Produce Traceability Initiative Case Study

Diagraph Can Help With Your Produce Traceability Requirements

This Produce Traceability Initiative story explains how a California fruit grower is taking early steps toward compliance by implementing a print/apply labeling solution for their multi-pack lines.

Reedley, CA, is home to **Sun Valley Packing Company**, a fruit grower in the Central Valley of California. With 3,500 acres of land producing fruit from May through September, this operation is an amazing sight to see.

With 50+ conveyor lines carrying single pieces of fruit (peaches, plums, apples, nectarines, pomegranites) funneling to 10 production lines where the fruit is packaged and the cases are coded, automation, efficiency and uptime are the keys to success.

"When we start picking fruit," says Alfred Pereschica, Plant Manager who has been with Sun Valley Packing for 26 years, *"it's not like grapes or oranges that can hold two, three, four days or a week. It's today, there is no tomorrow. Tomorrow's fruit is tomorrow. Our packaging volume can be anywhere from 30–50K in a single day…and we're not by any shape or form the biggest."*

Need: To meet *Produce Traceability Initiative* milestones that call for a GS1-128 bar code on each case of fruit. Information on the label must include the variety, product description, lot number, pack/harvest date, and grower's unique GTIN number (for details go to **www.producetraceability.org**).

Requirements: Sun Valley Packing has multi-pack lines in which one box of nectarines may be followed by a box of plums, followed by a box of peaches, etc. Each case must be labeled quickly and correctly, with no interruption or downtime.

Solution: Diagraph PA6000 E-Series ALL-ELECTRIC labeler, with integrated software from Produce Jet (www.producejet.com) printing and applying a 4"×2" label on each case of fruit. A vision system identifies each case and sends the data to the Diagraph labeling system, specifying the information that needs to be printed and applied for that specific case.

"We run at 100-110 fpm on the line speed, with about 30" in-between boxes," says Pereschica. *"One box may be a size 56, the next box may be a size 42 or a different box. There can be a lot of variables. The same variety doesn't necessarily get the same pack, or even the same box. And we do one right after the other, so these could be peaches, and nectarines could be the next variety right behind it. That's why the information is so important, and that was the challenge. Putting a label on a box is not a challenge…but data management is. You have to be able to identify what the box is and has in it within a millisecond, and be able to process the information so you can put one label on this box and a label with different information on the next box. The Produce Jet software integrated with the Diagraph labeler allows us to do this."*

Satisfaction: According to Alfred Pereschica: *"I'm really excited about these machines, and having the ability to do the multi-packs we need to do. We need to implement GTIN by the third quarter, and then we're going to go a little deeper and a little deeper…it's an on-going process. We want to be on the forefront of this trend, and be able to offer it ahead of time. It's something that's coming and I don't like doing things at the last minute. The label looks very neat—it's clear, it's simple, it's readable, and it's scannable. The Diagraph labeling system has been good so far, and I feel the future will also go this way."*

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