Technology in Agriculture: Where’s the Beef?

The Role of Technology in the Agriculture Industry

February 2019
Executive Summary

Who can forget the classic television ad “Where’s the beef” (and if you happen to have missed it, or are too young or have merely forgotten what a 30 second marketing gem it was, you may want to do a quick search or watch it here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ug75diEyiA0). With almost 4 million views and counting, the ad continues to transcend into our everyday lexicon and it is a leading example of the food industry’s early adoption of innovative thinking in harnessing competitive advantages.

The agriculture and agri-food industries have continuously been embracing technology to enhance efficiency in an ever-changing landscape starting long before GMO seeds and GPS tractors. Now, with drones being licensed by Transport Canada, and Amazon revolutionizing the grocery industry with enhanced self-checkouts, technology has a leading role in expanding opportunities as these industries look to revolutionize each aspect of the food supply chain from “Farm to Fork.”

So, while the drumbeat of the old adage “Where’s the beef” may play along in recesses of the old memory banks, the Ag industry is showing that there is plenty of proverbial “technical beef” to go with the bun.

At Arcurve, our commitment to software and technology means we are living the paradigm shifts that occur in industry through the variety of work we do for our clients. Highlights from one of the projects we completed in Ag demonstrates how real world innovative thinking breaks down barriers and creates more efficient information through the entire value chain.
The Project

Arcurve was retained to enhance the transparency of a program aimed at maintaining Canadian beef’s competitive edge, both locally and internationally. Transitioning an existing program to the web ensured the national initiative worked seamlessly across provincial boundaries. Security and privacy of data were critical for our client in how they defined success.

The Challenges

After careful analysis, Arcurve established with our client that technological adaptation could mitigate a variety of factors that could influence outcomes:

Data in Different Systems
Each province tracked and stored data in a separate system, leading to a lack of standardized data and consistency.

Loss of Knowledge
There was the potential for loss of data and expertise when individual coordinators left the program.

Not Scaleable
There was a desire to prioritize the work to improve efficiency and allow for registrations and tracking of a growing number of producers in the program.

Poor Toolset Accessibility
Coordinators were not able to level out their workloads because the system was not online and easily accessible.
How We Helped

Arcurve worked with our client to standardize how data was being captured and implemented the following initiatives:

**User Experience, Usability and Training**
Provided training and support to all coordinators and users to develop confidence in the tool, and realize the benefits much sooner.

**APIs and Multi-System Integration**
Integrated the application with other tools and websites allowing consumers a view into how “Farm to Fork” meets international certification standards.

**Single Source of Truth and Huge Efficiency Gains**
Created a central database for all coordinators to enhance the program’s efficiency.

**Big Data Insights**
Created reports that provided insight into the data for both provincial and national coordinators allowing our client to react more quickly with more accurate data.
The Results

Our solutions helped make an online tool more user friendly to the client, and more useful to their users. We streamlined how data was entered and viewed in the client’s online program, accommodating the increasing demands for operator registration. More efficient data entry quickly increased participation from the users. Ultimately, this updated tool provided users with high quality information to make more informed choices, through an enhanced big-data view into the entire food supply and increased visibility to industry standards.

There’s always room for more beef

Innovative thinking in the agriculture and agri-food industries abound with the continuing evolution of technology and its application. From “Farm to Fork” initiatives that enhance consumers’ appreciation of the local food supply, to employing the latest in drone technology to monitor crops, the ag industry is continually transforming itself. This type of adaptation is an excellent example of what's possible when technology is seen not seen as “just another tool”, but wholly embraced as essential to solve problems and create greater opportunities.

Innovations like Farmbot, Amazon Go, and GPS guided self-driving tractors are just the beginning. Each step in the food supply chain is being enhanced by the adoption of technology. The now famous question: “Where’s the Beef?” is readily answered as the industry evolves. Here at Arcurve, we are happy that the ag patty is getting bigger, and wholeheartedly encourage and embrace thinking outside the bun.

Ready to talk software?
We’re always ready.

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