

Peri & Sons Farms aggressively treks past PTI milestones

As it reaches another milestone in the Produce Traceability Initiative, Yerington, NV-based Peri & Sons Farms is sticking to an ambitious schedule and is confident it will reach the seventh and final milestone well before the 2012 industry deadline.

According to Peri & Sons Information Technology Manager Jennelle Branco, reaching milestone three in 2010 is a major accomplishment for the onion grower-shipper. "We have an aggressive, self-imposed deadline of August 2010 to complete all seven milestones as outlined in the Produce Traceability Initiative for our line of consumer packages," she said in a recent press release. "Once that's accomplished, we will set a course for reaching the seven milestones for our entire product line by



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— Jennelle Branco
Information technology manager

early 2011."

The operation has long been fully committed to compliance with the electronic traceability initiative, which was developed in 2007 as part of the ongoing evolution aiming to improve and maximize the efficiency of food-safety and traceability efforts throughout the produce industry.

In July 2010, Peri & Sons Farms was "confident it is in step or even ahead of like-size companies in the industry," Teri Gibson, marketing and customer relations manager for the company, said in the release. "Our customers mean everything to us. Even before PTI was formally announced, we had an excellent internal

traceability system in place."

Ms. Gibson added, "Peri & Sons Farms understands the need and the importance of a standardized, industrywide system to ensure everyone is making the same efforts to protect consumers."

For over 30 years, Peri & Sons Farms has developed and practiced clean and safe meth-

ods for storing, packing and shipping its line of white, yellow, red, sweet and organic onions.

Pamela Peri, executive vice president at Peri & Sons, said in the release, "We are fortunate in that the onions we grow are naturally less susceptible to the types of bacteria and contamination that most often cause food-borne illnesses. But that fact has not made us any less diligent in striving for excellence in our food-safety efforts."

Ms. Peri also noted that the company is "100 percent on board with the mission of PTI and considers the substantial investment of time and resources highly worthwhile."

Peri & Sons Farms is currently able to track a case of onions back to its specific field, lot, row and harvest crew. Soon it will be able to track which employee harvested each case of onions, and all this information will be available digitally.

Although the primary objective for investing in traceback technology today is to protect the health and welfare of its customers and consumers, Ms. Gibson said in the release, "We also recognize that the improvements in quality control and overall operational efficiency realized in the process so far have strength-



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Ms. Peri noted that attaining full traceability requires diligence on many levels and added in the release, "Buyers need to become more conscious of where the products they buy are coming from, especially when it comes to bulk products that get mixed together from various sources. It's difficult if not impossible to trace back bulk products unless they are purchased from a single source that grows, packs and ships direct to the customer."

Ms. Branco, together with the firm's management team, has been working on Peri & Sons Farms' PTI compliance strategy for more than a year, and she said in the release, "Gathering data is only half the battle. Being able to efficiently access and act upon [those] data also requires a major commitment to technological advancements. We are now developing a system to organize and store data so that in any recall situation it will only take us minutes to respond."

Peri & Sons will offer its customers access to information regarding where a box of onions was produced, where it was stored, where it was packed and where it was shipped, which Ms. Branco described in the release as "a very powerful notion in the face of an emergency."