Rasting Westfleisch
Traceability Implementation Case Study

FLEISCHHOF RASTING GmbH

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Rasting and Westfleisch:
Continuing to build consumer trust by using the GS1 System

Rasting, a major German meat and sausage processor and Westfleisch, a German beef slaughterer, understand that today they must continue to build consumer trust by providing information about all meat process and characteristics throughout the supply chain. Continued success of both companies relies on their ability to provide reliable quality systems, production, logistics and exchange of data. When dealing with external clients, they use the GS1 System, which enables them to track and trace products from animal to plate.

Rasting

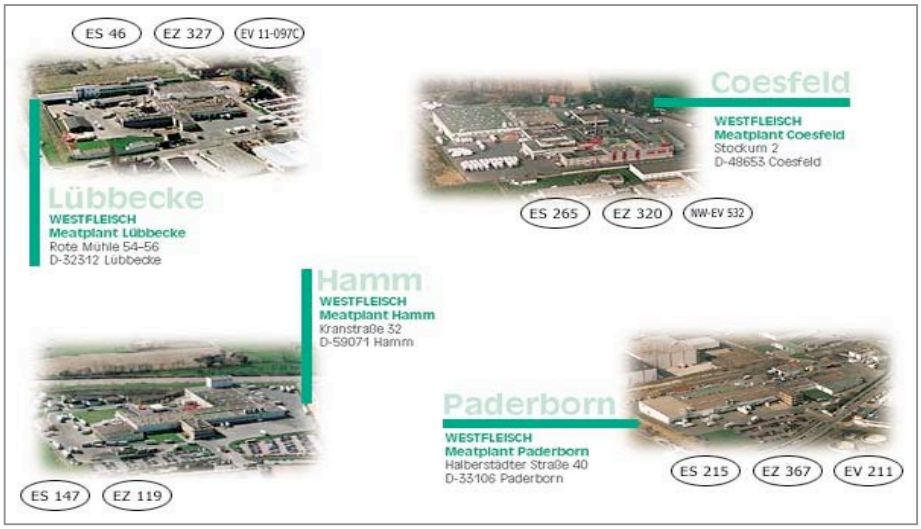
Rasting produces over 60,000 tonnes of meat products per year, all of which are sold under the Rasting label. In 2004, the company boasted an annual turnover of 225 million Euros. Approximately 500 people are employed in the company's 2 meat plants in Meckenheim and Essen. The company supplies over 1,200 customers, which include butcher shops, hotels and supermarkets. Supermarket chain Edeka is Rasting's number 1 customer.

Westfleisch

For the past 75 years Westfleisch has grown in volume and profits, producing over 600,000 tons of meat, including beef, pork and poultry in 2003. The company employs 1,200 people. In 2003, 17.4% of the total quantity sold was exported to over 30 different countries. Despite unstable market conditions, the company enjoyed a 2.4 million Euro surplus in 2003.

Rasting's meat plant in Meckenheim

Westfleisch's meat plants



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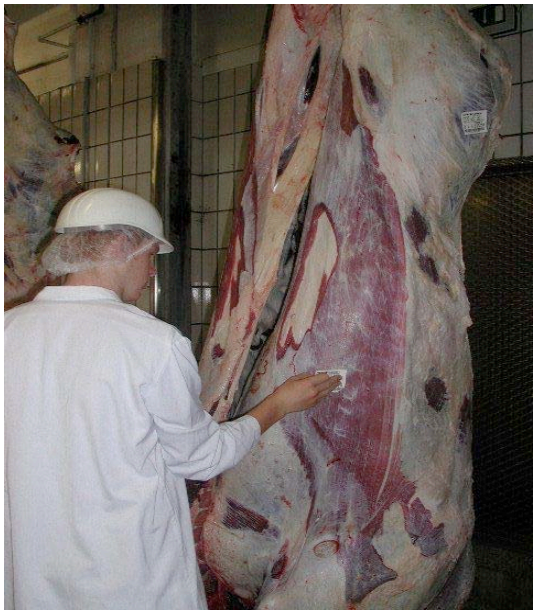
Rasting/Westfleish Supply Chain: From Beef Supplier to End Consumer

Working with an exclusive beef supplier, Westfleisch slaughters and cuts all meat products supplied to Rasting. Each live animal comes from a local cattle producer in Germany and bears an ear tag and passport, which contains the following information: a nationally-related marker (e.g. DE = Deutschland), county, and the last seven numbers of the registration number of the farm.



Placement of the GS1-128 bar code on a whole cow carcass at Westfleisch's factory

Once slaughtered and quartered or halved, Westfleisch identifies each piece of meat with a GS1-128 label, which contains, in human readable form, the name of the slaughterhouse, its European Commission identification number, name and reference number of the labelling organisation, and details of the animal including origin of the animal, where it was reared, slaughtered, date of slaughtering, ear tag number and weight.

A GS1-128 barcode is added to this label, which includes information about the animal and includes the batch number, AI (Application Identifier) 10, which assigns the meat to a specific grouping of animals. The information contained on the label includes the Global Trade Item Number (GTIN), AI 01, and Company internal information AI 93.

A new set of labels is created during each stage of cutting, processing and packaging. This ensures that before dispatch, the label on the final product contains all details of the animal, from inception. When the carcass arrives into the cutting zone, the GS1-128 label is scanned to create a new batch number. The batch number provides Rasting with the information on all carcasses.

GS1-128 bar code on a whole cow carcass at Westfleisch's factory

Once the beef had been cut, it is labelled again with the GS1-128, as highlighted below. This new GS1-128 on meat cuts contains the same information as the one contained on the carcass however the batch number has been changed, according to the new batch, which was created in the cutting zone. Batches are divided according to the number (approximately 50-80) of carcasses cut.

All beef packs are now packed into trays designated for delivery and are labelled with an internal barcode. The internal bar code is then scanned and connected with the individually packed items, labelled with the GS1-128 as shown.

Westfleisch sends a message via email containing box number, article information, weight and batch number to inform Rasting of the products to be delivered. Upon delivery, Rasting scans the boxes to confirm information received from their database is correct. Should this information not mirror the information from Rasting's database, the product is rejected.

Rasting uses GS1 Serial Shipping Container Code (SSCC) standards to identify pallets. The pallet is sent to the retailer and the SSCC is stored into the company's database. This ensures that Rasting knows what each customer receives, traceable back to the carcass. Providing this traceability service to their customers lifts the burden off of the retailer.

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Example of GS1-128 for vacuum-packed meat to the retailer from Rasting's meat supplier, Westfleisch.

Application Identifiers (AIs) indicate:
AI 01: GTIN (Global Trade Item Number)
AI 3103 &
AI 310(n): Net weight, (n) indicates the decimal point position
AI 10: Batch or lot number

Actual GS1-128 bar code.

Application Identifiers (AIs) indicate:
AI 01: GTIN (Global Trade Item Number)
AI 10: Batch or lot number
AI 93: Company internal information

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Ready for Recall

Both companies experienced their first recall situation in 1999 due to the Belgian dioxin crisis. Recycled cooking oil, commonly used in animal feed in the EU to provide the fats needed, became contaminated with dioxins and PCBs when industrial oil got into the recycling process. This got into animal feed and into the food chain. The Belgian government suffered an enormous loss of confidence as a result. All beef products originating from Belgium were re-called. Due to the lack of traceability systems, the Belgian economy lost approximately 1.4 billion Euros.

In contrast, it took Rasting only 36 hours to recall all of the products back to their plant. Germany's largest meat producer is able to meet the EU regulation, demanding traceability within a 4-hour time frame. Should a customer request product information today, Rasting is able to provide an answer within a matter of minutes.

To ensure definite identification and traceability of meat products, Westfleisch uses a multi-levelled batch-system, which includes information on the quality and origin of each individual animal. Throughout the various production areas, each GS1-128 label is scanned and recorded. Finished products are assigned to each customer order, enabling Westfleisch the ability to recall within minutes.

Benefits

In order to be able to serve the consumer, Westfleisch realised that it needed to provide an efficient tracking and tracing system and this is reflected in their mission statement, "Away from the commodity products – hence, mass goods – and more towards the highly specified raw materials for the industry sector with high degrees of service – that is the way forward and out of this unsatisfactory situation within the classic meat trade". Implementing the GS1 System has enabled Westfleisch to efficiently keep track of internal and external circulation of meat products.

Rasting realizes that in order to meet their customer's demands, they must be able to track and trace each product with speed and efficiency. Through implementation of the GS1 System, Rasting is able to efficiently order-pick in its two plants. Without GS1 standards, it would be impossible for the company to handle the traceability of an assortment of more than 1,000 products by delivering to over 1,000 customers each day. It would also require the hiring of additional people to complete the order-picking process in the very short 12 hour time period between order and delivery to the customer.

Contact

For more information about Rasting, please visit www.rasting.de.

For more information about Westfleisch, please visit www.westfleisch.de.

To learn more about the GS1 System and traceability throughout the supply chain please contact info@gs1-germany.de (in Germany) or visit our global web site at www.gs1.org

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