

case study: AQIS



AUSTRALIAN QUARANTINE
AND INSPECTION SERVICE

The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) is part of the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

With 2,800 employees nationwide, AQIS provides quarantine inspection services for international passengers, cargo, mail, animals, and plants arriving in Australia. AQIS also provides certification for a range of agricultural products exported from Australia. Export inspection and certification contributes to Australia's meat, horticulture, grain, fish, dairy, organic and live animal export industries, worth an estimated \$32 billion a year.

The Challenge

Meat exports contribute an estimated \$5.8 billion towards the total Australian export industry. It falls upon AQIS to ensure that export registered meat processing establishments in Australia meet stringent quality and process requirements imposed by local and international laws and regulations.

On site audits form a significant part of AQIS' quality assurance controls. Audit officers visit meat processing establishments up to four times a month to ensure that adequate records are kept on quality assurance and that appropriate quality management processes are being followed. These audits present a significant cost to both the meat processing plants as well as AQIS.

With the majority of export registered meat plants maintaining quality records electronically, AQIS identified that various efficiencies could be established in an effort to reduce audit related costs.

AQIS sought to:

- Reduce audit costs through remote auditing
- Improve the acceptability of AQIS verification systems to commercial customers and trading partners
- Promote the consistency of AQIS verification activities
- Increase efficiency in the case of product recall

The Solution: InformationLeader

With a large majority of export registered meat processing establishments in Australia using InformationLeader as a quality management system, various efficiencies have been made available to reduce the number of on site audits.

InformationLeader is a browser-based system developed by Theta Technologies to replace costly paper based systems and consolidate business information into a secure, auditable, centralised system. InformationLeader is the quality management system of choice in over 80% of export registered meat processing establishments in Australia.

Participating meat processing plants make their InformationLeader systems accessible over the internet to AQIS audit officers. The audit officers can then review all of the processing plant's quality management records remotely, running standardised reports and signing off documents and records electronically. This capability can reduce the number of on site audits by 75% and is expected to result in a 50% audit cost reduction. Electronic data capture and InformationLeader's reporting capabilities also allow AQIS officers to more specifically identify products that need to be recalled.

AQIS have also identified the potential of InformationLeader to provide a platform for the national collection, collation and analysis of plant performance data.

Benefits Identified by AQIS:

- 'Desk Audits' that are expected to result in a 50% audit cost reduction in 5 years
- Web based system has enabled remote access to quality management systems at meat processing establishments nationwide
- InformationLeader's reporting capabilities allow auditors to rapidly collate and present large amounts of data in a meaningful way
- Standards compliant electronic signatures allow AQIS officers to remotely sign off on records and documents with full confidence
- Fully auditable system with audit trails and change histories on all data in the system down to individual field level means that InformationLeader meets and exceeds all electronic record keeping requirements