



Implementing an orchard-to-customer software solution for an ambitious new player in New Zealand's highly seasonal cherry industry.

Pure Pac Limited was established as a state-of-the-art cherry packhouse and marketing company at Cromwell in the Central Otago region of New Zealand's South Island in March 2017. The vertically integrated co-operative amalgamates seven cherry producers - all Pure Pac shareholders, directors and suppliers with orchards managed by Parkburn Management Limited.

The Central Otago region is renowned as the world's leading producer of cherries. Pure Pac is among the few vertically integrated cherry businesses in New Zealand. It grows, packs and distributes 10 premium varieties for domestic and export sale between December and February each year.

In its first season, Pure Pac produced 530 tonnes, exporting 70 per cent to Asia, Europe and the United States and distributing 20 per cent domestically. The rest was sold at the farm gate. Its output is projected to increase to 1,500 tonnes by 2023.



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Pure Pac international and domestic sales manager Sharon Kirk

Among first to adopt in-field scanning

As a business, Pure Pac was among Radfords' first customers to adopt in-field scanning with payroll integration – an innovative add-on to FreshPack Multi developed specifically for New Zealand's cherry industry.

“In-field scanning was a significant selling point as we were keen to streamline payroll efficiency and eliminate manual counting and data entry,” Ms Kirk says.

“During harvest, hand-held scanners use Wi-Fi to match a picker's individual bar code with the buckets they pick. Live information feeds to payroll for piece rate payment. It enables supervisors to assess a harvest's progress and manage variable picking output. There were some hiccups with connectivity in our first season but Radfords was proactive in resolving issues and we're excited about the efficiency it will create in coming seasons.”

FreshPack Multi's accurate scanning and counting from orchard to dispatch has eliminated human error.

“When you manually count boxes on a pallet – especially if there is a mix of configurations – it's difficult to get a correct answer. Once you remove the human aspect, you remove the risk of error. In our first season, there were fewer mistakes than we've ever experienced compared to past operations” she says.

“FreshPack Multi also allows us to provide solid, reliable information to customers and plan for growth.”

A clean slate for compliance

Pure Pac presented a unique opportunity for Radfords Software to customise and implement three integrated software solutions – FreshPack Multi, FreshSales and Grownote – at a greenfield site for the inaugural harvest in December 2017.

Pure Pac packhouse manager Ross Kirk and international and domestic sales manager, Sharon Kirk, were contracted to construct, fit out and manage the 1,500 square metre packhouse and establish and manage a sales division. With some 30 years' horticultural experience, they understood how critical it was to implement a robust software solution to help enable Pure Pac to triple volumes over the next five years.

Orchard management solution Grownote was implemented in September 2017. Packhouse solution, FreshPack Multi and sales solution, FreshSales went live when harvesting began in December.

“Our objective was to record accurate information fast and extract quality data with a minimum of fuss. We wanted integrated systems that would take us from the field to the market, with flexibility, transparency and, importantly, compliance,” Ross Kirk says.

Pure Pac seasonally employs up to 60 in the packhouse and up to 150 in the orchards. There are no full-time employees.

“With an entirely seasonal workforce, our systems need to be intuitive and easy to use. Our workers may be employed for nine weeks maximum. They need to move with the technology and deliver results quickly.”

Pure Pac was working with one software provider and considering another when Radfords emerged as the frontrunner.

“Radfords' products were more advanced and ticked more boxes. We wanted full traceability and compliance from day one and that's what Radfords delivered,” Mr Kirk says.



Pure Pac packhouse manager Ross Kirk

“

Grownote’s biggest benefit is year-on-year data which, as time goes on, will become more valuable.”

Technology reduces workforce

Pure Pac’s key objectives included minimising staff, achieving traceability and simplifying tasks.

Mr Kirk estimates FreshPack Multi requires up to 10 less operators than traditional software. Future modifications will focus on creating further labour efficiencies.

“Our employees love using tablets and phones to instantly print labels. In a traditional packhouse, this takes considerable time and effort. With FreshPack Multi, we can easily print labels at 16 packing stations, a waste station and gate sales, creating widespread efficiency,” Mr Kirk says.

“With full traceability, we can tell when a product is picked, which block it came from and when it was packed. In our experience, cool-store management can be a nightmare, especially if a pallet has a quality issue and has to be segregated. But with FreshPack Multi, we know where all pallets are at all times and can easily identify and resolve quality issues. This ability to track product and capture data as it moves through the supply chain is a significant achievement.”



Integrated systems bolster relationships

FreshSales has already boosted Pure Pac’s relationship with its freight forwarder as manual data entry has been avoided and future modifications promise even more efficiencies.

“FreshPack Multi produces a pallet card which goes to the freight forwarder or domestic customer. FreshSales picks this up, runs a stock report and creates a load-out file. If the system recognises a pallet is missing, it won’t allow the consignment to be scanned. We can tell where a pallet is and when it will arrive in store,” Ms Kirk says.

She says, in her experience, grower payments have never been easier, thanks to FreshSales.

The Pure Pac team envisages Radfords’ orchard management system, Grownote, operating as a virtual farm manager over time.

“Grownote’s biggest benefit is year-on-year data which, as time goes on, will become more valuable. As an early adopter of this technology, we wanted to use it from day one to record, report and plan orchard activities such as irrigation, spraying and harvest details in a central location, Mr Kirk says.

“Grownote also saves considerable time during auditing. Traditionally an auditor might work through multiple folders on site to assess compliance. However, our auditor accessed all information from one spot, from his desk,” he says.





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First season highlights

FreshPack Multi

LABOUR SAVINGS

Up to 10 less people recruited

IN-FIELD SCANNING

Innovative piece-rate technology with payroll integration

LABEL PRINTING

Instant label printing at 16 stations

FreshSales

FREIGHT FORWARDING

No manual data entry, easy invoicing

GROWER PAYMENTS

Fast, accurate payments and reports

Grownote

DATA CAPTURED

Year-on-year crop comparisons



A partner for the future

The Pure Pac team considers Radfords its software partner for the future.

"The Radfords' team has the ability to move fast and build depth because of their vast experience, especially in the kiwifruit and apple industries," Mr Kirk says.

"Pure Pac has the packhouse infrastructure and orchard holdings to increase production capacity by 2023. There are 40 hectares under cultivation and another 30 set to begin harvest by 2020.

"With Radfords' systems in place, we're well supported to achieve volume growth.

"Moving forward, there are a few system components to modify and advancements to investigate. We know Radfords will make it happen.

"The team was on site to supervise from the first day of harvest and their ongoing support is outstanding. FreshPack Multi is a huge step forward in efficient packhouse management. Separately and together our systems are better than anything we've worked with in the past," Mr Kirk says.