

Green Valley Pecan Tracks Millions of Pounds of Product with Aptean Food & Beverage ERP



Industry

Food & Beverage

Challenges

- » Manual processes for production
- » Inefficient processes in the packaging department

Benefits

- » Increased number of quality checks at each stage of production
- » Implemented automated packaging processes
- » Gained the ability to track millions of pounds of inventory

Green Valley Pecan is one of the world's largest pecan growers and the seventh-largest pecan processor. The company, based in Sahuarita, Ariz., was founded in 1946 by Keith Walden, who purchased a large area of farmland in the Santa Cruz Valley, just south of Tucson, Ariz.

Walden found initial success by becoming one of the country's largest exporters of lettuce, but eventually determined that the Santa Cruz Valley was ideal for growing pecans. From 1965 to 1969, the company planted 7,000 acres of pecan trees to create the largest irrigated pecan orchard in the world. In 1975, Green Valley Pecan built its processing plant, and in 2000, it expanded its operations and purchased two more swaths of land, one in Cochise County, Ariz., and the other in Georgia.

Today, the company owns over 10,000 acres of pecan trees and produces tens of millions of pounds of in-shell pecans a year.

Multiple Legacy Systems Created Inefficiencies in Production

Prior to implementing Aptean Food & Beverage ERP, Green Valley Pecan was utilizing two separate systems to help manage its operations. While the two systems worked reasonably well together, the team at Green Valley Pecan was stuck using each of the software's most basic features, which resulted in a lack of real-time tracking and visibility.

“For us, information is key,” said Major Williams, Director of IT at Green Valley Pecan. “All of the processing data from our systems would come to us one to two days late. We knew we needed more from our solutions.”

Williams and the Green Valley Pecan team set out to find an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system that would provide them with the functionality they needed to continue their success as a company.

“We were already using a Microsoft-based ERP, but we wanted to get more functionality from a new system—more detail, more real-time tracking of our processes—so we started looking for a new solution,” he said.



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Major Williams, Director of IT, Green Valley Pecan

An Industry-Specific Solution with a Foolproof Methodology

Williams and his team knew what they were looking for in a system when they set out in search of a new ERP solution to run their operations.

“We were looking for a vendor that understood food processing and process manufacturing,” said Williams. “Unlike discrete manufacturers who know exactly what is going into the production process and what is coming out, our processes are different. When we put a pecan into production, we don’t get the same result each time. It was important for us to work with a vendor that was familiar with our methods.”

Green Valley Pecan was referred to Aptean and its solution by a process manufacturer in the Arizona area. Williams and his team knew they wanted another Microsoft-based solution but were fearful of the customizations they’d have to configure by implementing another generic solution.

“What drew us initially to Aptean Food & Beverage ERP was that it had a lot of the base functionality we were searching for already built-in, so we didn’t have to go out and customize,” says Williams. “With these base features already in place, we knew we could build on it for our quality, traceability and production needs and be able to track our production processes in a detailed way.”

Green Valley Pecan went live with Aptean Food & Beverage ERP in May 2017. According to Williams, the visibility into production data has been a game-changer for the company as a whole.

“Having access to critical information ahead of time, like how our cracking yield percentages are doing, allows us to make real-time decisions and adjustments to production as needed throughout the week,” he said. “We can also tell now when there’s a problem with a piece of equipment based on the output recorded in the system. Then we can go in and make the relevant adjustments in the plant.”

While Williams and his team knew that an ERP implementation would be a huge undertaking, Aptean’s proven methodology for implementation success helped ensure the process was as smooth as possible.

“The consultants at Aptean were very knowledgeable about food processing,” said Williams. “They came in and helped with the design of our system from the very beginning and challenged us about some of our processes. They introduced best practices, informed us about what other food manufacturers were doing, and we adapted our processes to work in those suggested changes. Any time we ran into an issue during implementation, one of the owners got involved and helped resolve the problem. That really impressed us.”

Features Built for the Food Industry

Green Valley Pecan harvests hundreds of thousands of in-shell pecans a week. Each nut is put through a complex pasteurization, cracking, shelling and sorting process, which must be completed as efficiently as possible in order to keep up with production.

For Phillip Grajeda, Production Manager at Green Valley Pecan, the implementation of Aptean Food & Beverage ERP has helped tremendously when it comes to ensuring the quality of each of these processing steps and the final product.



“Our QC department is able to set up quality checks at each step of the process, from cracking all the way to packaging,” Grajeda said. “There’s a check in place after a pecan has been cracked, right before it’s sorted and then again at the end for final approval. Samples are taken along the way, too.”

This quality information is tracked and managed in Aptean Food & Beverage ERP. It is then used to ensure each individual pecan meets certain specifications before it is sent to customers.

In terms of its traceability requirements, Green Valley Pecan relies on their new solution to help track its product through its vast warehouse.

“The system has really helped us with the overall traceability of our product,” said Grajeda. “We have a huge warehouse and if we want to find a certain product, even a certain pallet, and it’s being housed amongst millions of pounds of product, we’re able to easily find it by using license plates created by the system and tickets that the packaging operators generate.”

This traceability functionality also helps the Green Valley Pecan team fulfill custom orders for product blends.

“We sort our pecans into eight or nine different sizes, and sometimes customers ask for a custom blend that includes various-sized nuts,” said Grajeda. “The license plating of individual pallets helps us quickly locate the product to use in these blends, which is extremely helpful.”

Both Williams and Grajeda agree that one of the biggest improvements they’ve seen at Green Valley Pecan since implementing Aptean Food & Beverage ERP is in the packaging department.

“Previously we were using production orders to track our packaging materials,” said Grajeda. “There were lots of ledgers being manually updated and it was very labor intensive,” explains Grajeda.

Now, the process is automated, and as soon as the packaging operator generates a ticket, the associated packaging is consumed in the system.

“We were able to reduce the packaging consumption process down to almost a one-click function in the system,” he said. “What used to take someone two hours a day to do, now takes us about five to 10 minutes.”



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Phillip Grajeda, Production Manager, Green Valley Pecan

Utilizing Technology for Continuous Improvement

For the team at Green Valley Pecan, implementing Aptean Food & Beverage ERP has led to a culture of continuous improvement throughout the organization.

“The interesting point about ‘what’s next?’ for us is that we really haven’t stopped since implementation,” said Williams. “We’ve been continuously improving as we go through this process. Every time we come across a process or issue that seems to be taking our users a little longer than we’d like it to, or we find something that has too many steps, we find a way to automate it, and that’s one of the things Aptean has helped us with. They’ve worked alongside us and have helped us improve the entire time.”

Want to learn more about how Aptean’s food and beverage solutions can help your business? **Get in touch with us** today. We’d love to talk.



Are You Ready to Learn More?

Interested to see how Aptean Food & Beverage ERP can help you better manage your food company?

Contact us at info@aptean.com or visit www.aptean.com.



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