

# Innovative Tech



## Intelligent Super Tools of the Trade

Food industry information technology is advancing by leaps and bounds | BY LINDA L. LEAKE, MS

Information may not be able to change the course of mighty rivers or bend steel in its bare hands, but one could say data today are faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, and even able to leap tall buildings in a single bound.

With each passing day, information technology is increasingly more diverse, creative, adaptive, and influential, offering all components of the food chain unprecedented efficiency and flexibility, 24/7. Voluminous amounts of useful business management information are being communicated in various forms over long

distances as fast as Superman flies through the air.

Here's the scoop on some new data tool developments.

### Data Intelligence Tool

In July 2017, SafetyChain Analytics, a new business intelligence tool, hit the marketplace, courtesy of SafetyChain Software, Inc., San Rafael, Calif., a purveyor of real-time food safety and quality management solutions.

SafetyChain's suite of software, including Supplier Compliance, Food Safety Management, Food Quality Management,

and CIP (Cleaning in Place) Optimization & Material Loss, helps companies ensure program compliance; identify and manage issues early on; be ready 24/7 for inspections, inquiries, and audits; and more effectively evaluate and improve performance across their operations, according to Jill Bender, SafetyChain's vice president of marketing.

"With one centralized data repository, and use of our data analytics tool, companies are able to get real-time business intelligence that goes beyond just measuring compliance, but actionable data," Bender says.

"SafetyChain Analytics offers 24/7 on-demand access to food safety and quality data intelligence, including supplier performance, food safety and quality tasks, and all their measured and recorded attributes across multiple locations," Bender emphasizes. "Live operational monitoring of exception-based trending and process control, including a holistic view of food safety and quality data, are included. Additionally, the software allows the sharing of reports and charts with key stakeholders, auditors, and inspectors via dashboards, reports, filtering, and drill-down capabilities."

GFF, Inc., City of Industry, Calif., producer of Girard's Dressings, is using the SafetyChain Analytics program.

"Based on the data that we are collecting, seeing, reviewing, and signing off on in SafetyChain, we are able to instantly track the issues that might arise in the day-to-day production, in real time," says Aisha Kalley, Girard's food safety and compliance specialist. "If we suspect there's an issue based on the data we're seeing, SafetyChain Analytics has a function where we can build a report around that and it will automatically help us pinpoint the challenges and determine the root cause."

"As an additional angle, the new SQF Edition 8 Quality Code requires statistical process control monitoring with graphical representation, which SafetyChain's new analytics tool has," Bender mentions.

### Online Incidents Database

In July 2017, Global ID Group, Fairfield, Iowa, introduced HorizonScan, an online database that contains more than 85,000 records of global food safety and authen-



ticity incidents affecting hundreds of commodities from nearly 16,000 suppliers in 180-plus countries, according to Mark Cohen, the company's vice president of global marketing.

Global ID Group is a food safety and quality company and provider of testing, certification, training, consulting, and specialty services. The company is the exclusive distributor for HorizonScan in North America, Brazil, and Germany.

"The HorizonScan food safety management system monitors safety and integrity alerts worldwide, collecting data daily from over 110 food safety agencies and other reliable sources to deliver timely alerts on emerging food safety issues," Cohen relates.

HorizonScan's web-based food safety software displays the most important issues with pertinent, actionable facts, Cohen elaborates. "One uses a computer or mobile device to search by commodity, country of origin, type of threat, supplier, date of event, and more," he explains. "Users can set up automatic alerts for the commodities and issues most important to them."

Events that HorizonScan can track include microbial contaminants, pesticide residues, mycotoxins, allergens, genetically modified organisms, heavy metals, dioxins, polychlorinated biphenyls, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, residues of veterinary drugs, adulteration, and fraud.

Advanced search capabilities; graphs, trends, data, and analytics; the ability to identify high-risk suppliers; the latest news feeds, including the newest events from the last 48 hours; and original event reports are all afforded by HorizonScan, Cohen notes.

Great Lakes Cheese Co., Inc., Hiram, Ohio, recently starting using HorizonScan, according to Julie Simcox, the company's senior manager of corporate quality regulatory and food safety.

"We chose HorizonScan to facilitate our ingredient and supplier risk assessments as part of our FSMA (Food Safety Modernization Act) compliance work," Simcox relates. "HorizonScan provides a dynamic risk assessment tool that allows our organization to stay ahead of emerging risks and identify risks of concern to our organization in raw materials/suppliers we may previously not been aware of."

### End-to-End Sourcing Tool

If you love free stuff you might want to check out the ReposiTrak MarketPlace, launched in March 2017 by Park City Group's ReposiTrak Inc., Salt Lake City, Utah, a provider of compliance management and trace and track solutions for the grocery and food service industries. Park City Group is a software-as-a-service provider.

"ReposiTrak provides food retailers and suppliers with a robust solution to

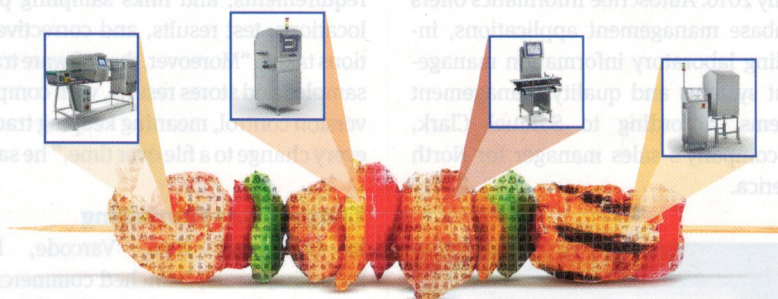
help them protect their brands and remain in compliance with the Food Safety Modernization Act," says Randall Fields, CEO of Park City Group. "But, it's really a platform for managing compliance across all vendors, both food and nonfood, as documentation such as W-9s, supplier agreements, proof of insurance, and audits are required by all trading partners."

MarketPlace enables ReposiTrak's retailers and wholesalers to search its

*(Continued on p. 16)*

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(Continued from p. 15)  
community of more than 40,000 compliant supplier connections, and bring new products to market in a fraction of the time, Fields relates.

“MarketPlace is easy to use and free to all suppliers,” he notes. “The goal was to automate and guide the sourcing process from end to end, and go beyond discovery to include supplier qualification, order negotiation, and the on-boarding of a new supplier.”

A big plus of MarketPlace is its inclusion of diverse types of suppliers, Fields adds. “To keep up with consumer demand, companies’ needs include smaller, local suppliers which can be hard to find,” he explains. “Then there are the short-term suppliers that supply product specifically for holidays, events, and themes, and lastly there are the suppliers needed to replace those who can’t or are not willing to comply with your business and/or safety requirements. MarketPlace includes many such specialty suppliers.”

### Environmental Monitoring

Autoscribe Informatics, Inc., Lakeville, Mass., added the Matrix Gemini Environmental Monitoring module to its portfolio in July 2016. Autoscribe Informatics offers database management applications, including laboratory information management systems and quality management systems, according to Samuel Clark, the company’s sales manager for North America.



A popular FreshCode model prior to activation.

“This newest software provides a framework to document environmental sampling procedures, results of environmental monitoring, and corrective actions taken,” Clark says. “The trending features provide an early warning of sanitation problems before they become violations.”

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Clark explains that Matrix Gemini provides a complete historical record of facilities’ testing. “If there is a problem, the system demonstrates when it started to occur and what was done to correct the issue,” he relates. “The complete audit history of all testing clarifies early signs of deteriorating sanitation and serves as a proactive inspection regime to avoid problems in the first place.”

Touting benefits, Clark says Matrix Gemini encapsulates food safety/food sanitation monitoring best practices; proves FSMA/HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) food safety compliance and current Good Manufacturing Practices requirements; and links sampling point locations, test results, and corrective actions taken. “Moreover, the software tracks samples and stores results, with complete version control, meaning keeping track of every change to a file over time,” he says.

### Temperature Monitoring

In November 2016, Varcodé, Ltd., Ra’anana, Israel, launched commercially what it calls its signature technology, the FreshCode temperature monitoring solution. Varcodé bills itself as a global innovator in cold chain monitoring.

FreshCode is a patented smart barcode recorder that captures temperature abuse throughout the cold chain, says Aaron Boyll, president and CEO of Varcodé North America, St. Louis, Mo.

“The recorder can be read by any smartphone via our free app or any standard barcode scanner,” Boyll relates. “The smart barcode recorder indicates if a product exceeded its threshold temperature for multiple timeframes, and can monitor for up to two years with no on-board power needed.”

Boyll says FreshCode recorders can be manufactured to the time-temperature specifications of customers’ specific cold chains. “Threshold temperatures range from -4 degrees Fahrenheit to 99 degrees Fahrenheit,” he elaborates. “Cumulative time and status intervals range from 10 minutes to 48 hours.”

Minimal training and no special equipment purchases are required to use FreshCode, Boyll emphasizes. “This low-cost solution includes a cloud-based system that enables fast and easy data analysis and decision making,” he says. “FreshCode is customizable to fit each cold chain, supporting HACCP plans with data and records, providing real-time alerts to management, maintaining permanent electronic records, and interfacing smoothly with legacy information technology systems.”

White Labs, San Diego, Calif., a purveyor of liquid yeast and enzymes for commercial and home brewing of beer, started using FreshCode in February 2017. “We ship products in quantities of 500 milliliters to 20 liters throughout North America and globally, and they need to stay cold throughout transport,” says Neva Parker, the company’s vice president of operations. “So we worked with Varcodé to determine the optimum temperature range for shipping and we are soon placing, at no extra charge, a FreshCode barcode recorder in each package, some 1,500 boxes per week.”

Parker is quick to point out that using FreshCode has been a huge value-added benefit for White Labs and those they serve. “Our customers can use our app, where we have integrated the Varcodé platform, so they can monitor the temperature of products throughout shipment,” she relates. “Using FreshCode gives our customers confidence in our quality control efforts, and it shows them that we are willing to take the extra step to ensure they receive a quality product at the optimum temperature and that we care how the product arrived at their destinations.” ■

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