

Fylde Fresh and Fabulous Embracing data as the root to growth

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A potato manufacturer has transformed its quality control process, reduced waste and boosted profits thanks to a data-driven solution supported by Made Smarter.

Fylde Fresh and Fabulous (Fylde), based in Greenhalgh, Lancashire, processes around 1,000 tonnes of potatoes per week to create a variety of cuts for the food manufacturing and service sectors.

It has invested £40,000 in replacing a manual and out-dated paper-based quality check process, with a bespoke ERP solution. The solution uses handheld tablets and real-time visualisation of factory data.

This live view enables the business to rapidly identify, communicate and react to any quality issues, which increases production efficiency and improves traceability.

In its first six months of operation, the solution has already reduced the amount of product returned by customers by thousands of kilos.

Simon Leaver, CEO, said: *“The support from Made Smarter has been fantastic. It has accelerated the scale and scope of our investment in technology, which will help our ambition to build an efficient manufacturing environment which produces first class potato products for our customers.”*

“We are operating in a growing market and employ a valuable team of long-serving employees with a wealth of experience and enthusiasm.”

“By putting data and analytics at the heart of a new smart operating model, we will be able to innovate, grow, and create high value jobs.”

The Challenge

Founded in 2005, Fylde Fresh and Fabulous has grown from a potato

grower to a processor with a £12m turnover and 70 staff.

Quality is crucial for the business, and in order to meet the specifications of customers it must adhere to stringent checks.

However, a reliance on a paper-based, manual system meant it couldn't react quickly enough to problems and link quality issues to yields and suppliers, which impact the production and the quality going out customers.

Fylde also boasts sustainability and self-sufficiency credentials. Any rejected potatoes or peel goes into an anaerobic digester, which powers two CHP engines, producing electricity to power its factory and export to the local community. Meanwhile, the output from the digester is used as fertiliser for growing.

Simon explained: *“Potatoes are an inconsistent product, so efficient QA checks are the backbone of our company and integral in the supply and performance for our customers.”*

“We have a list of 15 defects such as bruising, frost damage, and hollow heart, which can cause problems later in production.”

“With largely paper-based and outdated quality checking processes, it took a whole day to realise there were any issues. By that time, it had gone through production and out to the customer.”

“We strived to achieve very high standards but the manual data collection and spreadsheet-based analysis began consuming an incredible amount of time. Rising demand for quality and efficiency

required more detailed data analysis. It became impossible to manage data without automating and digitalising the process.

“Without new technology to support our data-driven strategy the business would have started regressing.”

The Solution

Fylde invested in a bespoke ERP system that allows the business to design, maintain, collect, evaluate and utilise real time data.

All QA checks, both goods in raw material and production checks, are undertaken using handheld tablets which are uploaded onto the central server.

Out of specification products will send live alerts to supervisors and managers.

Management will be able to track and assess the quality of the product remotely or in office, quickly and easily review performance of different potato loads, and create accountability for QA checks undertaken.

The Benefits

The solution, which was implemented in April 2022, has already started saving money, resources and allowed the business to become leaner.

RTM or Return to Manufacture has reduced by 0.07% which over the course of the year is forecast to prevent around £8,000 of product from being rejected by customers.

Real time reporting based on live data means that issues are spotted sooner, preventing the production of an out of specification potato,



which reduces waste and increases machine and workforce efficiency.

Data and analytics also means the business has sped up and improved traceability; enabling it to assess raw material supplier performance and choose higher quality suppliers.

The solution has helped Fylde retain its AA rating with BRCGS (Brand Reputation Compliance Global Standards).

Simon said: *“This system has been transformational. We have tighter control of our product quality and can reduce the amount of product rejected due to being out of specification.”*

“With paper-based processes we were in the dark. Now we can clearly see what's going on. Communications within the business have massively improved and we have tighter control of the quality

and safety of products leaving the factory.”

“With this data we can create links between numbers. It will save us a lot of money. A one percent yield difference can cost thousands of pounds.”

The Future

Simon said: *“It is important to slowly implement new digital changes and improvements, while at the same time increasing the digital skills within our team and the atmosphere regarding digital adoption.”*

“Our eventual goal is that all Quality Assurance staff, production supervisors and management will gain digital skills and be very comfortable with the changes we make.”