



How Topco Accelerated GFSI Compliance & Eliminated Time Wasted on Paperwork

Topco Associates LLC is a \$14 billion, privately held cooperative that provides innovative business solutions for its 54 retail grocery and food service member-owners. Topco leverages its members' collective buying power to create a competitive advantage in the marketplace by delivering aggregation, innovation, and knowledge management solutions. With 1,600+ supplier manufacturing facilities, 30+ private label brands, and more than 80,000 SKUs, the co-op's collective volume in food is larger than Walmart's.

Challenges:

1. Supplier management at Topco was manual. Follow-up via email or telephone was cumbersome, time-consuming, and potentially error-prone, yet also necessary to ensure compliance with food safety standards.
2. Allergen risk assessment was another labor intensive process. It would typically take the quality assurance team six to eight weeks to conduct an in-depth audit for any given product.
3. Topco also needed a system to help manage toward the goal of Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) certification for all 1,600+ supplier plants. According to Howard Popoola, Topco's Vice-President of Quality Assurance (QA): "We require our suppliers to be certified to a standard that is benchmarked by the GFSI, but often times the challenge is keeping up with the documentation."

Solution:

After joining Topco, Popoola was intent on simplifying supplier relationship management and reducing the time his staff spent on paperwork. The company also wanted to speed supplier adoption and compliance with one of the benchmark safety food schemes outlined by the GFSI. To meet these objectives, the company invested in TraceGains' innovative Supplier Management and Specification Publishing tools to automate document collection, push specification updates out to suppliers, and simplify or automate workflows.

TraceGains now provides 24/7 automated document collection from suppliers and ongoing monitoring to inform suppliers when updated documents must be re-submitted. The system also monitors allergens and displays the information in a dashboard format, allowing Topco to manage supply chain allergen risk with just a few mouse-clicks.

Topco's supplier documents, and the data contained within those documents, are now available on a single platform that can be accessed from any of the company's locations.



Solution Overview

Customer: Topco Associates LLC

Challenge: Topco wanted to more efficiently manage supplier documents and improve quality and food safety. Too much time was wasted on manual workflows and business processes, and the company needed a better way to measure supplier performance and compliance.

Solution: TraceGains' Supplier Management and Specification Publishing solutions were easy to use and delivered valuable business intelligence and useful dashboards that helped achieve and maintain GFSI compliance across the vendor base.

Outcomes:

- By automating data collection and workflows, Topco is better equipped to mitigate risk, improve quality, and has become 365 Audit Ready™.
- Reports on historical supplier and item-level compliance trends can be used to mitigate corporate risk and/or to enhance negotiations.
- Attaining and maintaining GFSI certification for 1,600+ suppliers increased from 9% to 95%



Outcomes:

With TraceGains automatically collecting GFSI audits and various item-level documents from suppliers, Topco's QA team has the confidence that they are 365 Audit Ready™ because all the required documents and underlying data are at their fingertips.

"With all our supply facilities loaded into TraceGains, notifications on audit expirations are fully automated; we don't even have to touch it," explained Howard. "That saved us about 10 to 15 percent in time spent going after suppliers to get their audit documentation to us."

Topco uses TraceGains' Supplier Scorecard to monitor which suppliers are performing well and which ones need counseling. The scorecards inform internal decision-making and enhance future purchasing negotiations. TraceGains also automatically publishes full specifications to all Topco suppliers. This ensures that vendors are always informed and aware of changes, negating the need for version or revision control.

The early warning alerts in TraceGains give Topco the confidence that the inventory in the warehouse meets specifications and safety standards, and is ready to ship. That knowledge allows the company to reduce its buffer stock and free up cash flow.

Through better data management, 95 percent of Topco's suppliers are now GFSI certified compared to nine percent in 2009. Not surprisingly, Topco is preparing to deploy additional TraceGains solutions to further automate its QA decision-making and workflow.

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*-Howard Popoola,
Vice President, QA*



Before

- Supplier document management was cumbersome
- Only 9% of supplier facilities were GFSI certified
- 40% of GFSI audits were missing or incomplete
- Keeping specs up-to-date was a struggle
- Supplier performance reports were labor intensive
- Little insight into supplier performance

After

- Automated supplier relationship management
- 95% of supplier facilities are GFSI certified
- Suppliers alerted if documents are missing or expired
- Instantly push specs & other documents to suppliers
- Detailed reports developed with just a few mouse-clicks
- Fully automated supplier scorecards