



Founded by Arthur Rice in 1913, Rice Fruit Company receives, stores, packages, and markets apples for some 46 growers in Pennsylvania and surrounding states. Rice Fruits' packhouse encompasses three production lines (including a six-lane pre-sizer), 41 controlled atmosphere (rooms and eight loading docks. It has the capacity for 185 packers to work six days a week.

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We wanted to replace our legacy system, add features and have professional, stable and ongoing development when problems are encountered, and new needs arise.

Ted Rice



A fit-for-purpose solution for a first-time US customer

Introduced to Rice Fruit by a supplier, the Radfords team noticed a box of apples from a New Zealand customer during their first site visit. The label on the box had been generated by Radfords' software and started the fruitful conversation. Rice Fruit was seeking a solution with business intelligence capabilities to improve forecasting and decision-making in real-time.

Rice Fruit Requirements

- Professional partner with great customer support
- Ongoing Development as industry and operation evolves
- Inventory Control (ticketing and shipping)
- Warehouse management
- Up-to-date reporting
- Interface with customers that require EDI
- ASN creation
- Traceability
- Accommodate complex nuances including multiple varieties and pack types
- Grower payment functionality
- Ability to process an import program
- Customised to meet Rice's needs

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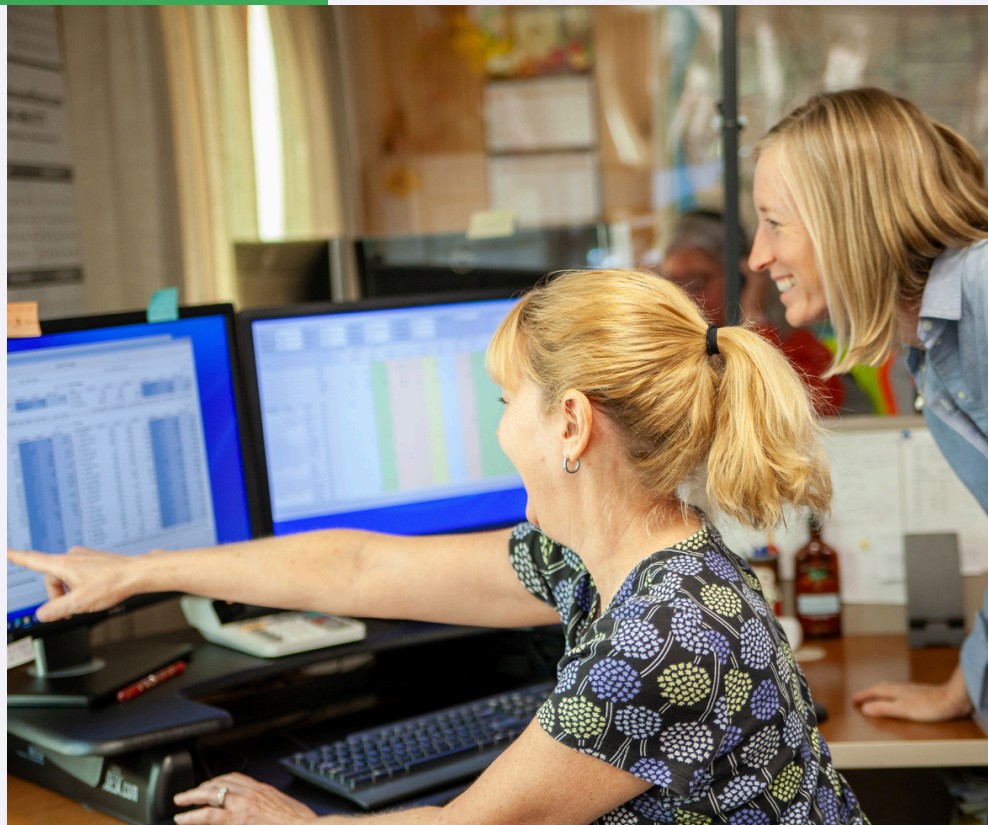
We looked at 10 or more providers. We had already been through two implementations, but neither was sufficient to incorporate our requirements, especially that of grower accounting.

With Radford's ability to mix and match to meet each customer's needs, Rice Fruits implemented three programs: FreshPack, FreshQuality and FreshInsights to maximize the efficiency of their operation.

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The ability to structure data sets while having one version of the truth was a lightbulb moment. We had been doing ad hoc spreadsheets and adding to the original system but that function was already part of the Radfords' system and easy to roll in and integrate with our Electronic Data Interface (EDI).

– Ted Rice



Implementation interrupted by a global pandemic

"Implementation during the pandemic was challenging. However, our Radfords' implementation manager was organised, detail-oriented and professional at all times and tackled a complex project from the other side of the world head-on," IT director Scott Hughey says.

"Our legacy system had performed grower accounting calculations which we needed to replicate as closely as possible as our communication and methodology has historically been something that set us apart with growers. The areas that were important to us required customization that the Radford team was able to deliver. The Radford team spent a lot of time, effort and testing before implementation, insuring everything went well once rolled out."

"Fresh produce is already a complex industry and when you have a process as complex as ours, extensive training is required. Line operators are very quick to learn their system. Ticketers (end point managers accepting produce on pallets and scanning) take longer. "The software itself is not difficult and the system was easy enough that most users caught on quickly."

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It's a very comprehensive and complex system, yet moderately easy to use after set-up. It didn't take long to see the efficiency and productivity once our team understood how to use the system. Reporting is much more intuitive.

"If you know how to use pivot tables, you will be able to get a report on anything. With a lot of learning and preparation from the implementation team, we were able to successfully receive, pack, inventory, and ship fruit – the number one priority" IT director Scott Hughey says.



Fresh produce data and process expertise for Rice Fruit

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Radfords' software gives us freedom to create and pull data in ways that are more beneficial to us. We're able to evaluate raw product, oversee product creation, sales and tracking. And, with FreshInsights, we have a hub to integrate information from external systems and look at reporting on all our activities.”

Ben Rice - CEO

Operations analyst Mike Tully says Rice Fruit was excited to have a central hub as the company did not have a business intelligence process previously.

“The capability of FreshInsights to act as an information hub was somewhat of a surprise. It's a remarkable tool and is unlimited in terms of business intelligence capabilities. We are pulling information into FreshInsights from various systems, most notably our grader. Being able to pull this data into our ERP system and run custom reports is an unexpected benefit we are just starting to exploit,” he says.

Radfords prides itself on being flexible and creating a program that works with the customers' operations, balancing current business process with their 35 years of industry experience. Rice Fruit ordered numerous customizations to maximize the value they received from this new software. This included information from their customers, growers, sales team and inventory to accommodate its workflow and processes.



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That whole department has bloomed. We can now track product delivered to box level and know which box goes on which pallet. This process is vastly improved.”



A solid foundation of technology for the future

Rice Fruit has been able to shut down its legacy system after relying on it for years. “This is a true sign of a successful implementation,” Ben Rice says. “We’ve never been able to track to box level. The software is a good tool that helps us with a complicated process. Features such as scan-to-location allow us to respond to situations such as fruit coming in, going to storage, and forklift drivers scanning produce to specific rooms. We can monitor by grower and variety - and track against estimates for accurate forecasting. We can respond much faster and there is a level of live information and detail that we have never had.”

Mike Tully says growers recognise that Rice Fruit is reporting back in greater detail helping them improve their business. “We’re giving better information faster and this will continue to accelerate,” he says. “Radfords Software has given us a solid foundation of technology for a forward-looking company with a growth mindset,” Ben Rice says.

Efficiencies at a glance...

FRESHQUALITY

- Less time spent looking for product.
- 30 minutes a day saved in reporting.
- Greater granularity of information.
- Reduction in pallet ticket duplication.

FRESHPACK

- Greater collusion between departments.
- Real-time visibility.
- 1 hour a day saved on inspection reports.

FRESHINSIGHTS

- Easier access and better reporting tools.
- Fast generation of ad hoc pivot reports.
- Product mapping aids efficient and accurate shipping.

**Complete control
from soil to supermarket**