

Making sure all the parts of your company are talking to each other



Apollo Apples is one of New Zealand's top produce companies, focusing on the cultivation and export of apples.

As they've grown, the need for better systems and more effective communication has become paramount in their organization.

Discover how Grownote has increased efficiencies, effectiveness and allowed for better decision-making within Apollo Apples.



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- Lachlan McKay
Orchard Operations Manager For Apollo Apples



Our Client

Apollo Apples is one of New Zealand's top produce companies, focusing on the cultivation and export of apples. Over the years, Apollo Apples has become an all-in-one grower, packer and seller, shipping top quality fruit all over the world. As they've grown, the need for better systems and more effective communication has become paramount in their organization.

The Challenge

Despite its vertically integrated structure, Apollo Apples was having serious problems with their information flows.

The first problem: Communication between the packhouse - which thrived on detail and pre-planning - and the orchards, where managers had to respond on-the-fly to field conditions. An example of this is during the harvest. The packhouse could never be sure how many bins they would be getting and what would be inside them until the truck actually arrived.

"There was a big hole there," recalls Lachlan McKay, Orchard Operations Manager for Apollo Apples. *"We'd send the fruit from the orchard to the packhouse and no one knew what it was, what its size was, or its quality. There was no way to get the information to the packhouse before it arrived."*

The second problem was communication between the orchards and the management team. While the orchard manager could send bulletins and updates, there was no way for Apollo Apples management to easily track the current crop conditions in the field in real time or go back and check an orchard's history of performance without searching paper records.

Finally, as a grower, packer, and exporter, Apollo is responsible for all their own compliance documentation and paperwork. With six different orchard sectors all using their own spreadsheets, data had to be collected and collated by the management team, eating up valuable time every month and creating countless opportunities for mistakes and miscommunications to be made.

Clearly, there had to be a better way.

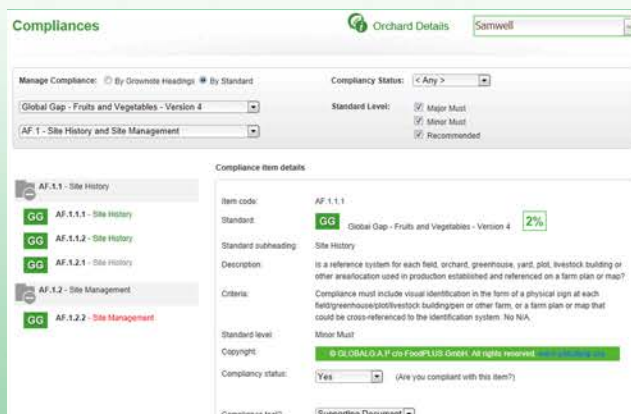


The Solution

Apollo Apples was ideally suited for Radford's Grownote, a web-based orchard management system.

Now all the documentation and reports from the orchards could be uploaded using forms that ensured company-wide compliance to a single format. What's more, all information was now centrally shared and immediately accessible between multiple sites, even though they were miles apart.

- With Grownote, Apollo Apples could **plan** for orchard events such as spraying and harvesting.
- They could **improve their communication** between the orchards, the packhouse, and the management team.
- They could maximize **resource utilization**, with accurate predictions of how many people they would need in the packhouse and in the harvest teams.
- They would experience better **recording and reporting**.
- They would minimize the time spent in **compliance administration**.



Multi-standard compliance is a breeze with Grownote. Keep track of your progress and easily email or print your compliance checklists.



Using the map overlay tool, key areas of an orchard can be identified, such as marking areas that are ready for harvest, or have been treated for insects.

The Results

The improvements were immediately apparent.

"We're seeing a major shift in what we used to do," reports Mr. McKay. "The data is reliable and in a central place that everyone can get to. The fact that management has access to the data in real time means better decisions can be made, and efficiencies have increase dramatically."

As everyone grew more comfortable with the reports in the program, communication took a huge leap forward. Not only was the packhouse getting accurate information on the numbers of bins coming in, but they suddenly had access to the quality assurance data that used to sit on the orchard managers' desks. Now, quality assurance teams can take tablets into the orchards to enter QA data electronically and in real-time into Grownote



Data is entered by QA teams into Grownote in real-time, instantly available for better decision-making in the company

"We've increased the amount of QAs in the field because of the capabilities Grownote has given us."



One key metric in the QA data that no one had before was the average size of the apples in each orchard. Sizing makes a big difference to how the apples are packed and which markets they will be sold to. Having that data in advance allowed the packhouse team to plan and program their upcoming shifts to maximize efficiency – and it allowed management to better anticipate which markets they would be selling into.

"We've increased the amount of QAs in the field because of the capabilities Grownote has given us," Mr. McKay noted. "We used to have two, now we have six. It's improving efficiencies in the packhouse."

Planning for orchard events became easier, too.

"We have used the event-based programming in Grownote for both our spraying and harvesting," Mr McKay says about Grownote's planning capabilities. "I can see who's spraying on what day, where they are spraying and with what chemical. We can program our harvest for seven days and the packhouse can look at that and say, right, I've got this many bins coming in on this day of this variety for this market. It allows the packhouse to plan the packing accordingly."

With the map overlay tool, managers could easily mark which areas of the orchards had been treated for insects, were ready to be harvested, etc. Key items can also be identified, including landmarks (such as nearby living areas), hazards (such as power lines) and ecological areas (such as waterways) to name a few.

A Look Towards The Future

This year, instead of tracking down compliance paperwork from six different sources, Lachlan McKay anticipates an easier time. "Now the guys can go into Grownote and start doing compliance electronically," he says. With each sector using the Document Library feature to store their paperwork in separate folders, the managers are already finding ways to use the new data.

Time sheets are the next step. Instead of keeping payroll in a separate system, Apollo Apples is about to start using the new timesheet feature in Grownote. Instead of the array of paper timesheets, they will record hours in the Diaries section to better track staff hours and labour costs.



Overview

Orchards

Diary

Compliance

Tools

Admin

2012

Log Out

Setup Wizard About this form

Diary - Week View

All Orchards

+ Add an event

Event Status: ☒ Proposed ☒ Scheduled ☒ In Progress ☒ Completed

Filter By Selected Season

Sunday - 16 September	Monday - 17 September	Tuesday - 18 September	Wednesday - 19 September	Thursday - 20 September	Friday - 21 September	Saturday - 22 September
S Mowing #30 (Samwell)	S Pest Monitoring #13 (Farside Orchard) S Mulching #32 (Farside Orchard)	S Livestock Movement #15 (Samwell)	P Service #27 (Samwell) S Administration #138 (Samwell) S Training #22 (Samwell)	P Mowing #26 (Samwell) P Soil Testing #11 (Samwell) P Pruning #29 (Samwell) P Water Testing #13 (Farside Orchard)	P Pruning #29 (Samwell) P Mowing #26 (Samwell) S Spray #109 (Farside Orchard) S Staff Meeting #144 (Farside Orchard)	

**View and plan all your orchard events on one page.
Month, week, grid and list views are available.**

Added Benefits

The team at Apollo Apples has found unexpected features within the data and reports that Grownote offers them.

Being able to cross reference staff hours with harvest totals has led to useful metrics to measure team performance in the field. Managers can check the data on their thinning, pruning, and harvesting teams and react to the results.

When an orchard underperforms, it can be hard to identify the problem. Grownote's archived events and history can be examined when trying to determine where the problem may have occurred. "We can build a picture of an orchard from pruning through to harvest," says Mr. McKay. "We can analyze what went wrong with harvests when production comes in below expectation, and learn from past mistakes."



In Summary

Radfords is proud that Grownote has been such an important and useful tool for Apollo Apple's continued success. "For our business, the implementation of Grownote has been hugely valuable," McKay confirms. "We now manage harvest a lot better. Our efficiencies have improved greatly. Grownote has become a crucial tool to the growth of our business".

Contact Grownote today to discuss your orchard management requirements.

Grownote.co.nz
MANAGE YOUR ORCHARDS

