

# case study



## **Tag, You're More Efficient! Intermecc by Honeywell Solutions Enable Washington Fruit & Produce Co. to Streamline Pallet Tagging and Inventory Control – and Comply with Food Traceability Laws**

For Washington Fruit & Produce Co., one of Washington state's largest shippers of apples, maintaining the most effective technology possible for distribution center (DC) operations is a constant requirement.

The company, which recently moved into a brand new state-of-the-art packaging and storage facility in Yakima, Wash., identified a need for a more streamlined pallet tagging and inventory management system that would not only help streamline daily operations, but also provide them with compliance to new food traceability initiatives required by the U.S. Government.

They engaged with Pacific iD, a technology solution provider, to recommend and install a completely new hardware system for their DC operations that would offer improved inventory management and accuracy, increase operational efficiency and increase throughput.

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Their ultimate solution: a complete range of Intermec by Honeywell products, including CK3 mobile computers, CV60 vehicle-mount computers, SR61ex scanners and PM4i industrial printers. The result: immediate efficiency improvements.

## Enhancing Operations

“On a daily basis, we package fruit from orchard bins to size, shape, color, and quality-graded boxes for worldwide sales,” said Washington Fruit & Produce Co. Systems Operator Mikey Hanks. “We operate year round and ship both domestically and export to Europe, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Canada, Mexico and South America, so we not only require extremely efficient operations, but we rely on accuracy for all of our shipments.”

However, Hanks noted the company was severely lacking a pallet tagging and inventory management system, which often resulted in the wrong pallets being shipped. Additionally, of the 250,000 boxes of apples the company usually has on hand, there was often a discrepancy in tracking what they actually had in the warehouse. This resulted in daily “house counts,” to ensure inventory control, which proved time-consuming and an ill use of employee time.

“Before deploying the Intermec [by Honeywell] products we relied heavily on a manual inventory system,” said Hanks. “We had handwritten sheets used on the loading dock for loading trucks that can be hard to read or many times were inaccurate as to what was actually loaded onto the truck.”

## Integrating New Technology

After testing the Intermec by Honeywell products directly against those of a leading competitor, they ultimately chose the Intermec by Honeywell CK3s to aid in their pallet tagging operations. This new technology also helped Washington Fruit become one of the first in the region to comply with the new food traceability compliance laws.

“We look forward to where this system can take us in the future.”

— Mikey Hanks, Systems Operator, Washington Fruit & Produce Co.

“Our inventory at our new facility is tracked at the box level with all information about the fruit inside each box – all the way down to what part of which orchard the fruit was picked from,” said Hanks. “This is done with serial numbers printed on each box, and we are the first to deploy this traceability to apples in our entire region. In case of a recall, we know exactly where every box was shipped and which orchard’s fruit it came from in case the problem was rooted there.”

Washington Fruit chose to deploy CV60 terminals and keyboards on each of their forklifts, as well as SR61ex scanners for inventory control. The new technology allows the forklift drivers to stay seated when scanning pallets.

With the new system, apples come into the DC in large wooden crates. The entire crate is submerged into water, and the apples are sanitized, washed, waxed, graded, sorted and boxed. Workers stamp full boxes with all the necessary information in human readable form, as well as with two bar-codes. One is a Global Tracking and Identification Number (GTIN), for food traceability compliance, and the other is the in-house serial number.

Through the use of robots, the boxes are placed on pallets. Intermec by Honeywell CK3 mobile computers are used to scan the serial numbers on the pallets and generate pallet tags for inventory management. The Intermec by Honeywell PM4i printer prints out custom labels with a bar code that’s scanned by the forklift driver. The pallet tag stores all the serial numbers of each box on each individual pallet. In shipping, the CV60s and SR61s are used to put the pallets onto the right trucks.

## Streamlining Success

Since deploying, Hanks said they have already begun to see their overall efficiency improve, simply due to the ease of use.

“The CK3 has a lot of buttons that can be utilized without needing to press the function key first, so overall it’s just faster and more efficient. Plus, we’ve also seen vast improvements with the printer speed on the PM4i – we’re able to generate in the neighborhood of 40 pallet tags an hour now using customized Intermec [by Honeywell] labels.”

In fact, Justin Long, President of Pacific iD, said the company has been breaking their own daily packing records without adding any staff, something Hanks attributes to the seamless integration of both their new hardware and software to their new state-of-the-art facility.

“Since deployment at our new facility, we have not had any instances of the wrong products shipping to customers,” Hanks said. “This is something we wouldn’t have accomplished without our new software and hardware implementation.”

## For the Future

Hanks said the company still has a long way to go in terms of deploying a full WMS system to completely manage their new 228,000 square foot warehouse. However, for now, the company’s newfound system is offering them accuracy and capability for food traceability that would have not been possible before.

“We look forward to where this system can take us in the future,” said Hanks. “Our new warehouse has the capabilities to do a lot more in terms of increasing our throughput, etc., so we’re excited to continually monitor our processes and implement continued upgrades as we’re ready.”

**For more information:**

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