

TRACEABILITY IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

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Traceability Implementation Project Guidelines

The Mid America CropLife Association (MACA) has worked with agricultural retailers on an approach that tracks and traces crop inputs. Ag retailers can integrate the following traceability guidelines into their daily business operations using a variety of warehouse management devices and software programs. The Traceability Implementation Program (TIP) guidelines are designed to be flexible.

While ag retailers will incur some expenses implementing traceability tools and processes, the ag retailers that tested the approach discovered several benefits, including increased efficiency; improved inventory management and billing; and reduced manual input errors and labor. Traceability also would be helpful in the event of a food, environment or public safety issue.

1. Consult vendors about wireless barcode/RFID chip scanners that may be integrated with inventory management software. Since not all shipments have barcodes or RFID chips, ask vendors about scanners that allow users to manually key in product identification and quantity in the warehouse.
2. Use scanners to track incoming supplier shipments as well as returns to suppliers.
3. Use scanners to track sales to customers as well as customer returns.
4. Information from scanners should communicate to point-of-sale software that records inventory adjustments.
5. Consult with vendors about integrating inventory management software with computerized devices that custom applicators can use to call up scheduled orders and calculate quantities of product needed for each load in the field.
6. Consult with vendors about ability to dock the custom applicator's device at the office computer system and transfer completed orders to the retailer's server and schedule program.
7. Consult with vendors about software applications that retailer's customers may use to record application of farmer-applied crop inputs.
8. Consult with vendors about Web-based applications that allow retailers and customers to confidentially share information about crop input applications.
9. Provide training on traceability approach, benefits and equipment to staff.
10. Provide educational materials and promote benefits on traceability approach to growers and influencers at local level.

The TIP participating ag retailers found that it took about a year to implement and train their staffs on this approach to traceability. For more information, please contact Bonnie McCarvel, executive director, MACA, 800-625-2767, bonnie@maca.org.