suggestion when levels drop too low. Once the first forklift driver responds and scans the license plate, the suggestion disappears from other drivers' screens. "With RFgen, it's a lot quicker when we are doing things in the warehouse," said Heady.

Reduced Learning Curve with Voice Picking

To improve the picking process, Caito Foods implemented the RFgen-Vocollect Voice Solution. "One of the main reasons we decided to move to voice picking is that we create pallets as we pick; we don't stage. Our pickers need to have both hands free," explained Garrett.

The RFgen-Vocollect Voice Solution is designed for picking in challenging environments and it can help businesses increase productivity by up to 35%, while reducing errors by up to 25%.¹

When new warehouse workers were hired, it used to take about three months to fully train them and get them working at the same speed as more experienced employees. According to Heady, the RFgen-Vocollect Voice Solution has cut that learning curve down to three weeks.

Better Warehouse Analytics

"With RFgen, we're able to focus and serve other departments better. We knew on paper that some things were happening, but now we can better identify trends," said Swails, noting that this has been particularly helpful in solving inventory problems.



RFgen has enabled Caito Foods to redirect some employees to more strategic tasks. WMS Coordinator, Scott Billeter, used to shuffle through lots of paperwork in order to confirm that outgoing shipments contained the products and amounts ordered. RFgen automated Ship Confirm, so Billeter can focus on other tasks. "RFgen has allowed us to become more analytical," he said.

Improved Customer Service

"As a distributor, our compliance requirements are different from the shippers. But we're finding that our customers need information such as country of origin for their own compliance and in-store signage...National accounts and more progressive retailers are all asking about SQF certification, third-party safety audits and trace-ability processes," said Swails.

"We print the UPCs right on the invoices from the license plates. Eventually, we'll put the GTIN number on from the supplier on the invoice and once GTIN is up and running, it will establish field-to-fork traceability," added Garrett.

¹ Vocollect product information.

About RFgen Software

Incorporated in 1995, California-based RFgen Software provides flexible and reliable mobile supply chain solutions that solve real-world business challenges. As a certified Oracle, SAP, Microsoft, Deltek and Vocollect partner, RFgen actively seeks companies facing challenges managing their internal supply chain operations and solves them using real-world experience, industry best practices, and state-of-the-art technology. RFgen's Mobile Framework division specializes in development tools for mobile, wireless and voice environments and provides open standards based connectivity to a multitude of systems (database, SOA, legacy, etc.). RFgen's ERP Integration division focuses on providing certified, open-source transactions and integration expertise for Oracle E-Business Suite, Oracle JD Edwards, SAP, Deltek Costpoint and Microsoft Dynamics solutions.

RFgen's Mobile Framework is an open systems development platform that speeds the path from idea, to proof-of-concept, to solution deployment. RFgen provides built-in, native functionality for extending real-time and on-demand access to enterprise data to almost any mobile device available today. RFgen's Mobile Solutions are currently installed in more than 35 countries, in over 2,800 locations, and are supported by a certified group of over 140 solution partners.

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North America
Corporate Headquarters
1101 Investment Blvd., Suite 250
El Dorado Hills, CA 95762
Phone: (888) 426-2286

www.rfgen.com

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