

ERP or not?

Food companies evaluate technology solutions to comply with the Bioterrorism Act.

At the end of the year all food manufacturers, including food packaging which touches food product, must comply with the Bioterrorism Act of 2002. Larger companies were to

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have completed this task more than a year ago; now even the smallest food manufacturing and packaging firms must grapple with the notion and implementation of lot traceability and record keeping.

From raw materials received and warehoused, to preparation and packaging of final food products, to the sealed containers en route to distribution centers, retailers, restaurants and end-user consumers—a four hour window is mandated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the Bioterrorism Act to explain exactly where the food (ingredients and packaging) has traveled.



The FDA estimates that about 420,000 food facilities are required to register under the act and increasingly quality assurance managers are looking to technology resources (existing in-house or acquirable) that will assist in meeting this compliance requirement.

Lucia Falek, QA manager for Butterball Farms, says, "The role of quality managers has changed dramatically since the act was passed. The consequence for non-compliance is very costly, so executive management is turning to quality managers to recommend and 'handle' this issue. From now on, quality managers will have a more significant voice in technology selection."

Some Enterprise Resource Planning software solutions have added ad hoc solutions in a last

Within TGI's Enterprise 21 ERP software, users can perform inquiries on vendor lot transactions to meet traceability requirements of the Bioterrorism Act.

dash effort to secure additional sales or keep current clients content. Other ERP firms recognized the impact of the Bioterrorism Act four years ago and have carefully constructed viable and cost-effective solutions to meet compliance.

According to Rebecca Gill, vice president of TGI Ltd., manufacturers of Enterprise 21 ERP, the following functions are critical to meet compliance with the Act:

- Full tracking of raw material lots through manufacturing;
- Full tracking of finished good lots through shipment to customer;
- Complete reporting on lot genealogy showing all usage of lots in from vendor, through manufacturing job, and to end user;
- Ability to query end-user sales order and see all raw material and finished good lots used for specific shipment;
- Ability to query lot from



Vigilistics Lot Genealogy™ allows searches for configurable fields such as date ranges, material ID's or bill of lading numbers, and returns a complete trace-and-recall display.

vendor or manufacturing and see all end-users shipped to;

- Ability to track lot properties with allowable "criteria" for each lot.

Brad Sacks, chief executive officer and global managing director with More Than Gourmet based in Akron, OH, uses Enterprise 21 ERP software by TGI Ltd.

Sacks says the company is able to comply with the Bioterrorism act and relies on recall policies: "It's instantaneous if raw material producer has bad product. The raw material lot code makes way through the manufacturing system...we know where every pound of ingredient ended up in finished product. The Enterprise 21 manufacturing system can query lot code and where finished product went to...including

which customer and warehouse."

Other ERP solution providers include BatchMaster, Geac, Ross Systems Inc. and Pronto North America.

Some technology firms are inventing non-ERP solutions (although integration with ERP is possible) to address the act.

Vigilistics has some clever tools and methods to ensure compliance, yet is focused solely on the dairy industry at this time.

Until the seal is broken and

chain of custody relinquished, food and packaging firms must be armed with the necessary technology solutions to respond immediately to the FDA. At present, most small food and packaging firms appear ill-prepared to comply by the end-of-the-year deadline as they continue to evaluate their options. **F&DP**

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