Egg-cellent Traceability

Member Feature: Riverview Eggs

Over a number of years GS1 Ireland has worked with Riverview Eggs, a family run egg production, packing and distribution company, to help them implement a world-class traceability and quality control standards. This achievement has recently been honoured through their award of the British Retail Consortium (BRC) AA standard, Bord Bia EQAS Certificate and a GS1 Global Traceability Conformance (GTC) certificate.

Riverview Eggs began in 1966 on the Kelleher family farm with just 700 hens in a converted barn. Today, under the stewardship of DJ and his sister Mary, their mother and the involvement of a number of other family members in egg production Riverview Eggs has grown to become one of the leading egg packers in the Republic of Ireland, selling eggs from over 300,000 hens. The business counts Dunnes Stores, Tesco, SuperValu and Centra along with businesses such as Pallas Foods and Total Produce in the food services sector, among its customer base. As they celebrate their 50th anniversary in 2016 they are justifiably proud of what the family business has become and the quality standards it upholds.

"What makes Riverview unique is that not only do we pack and distribute eggs, but we've maintained the tradition my mother started in actually producing our own eggs. That tradition is carried on by my brothers Richard and Mortimer, along with 10 other producers, who produce specifically for Riverview," explained Mr. Kelleher.

The process of egg quality and traceability begins on each farm. Each day as eggs are dispatched the pallet is labelled with details of the farmer and oldest date of lay. On arrival at Riverview, each batch is scanned into the Riverview stock control system and this begins the detailed tracking process, recording every egg from farm of origin to the final packing box that is dispatched to a specific retail customer.

Riverview Eggs receives GS1 Global Traceability Conformance Certificate. Pictured are (left to right) Denis O'Brien and Mike Byrne, GS1; DJ Kelleher and Alf Smiddy, Riverview Eggs.

Egg grading starts with a process called candling where using light, each egg can be seen through, to check for any faults or cracks and to identify any soiled eggs. After candling, each egg is ink coded with key traceability information including its best before date, the farmer's identity number and the production method. In fulfilling retail orders eggs are packed into customer-specific, barcoded packaging and then into outer cases. It is at this point that the unique information for each box is applied with a GS1 standards compliant label that contains the product identification code for that box of product, a serialised shipping identifier, the expiry date for the eggs and the batch number. As this box label is scanned at the point of dispatch, the key link is created in the Riverview ERP system between the batch of eggs and the final customer.

Reflecting on the process management and traceability system at Riverview, implemented with guidance from GS1 Ireland, Mr. Kelleher commented, "the adoption of GS1 standards was actually quite easy. The staff bought into it very, very readily because the traceability data is recorded automatically and can be retrieved at the press of a button."

When Intars Irbe, the Team Leader, started working at Riverview Eggs, the process was very manual and paper-based. With the introduction of the GS1 barcode-based system, Mr. Irbe noted that the paper workload has lightened considerably and everything can be looked up in the computer system in a matter of seconds.

In choosing to work with GS1 Ireland as an advisory partner, Mr. Kelleher commented that one of the key strengths was GS1's ability to listen to the needs of the member company. "*GS1 simplified the entire thing. They listened to us; they enabled us to put a system in place that our staff could understand. When a producer sends the eggs in here we are able to demonstrate with great ease where all of those eggs have ended up. And this is where production processes, traceability and GS1 standards marry up extremely well*".

"Our customers are becoming more demanding in their requirements for traceability. We are satisfying this through the adoption of GS1 standards. I would absolutely recommend GS1 to any producer. They will work with you to develop a system of traceability that will work for your customers, your staff and your auditors. At the end of the day we have to sell a product and be able to stand over it and GS1 allows us to do that in a very simplified and user friendly way."

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