

Dairy Crest sees rapid ROI with labelling conformance system



Business Issue

Dairy Crest Group is the UK's leading chilled dairy foods company and manufactures a diverse and growing range of products with high throughput at each automated factory site.

The Group employs over 7000 staff at 21 sites across the UK and Ireland, with a turnover in excess of £1.4 billion per annum. Its highly perishable cheese, butter and milk products must consistently be labelled correctly, with the barcode identifiers printed on each item always readable.

Delivering wrongly or poorly labelled products can have serious consequences, with the risk of tens of thousands of pounds in fines. Further costs associated with reverse logistics, product recall and subsequent restocking are another reason why labelling is so important. If an incident occurs multiple times, the company could be de-listed as a supplier.

As a result, Dairy Crest needed a solution that quickly identified labelling errors and enabled issues to be rectified at the production stage, before products leave the factory.

The Solution

Dairy Crest has a long-standing relationship with BEC, using their automated data capture solution, eSmart Vision, which integrates directly with the Group's logistics processes to improve inventory management. This system has helped Dairy Crest prevent product recall events and restocking due to incorrect or poor labelling. The savings from being able to avoid these issues alone has more than paid for the cost of the system.

Dairy Crest uses the Prism MRP system for process control and scheduling and the barcode checking solution, which would need to integrate seamlessly with this software. BEC analysed the processes involved and recommended implementing eSmart Vision as it would ensure 100% labelling conformance and peace of mind. This software uses advanced digital camera technology to ensure the presence, validity and quality of the barcode labels, at speeds of up to 1000 parts per minute, depending on the product and environment.



"Our initial investment has been more than recouped by the savings made on the cost of product recalls and by avoiding penalties."

Dairy Crest

eSmart Vision extracts information from Prism and presents it to operators on the shop floor via a mobile device. The operator can then establish which product is being manufactured and its associated barcode label, by allocating a schedule number. Each label is scanned and compared to production information. If no match is found or there is an unsuccessful read, the label is deemed incorrect or of substandard quality. When this occurs, eSmart Vision immediately issues an automated message to a display board on the production line. This details the problem and stops the relevant production line until rectified. As an additional precaution, eSmart Vision also prevents products from being produced without a schedule number being input. The software has also been designed to count products as they are labelled, enabling automatic periodic updates to Prism.

Benefits

Implementing eSmart Vision has enabled Dairy Crest to greatly reduce incorrect labelling in the factories where it is utilised.

By allowing the Group to identify problems at an early stage, eSmart Vision has helped Dairy Crest to:

- Avoid being issued with customer financial penalties;
- Save time and money by avoiding stock withdrawal and restocking;
- Improve the timeliness and availability of production information;
- Improve customer relationships and business development opportunities.

In summary: BEC's Added Value

- ▶ Replaced manual pick processes with real-time, automated data capture solution
- ▶ End to end manufacturing supply chain improvements
- ▶ Ensured high levels of user acceptance and smooth implementation
- ▶ Seamless integration with Dairy Crest's MRP solution.

