



White Paper

Production Management Software to the Rescue

In this paper we review the importance of implementing a production management system for your agribusiness. Discover how this solution will help to improve control of your inventory, while also planning and scheduling your production activities more efficiently.

Managing your production can get out of hand unless you have “tools” up to the task. Once you commit to a production plan, you have to:

- Determine if you have enough space, labor, seeds, cuttings, and so on;
- Release your plan to production planting date by planting date and item by item;
- Manage the planting according to your plan;
- Follow up with subsequent activity in a timely way;
- Plan your daily work based on requirements;
- Track your progress and update inventory with the expected output;
- Update inventory with available product as it becomes available;
- ... and much more.

Staying on top of this “to do” list requires that you have a list of activities to be performed across your operation and then managing it. This allows you to assign work to your personnel/work crews and then use their feedback to update planned future activities. It also allows your production forecast to be updated providing better availability information to your sales team.

To manage at this level of detail requires software specific to the purpose. It starts with putting together a viable plan, followed by being able to quickly and easily generate the activities associated with the plan and then being able to execute based on this detail. In the process, a significant number of records will be generated and this is best handled by a very capable database management system.

Creating a Feasible Production Plan. Creating a plan requires a large amount of data and the ability to access and manipulate available data. Some may start with last season’s plan and make adjustments based on prior results and future expectations. Others may start with last season’s sales and build from there. Still others may use models to forecast demand and then analyze what will give them the greatest return. The list can go on. Regardless of how the plan is built, it is essential that it be feasible. This requires that the critical resources at each stage of production be calculated and compared against the available resources, particularly space, labor and plant material resources.

Planned Activities are Key to both the Plan and its Execution. Plant production requires specific activities along with resources at each stage. It is this detail that is key to both a feasible plan and its execution. Generating this level of detail in Production Management software is simplified by using pre-defined processes that apply across multiple products. These schedules can both contain the standard timing for each activity along with expected losses and resource requirements.

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+1-888-253-5353 or +1-559-227-1000
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This detail can then be used for establishing both the feasibility of the plan as well as being the basis for the “work orders” issued on a daily basis to perform the work. In managing at this level of detail, it is then possible to record the results and have future activities updated accordingly.

Expected and Available Production. A very important part of Production Management software is the ability to provide updated estimates of production during the production process. This allows the sales team to plan their sales activity, customers to know what is going to be available and management a basis for both operations and planning. As product becomes available for sale, it is considered “available” product and is recorded as available by sale. Both in the production process and when available, the location of the plants can be tracked and used in operations. This is particularly helpful in the picking process.

Stand-alone or Integrated? A Production Management system can either be used as a stand-alone system with the results being passed to the inventory and sales management system. Or, it can be part of an integrated system where the inventory information is updated directly by the Production Management system. Being integrated also allows the Production Management system to update resource (inventory) usage and provide the accounting allocations for such usage. While the full benefits of a Production Management system come with it being integrated into the larger enterprise system, this is not a requirement. A stand-alone system still provides you with control over your production processes from planning, to field operations and to inventory availability estimates. In either case, such a system gives you easy and detailed insight into your production operations and performance.

Information Exposure and Business Intelligence. Having a system that can provide all these features is not enough, by itself. The system needs to have robust reporting that extends to grid views of the data and pivot table summarization to allow analysis. It should also have a dashboard to allow you manage by exception, or to focus on critical information, or to simply present management information in real time, graphically. Automatically generating reports and providing email alerts reduces your workload and guarantees that tasks are not overlooked. It also helps you manage the mundane, track your KPI's and enforce process compliance.

Conclusion. Where a nursery has a significant number of production items being produced over an extended period, then generating and executing the production plan through Production Management software has very real benefits and value. It provides the detail required for planning as well as managing production. It allows more control over the production process with better feedback of activities and results that can be used to not only update inventory availability but also to provide better insight into your production.



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