

EDEKA: Traceability at the fresh food counter



A well-stocked, attractive fresh food counter is one of the most important amenities for supermarkets. Here the retailers position themselves as providers of regional and high-quality products and can establish and maintain customer trust. In order to operate a fresh food counter in accordance with regulations, authorities require companies to maintain high standards, including increasingly more detailed traceability requirements.

As a pioneer in food retail, EDEKA offers digital traceability for their fresh food counters in many of its markets. fTRACE developed a fresh counter traceability solution together with GS1 Germany and EDEKA so that customers can learn more about product origins directly at the fresh counter or on their smartphones and to reduce time spent on paperwork for fresh counter employees.

Addressing regulatory requirements and time limitations

Every EDEKA store with a fresh counter is obliged to meet legal traceability requirements and is subject to regular checks by authorities. Most of the documentation is still done by hand on paper with a low degree of digitization. One of the major pain points fresh counter employees experience is working with and cataloging unpacking lists. German law requires stores to keep records of all that is put out on the counter during the day and put back in the cold store at the end of the day. EDEKA recognized that this labour-intensive step was a hurdle to their employees who are experts in working with ultra-fresh products, such as meat and fish. They usually have a limited amount of time for administrative processes and this contributes to difficulties in fulfilling regulatory requirements.

Fresh counter employees serve customers and meet documentation requirements simultaneously. If a store is crowded these requirements may lead to recording errors, which in turn can result in financial penalties if regulators carry out official food inspections.



More efficiency at the counter - tablet instead of folders



EDEKA, with the support of GS1 Germany, sought to reduce time spent on fresh counter paperwork while increasing regulatory compliance by implementing a refined version of fTRACE - a traceability system that links static product data in real time with dynamic batch information on individual processing steps in a supply chain.

Relevant information includes, for example, the slaughtering date, the method of fishing or the country of processing. Each actor along the supply chain feeds their own specific data into the system. This makes the history of a product traceable at any time. Since a supply chain is a complex network of different stakeholders the entries are made according to well defined attributes. The service is based on global GS1 standards and uses Global Location Numbers (GLN) and Global Trade Item Numbers (GTIN) as its main identifiers linked with the Electronic Product Code Information Service standard (EPCIS) to enable users to transmit and share event related data. A sophisticated rights management system manages appropriate data access.

EDEKA reports that deploying the fresh counter traceability solution has optimized and digitized work processes related to the service counter. With the help of scanners and tablets, employees can electronically record relevant processing steps of a product, such as disassembling for display in the service counter. The inefficient paper-based unpacking list is now a thing of the past.

Awarded Benefits in 1,200 stores

The main result: Reducing time spent on administrative paperwork by up to an hour per store per day. This comes along with a lower error rate and an enhanced service level leading to an increase of trust and customer satisfaction. For the first time, consumers have the option of using a touchscreen directly at the counter to find out about the products on offer and where they come from. Alternatively, they can call up the data via smartphone app or at home on the computer.

In addition, EDEKA meets all legal requirements and can easily check at any time whether the data is complete and correct - for example with regard to EU regulation 1337/2013, which requires information on the origin of meat as well as breeding and slaughtering locations of the animals be readily available upon request at the counter. All relevant information is stored in the cloud-based system for at least two years and can also be printed and checked as part of official food audits.



EDEKA is the first retailer to implement fTRACE at its fresh counters and plans to have more than 1.200 stores live in the next couple of years. All these stores will convert from pen and paper to fTRACE. For its digitization and traceability efforts, EDEKA has been awarded for the «Best In-Store Solution» by the EHI Retail Institute.

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