

Primex International

The search for ERP
tailored to the food
industry



Industry

Food & Beverage

Challenges

- » Every part of the organization operating within its own silo
- » A seemingly unlimited number of customer and country specific requirements

Benefits

- » Accurately tracking the costs of all products
- » Integration and visibility between Primex Farms and Primex International
- » Easily manage all unique customer expectations

Four Generations of Excellence

For Ali Amin, the President of Primex Farms, the tradition of growing, harvesting, and processing pistachios is literally “close to home.” When Ali was born in Rafsanjan, in southern Iran, the city was the global center of pistachio harvesting. As a boy, Ali witnessed American scientists visit Rafsanjan to observe the pistachio orchards and take rootstock samples. These samples were planted in California, and today the state has leapfrogged Iran to become the world’s largest producer of pistachios, recording more than 994 million pounds in 2018.

Ali’s own family is closely tied to pistachios – the previous three generations had all been pistachio growers. After finishing college, Ali arrived in California to continue the tradition. In 1989, Primex International Trading Corporation was founded to export pistachios and other nuts such as almonds and walnuts. Primex International has grown to serve as a trader for nut processors, manufacturers, and wholesalers. Today, 90% of the company’s business comes through exports.

Ali wasn’t finished. He began planting his own orchards in 1990, and in 2002 he established Primex Farms in California’s San Joaquin Valley, building the most modern pistachio processing facility in the world. The plant has grown exponentially over the years; the latest expansion, scheduled for completion in 2019, will result in an 80-million-pound capacity. This lets Primex handle not only the output from its own orchards, but also accommodate the requirements of the more than 90 growers that bring their harvested product to Primex for processing.



“We emphasize quality, and also integrity, in terms of what we do, and what we put in front of us. We want to be well-known in the industry as a quality-conscious packer.”

Brian Tran, Senior Trade Associate at Primex International



The Search for a Single Platform

Not long after the processing facility went live, it became clear to Ali and his team that Primex would need a software solution that was as modern and innovative as the plant. Ideally, they would be able to find an enterprise resource planning (ERP) application that directly addressed the pain points felt by Primex and other food processors. As Brian Tran, Senior Trade Associate at Primex International, explains, “We wanted an ERP software tailored to the food industry and flexible enough to accommodate our needs.”

This search for a food-focused application led Primex to discover Aptean Food & Beverage ERP *bcFood Edition*. Built upon Microsoft’s Dynamics ERP application, Aptean Food & Beverage ERP is a vertical solution and the product of more than 30 years of implementing software with food processors, manufacturers, and distributors. Primex was impressed with Aptean Food & Beverage ERP trade tools that allow for the setup and management of complex pricing, rebate, and claims agreements with customers, and the solution was deployed at Primex International Trading.

At the time, one of the greatest challenges Primex faced was the fact that every part of the organization was operating within its own bubble. The orders that were being entered by Primex International had to be communicated to the processing facility at Primex Farms, where they were re-entered into a separate software program. This led to delays in communication, as well as inconsistencies between the two companies.

Handy Handoko, the Accounting Manager at Primex International, recalls the problems that were caused by these disparate environments: “We used to have two different software [systems]. We used QuickBooks at the time, and there was a lot of duplicate data entry from the trading system. We had to enter all the invoices and the numbers into QuickBooks.”


Happy with how the software was performing at Primex International, the company worked Apteian to roll Apteian Food & Beverage ERP *bcFood Edition* out to Primex Farms, putting the processing and manufacturing activities onto the same platform as the trading department. Bringing all the pieces of the business together created greater efficiencies for Primex, and the industry-specific features in Apteian Food & Beverage ERP met the company's needs. When it came time for a software upgrade in 2017, the choice to maintain their partnership with Apteian was an easy one.

The Implementation Process: Refined and Improved Methodologies

The initial implementation of Apteian Food & Beverage ERP had gone smoothly, and the team at Primex was expecting a similar process in 2017. What they found was that the clear upgrade path provided to them by Apteian made this second implementation even more streamlined.

"When we first deployed Apteian Food & Beverage ERP, the implementation process was very structured and lengthy because we moved from a completely different software system," says Handy. "With the most recent upgrade, the process was smooth, as the original structure from the initial process was still there."

While many of the people involved in the 2017 upgrade had been there for the original deployment of Apteian Food & Beverage ERP, there were some new faces, too. One of these was the Production Manager at Primex Farms, Gerardo Godina. As a department head, Gerardo was identified as a "key user," and therefore became responsible for providing his colleagues with the same instruction and guidance that he received from Apteian. This "train the trainer" policy is a distinguishing feature of Apteian's implementation methodology. Although the lower implementation costs that come with less training hours on the part of Apteian are an obvious benefit, the true advantage to this approach is that, by delegating responsibility directly to Primex, users take a greater level of ownership over their software. For Gerardo, the similarities between Dynamics and other Microsoft applications such as Word and Outlook made the application instantly familiar and reduced the learning curve for everyone: "The system, the icons, all the functions, [were] very easy to understand."



"Having Microsoft Dynamics 365 as one system for both companies really eliminated a lot of redundancies, as we were able to send sales orders directly to the production company. It made everything more productive."

Handy Handoko, Accounting Manager at Primex International

Due to Aptean's implementation expertise and the hard work of the Primex team, the upgrade was completed on time and on budget. Primex was able to utilize the new features and functionality in the upgraded Aptean Food & Beverage ERP solution as they were heading into their peak harvest season, immediately seeing what sort of advantages their new system had to offer.

A World of Features for a Global Market

The functionality within Aptean Food & Beverage ERP has allowed Primex to accurately track the costs of their products. With Aptean Food & Beverage ERP landed cost features, for example, users can attach related costs such as freight to sales order lines, making it possible to obtain a true view of sales costs and produce more accurate gross profit analysis reports. For Primex International, dealing with customers around the world has resulted in a seemingly unlimited number of customer and country specific requirements pertaining to particular nut grades or sizing. Aptean Food & Beverage ERP's sales contract functionality became a critical tool for managing all of these unique customer expectations. Every sales contract in the system includes information such as the agreed-upon quantity of product and price. Users can then issue sales orders directly from each contract, and this relationship between order and contract makes it possible to obtain detail into how much of a given contract has been fulfilled and how much is still outstanding.



Yet another consideration that comes with being a global exporter is the need to comply with a wide range of quality and safety regulations. Primex utilizes Apteian Food & Beverage ERP's QA features to record the quality attributes for each product during real-time processing. This data can be printed directly from Apteian Food & Beverage ERP to provide customers with information on the overall quality of the product they are receiving from Primex.

The Benefits of Integration

When Apteian Food & Beverage ERP was originally deployed across the entire company, Primex achieved its goal of integration and visibility between Primex Farms and Primex International. The sales orders entered by Primex International can be viewed by members of the logistics team and used as the basis for planning. These plans are in turn utilized by the production team to perform the necessary processing activities. And throughout the entire process, the accounting department is able to track each order so that, upon fulfillment, invoices are issued in a timely manner. As Brian explains, "At any given point in time, anybody using the software is able to retrieve the live data. I think that's amazing."

Tiffany Weldin, the Quality Systems Director at Primex Farms, agrees. "Before we had Apteian Food & Beverage ERP, data would be at least 12 hours behind. Now that we have Apteian Food & Beverage ERP running in our production environment, we're able to look at the information immediately as it's being generated."

Apteian Food & Beverage ERP also provided Primex with much better inventory control and traceability. As materials are transferred from storage bins to production areas, these movements are recorded in real-time, so that at any moment it is possible for users to determine exactly where a particular item lot or container can be located. And as processing occurs, the levels of on-hand raw material and outputted product are adjusted accordingly. This accuracy ensures that Primex's production processes are in tune with existing demand, eliminating concerns of over or underproduction.



“With the most recent upgrade, the process was smooth, as the original structure from the initial process was still there.”

Handy Handoko, Accounting Manager at Primex International

An Eye to the Future

Seeing the benefits of consolidating major departments such as sales and production onto a unified platform, Primex intends to integrate as much of their company as possible, especially when it comes to tracking the payments that are made to their growers throughout the course of the harvest season. Primex is currently managing this part of their business in a Microsoft Access database, representing the only other environment besides Aptean Food & Beverage ERP that is still being used for day-to-day activities. Aptean Food & Beverage ERP has a built-in grower accounting component that allows processors to set up and manage complex payment schedules with growers, and Primex plans to migrate to this functionality, allowing them to discard their separate Access environment and have a totally integrated system throughout the company.

The drive to move as much as possible into Aptean Food & Beverage ERP extends beyond specific departments. Primex International has already transitioned their existing Word and Excel documents into Aptean Food & Beverage ERP's style sheets module, and Primex Farms is looking to follow suit. This will eliminate data redundancies and let users generate documents from Dynamics using the information within the system.



For Primex, the most compelling argument that Aptean Food & Beverage ERP will continue to meet its future needs is the past. With a partnership almost a decade old, Primex has seen Aptean's commitment to offering a software solution that can grow and evolve alongside its users, giving them confidence that they will always have a product that can conform to their business processes. As Brian concludes, "Working with Aptean is great. We have been very fortunate to find a partner who knows the industry."



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About Aptean

Aptean is one of the world's leading providers of industry-specific software. Our enterprise resource planning and supply chain solutions are uniquely designed to meet the needs of specialized manufacturers and distributors, while our compliance solutions serve specific markets such as finance and life sciences. With both cloud and on-premise deployment options, Aptean's products, services and unmatched expertise help businesses of all sizes, across many industries, to scale and succeed.

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