

case study: NZFSA



The New Zealand Food Safety Authority (NZFSA) is the regulatory authority for importing and exporting of food and food-related products in New Zealand.

NZFSA also administers legislation that covers food for sale in New Zealand, the primary processing of animal products and official assurances related to their export, the exports of plant products and the controls surrounding registration and the use of agricultural compounds and veterinary medicines.

With over 80% of food produced in New Zealand bound for overseas markets, few countries are as dependant as New Zealand on a strong and successful food regulatory system.

The Challenge

An integral part of maintaining a high level of food quality and safety is the Compliance and Investigations group in NZFSA. The group is tasked with ensuring that businesses in the food industry comply with all standards and regulations through regular audits and the investigation of complaints from the public.

Audit teams and investigators are based around New Zealand, gathering large amounts of data and evidence that needs to be processed by their head office in Wellington. This involves sending paperwork and evidence by mail and email around the country, awaiting approval and return mail, and a great degree of communication management. At the end of each month, a report had to be presented to the Minister for Food Safety. Collating this information and generating the report took a full time employee a week to complete.

Concerns with the audit and investigation process were:

- Difficulty tracking the flow of information
- Reliance on mail/email systems
- Difficulty in collating and analysing information
- Inefficient communication systems resulted in lost mail and lost time
- Difficulty managing business processes in a distributed environment

The Solution: InformationLeader

A single browser-based system now replaces thousands of paper printouts and assorted documents that made up the previous audit and investigations processing system.

Food safety audit officers log into InformationLeader from across New Zealand and enter their audit data into a centralized repository. This has halved the amount of time spent processing audit information and managing the communication between audit officers and head office. NZFSA also used this opportunity to standardize the format of the audit information, increasing data collation efficiency. InformationLeader's reporting capabilities now generate the monthly report at a press of a button.

The investigations unit now enters all their gathered information into InformationLeader. They record witness statements and observations into electronic forms, as well as attaching digital evidence (e.g. documents, photos) to these forms. This information is now available to the prosecutions unit immediately.

All data entry is managed by an electronic workflow that can track and guide the flow of information, resulting in a marked improvement in process efficiency, managerial control, and organizational awareness.

NZFSA is now looking to use InformationLeader to handle food complaint information entered by external health protection officers. The officers currently use a Lotus Notes based solution that has proven cumbersome and expensive to maintain due to the need for a specialist programmer.

Benefits Identified by NZFSA:

- Reports that took days now generated at the press of a button
- Controlled business workflow means greater managerial control
- Full audit trail of all actions performed within the system
- Reduced staff time entering and reformatting data
- Security model supports varying access levels for employees in different roles
- Data entry validation increases data accuracy
- Web based application allows instant data entry and retrieval from anywhere in the country