

Case Study



IMPLEMENTATION IS EVERYTHING HOW TRACEGAINS HELPED REQUEST FOODS TRANSFORM THEIR SUPPLIER RELATIONSHIPS



Headquartered in Holland, Michigan, Request Foods Inc. produces and supplies private and controlled label frozen foods to retail, club store, and foodservice customers across the country. Request Foods makes custom-prepared entrées, sides, appetizers, sauces, desserts, and specialty items.

Setting up shop in 1989, Request Foods is one of the largest family owned and operated co-manufacturing food companies in the United States, employing around 900 people at last count. Today, they occupy more than 600,000 square feet of manufacturing space.

Request Foods became a TraceGains customer in 2017, and within the first year, got more than 70 percent of their suppliers up and running on the TraceGains Network.

Challenges

The first challenge Request Foods faced was convincing every department—from R&D to purchasing to regulatory—that their facilities had a problem to begin with.

That problem boiled down to their constant struggle to manage documents stored in electronic folders and organized by supplier and raw material number. Employees didn't have visibility into critical information, such as material expiration dates. Documents were constantly outdated, and every audit turned up evidence that they weren't in control of their supplier documentation.

Once everyone at Request Foods accepted that there was a problem, they still had to implement the platform and convince their suppliers to get on board.

Solutions

With both **Supplier Management** and **Supplier Compliance**, Request Foods is now more likely to have current documentation on hand and employees have visibility into supplier locations. This helps them meet the FDA's FSMA requirements.

TraceGains Supplier Management streamlines supplier qualification by gathering supplier documents in one place, extracting the relevant information, and organizing it into performance dashboards and reports. Users can choose standard or custom dashboards for allergen, organic, country of origin, nutrition, risk analysis, and other mission-critical data. The system also generates automatic alerts when supplier documents are missing, incomplete or about to expire.

TraceGains Supplier Compliance evaluates supplier product performance, lot by lot, from purchase order to production, extending inventory visibility all the way to the shipping dock. Users can scorecard suppliers based on critical attributes.

"My favorite part of TraceGains Network is the visibility we have into who we purchase from and into who is most cooperative when sharing documentation. Our past inventory system (Oracle-based) was not intuitive and required a purchasing associate to help search for an item or supplier. TraceGains opens this information up to many departments with an easy to use, intuitive system."

-Brad VanderVeer, Director of Quality Services and Food Safety

Outcomes

- **Easier Audits.** Request Foods now has confidence that their documentation is accessible and up to date. Document management is digitized and stored in a single location, so anyone can quickly search, filter, and organize credentials. This dramatically reduces audit preparation time, from what can be weeks to just a few hours with immediate documentation and data access. "We have regular audits where the auditor has historically asked for third-party audit certificates on five suppliers, for example, and we might have them, but they're expired because one person was trying to keep up with more than 700 suppliers."
- **Automated Information Exchange.** Request Foods' regulatory department relies heavily on TraceGains to maintain proper halogen and labeling information. They now have an automated process to communicate with suppliers more than ever before. "In our facility, purchasing ran point on supplier communication. We were the only people who talked to suppliers. If R&D needed something, purchasing reached out. If labeling needed something, purchasing reached out because they had the contacts. Now, thanks to TraceGains, everyone has access to the contacts, and they can email back directly. They're having direct communication with suppliers that they never had before."
- **Successful Implementation.** Request Foods put in the work up-front, persistently following up with suppliers to connect, as well as relying on TraceGains Support Team to guide them through any challenges. Now, more than 70 percent of their suppliers are on TraceGains Network, reducing the need for personnel to reach out manually and further automating their processes. "TG Support has been awesome. Whenever I have a problem and am at the end of my knowledge, I say let me loop in TraceGains Support and they always come back and get it fixed for them. So I think that really helps our suppliers connect when they see that TraceGains has a really strong supportive network."

"TraceGains is a cloud-based system where suppliers can upload documents, and once we've both accepted the 'friend request,' we can see what they've shared and approve it. When documents are soon to expire, TraceGains automatically sends an email requesting an update, which takes the pressure off of us to monitor expirations."

-Brad VanderVeer, Director of Quality Services and Food Safety

"We just had our BRC audit. The investigator asked for documentation on several suppliers and we had everything. That was the first time that's happened. And not only did that give us a checkbox for that part of the audit but also shows the auditors we're investing in meeting the legal requirements and addressing the laws, addressing the requirements of the audits itself and that our commitment is there."

-Brad VanderVeer, Director of Quality Services and Food Safety

About TraceGains

TraceGains delivers cloud-based supplier compliance and quality management solutions for the food, beverage, and supplement industries. At the heart of TraceGains is an advanced network platform that allows companies to automate and streamline their processes through instant information sharing and collaboration throughout the supply chain, fueling digital transformation and product innovation.

Learn More

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