

GROCONTINENTAL
A Proud Member of **AGRO**
AGRO Merchants Group



Leading Food Industry Storage and Distribution Company Chooses In-DEX WMS to Control, Monitor and Record Stock

Grocontinental, acquired by Agro Merchants Group in December 2017, is one of the UK's leading international food industry logistics providers and works with some of the world's prominent brands, primarily serving the dairy, meat and bakery sectors. The company's services include inbound and outbound UK and European transport and premium multi-temperature warehousing, backed by the latest technology. It achieves quality, technical and regulatory requirements to a high level exceeding what the expectations of the fast-moving food industry.

The business operates from a purpose-built 35-acre site in Whitchurch, Shropshire with 197,000 pallet spaces of multi-temperature storage from -28°C to +12°C including ambient, chilled and frozen; and a daily blast freezing capacity of up to 360 tonnes. Its 80,000 sq. warehouse accommodates chilled and frozen products with a capacity exceeding 120,000 pallet spaces incorporating innovative refrigeration and mobile storage racking systems.

THE BUSINESS

- Leading International food industry logistics provider
- *One-stop shop* supporting leading brands across the dairy meat & bakery sectors
- Chill & frozen multi-temperature controlled storage & distribution specialist
- 5,000 daily pallet movements

KEEPING THE FOOD INDUSTRY ON THE MOVE

Grocontinental provides a *one-stop shop* for all of its customers' requirements across the food product supply chain. In addition to temperature controlled storage and distribution, it offers specialist services to meet specific customer needs like blast freezing, nitrogen tunnel rapid freezing and tempering. All of the company's warehouses are HM Customs bonded in support of global customer needs.

Grocontinental operates 24x7x365 handling 5,000 daily pallet movements with seasonal variations. It uses intelligent IT systems to monitor all stock locations and ensures that the temperature integrity along the movement chain meets all UK and EU food safety standards. Its customers have real-time access to information about all aspects of their product stock, in storage or in transit, via a secure web portal. This enables tracking of all orders throughout the supply chain and for them to immediately see details of stock, dispatch, delivery and receipt.

THE CHALLENGE

The key challenge was to establish a comprehensive warehouse management system able to manage all aspects of Grocontinental's operations, and with a clear future development path. An in-depth analysis of the company's systems and functionality was undertaken. An expert IT consultant was retained to assist the management team in appraising available systems, software and suppliers.

The existing Warehouse Management System was functioning well but, over time, the company had added bespoke software supporting its own requirements, developed in-house or via IT consultants. In developing a range of value-added services - including *co-packing* and *cheese scraping* - it found that excessive manual and paper-based administration was needed. This extended the amount of data re-entry required across the business and resulted in inevitable errors.

Grocontinental required a more flexible reporting system, giving clear visibility of stock movements as well as a sophisticated track and trace capability. Working with the IT consultant, the company undertook a comprehensive systems and software review considering its current and future business requirements. It examined alternative products and the options for integrating all of its business management systems. A key objective was to eliminate as much paperwork as possible, especially in the warehouse and transport areas.



"The different business rules, or unique requirements of each customer, are also built in so that we automatically follow their product handling policies and instructions."

**Linda Grocott,
Managing Director,
Grocontinental Ltd.**

THE SOLUTION

The internal systems and business needs analysis exceeded four months. In parallel, the management team considered a range of available software packages, including the latest and enhanced version of its existing WMS. The board's decision was to proceed with the In-DEX WMS Warehouse Management System from Principal Logistics Technologies.

In-DEX WMS Warehouse Management System was deployed at Grocontinental's Whitchurch facility. It controls, monitors and records all stock from arrival at a warehouse, through its storage life to delivery and acceptance to an end customer site with *proof of delivery*. The system runs all of the warehousing administrative processes through to invoicing. Grocontinental retained its existing Stirling Transport Management software, the latest version of which was seamlessly integrated with In-DEX WMS.

From a stock management position, each of the company's trucks is treated just like any other internal location - except that it is on wheels. Product stays on the company system until it is delivered and *proof of delivery* confirmed, which could be at the outward loading bay when handing over to an external haulier.



RESULTS SUMMARY

- A fully integrated real-time Warehouse Management System was deployed
- Individual business rules were applied aligning with customer policies
- Efficient stock routing and full control from inbound pallet scanning to put away then pick and despatch
- Enabled Value Added Services like co-packing and cheese scraping
- Faster goods inwards via reduced paperwork & administration time with In-DEX WMS Document Management
- Significant increase in operative consistency and efficiency achieved



DELIVERING A FULLY INTEGRATED, REAL-TIME WAREHOUSE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Grocontinental was left with a fully integrated and dynamic real-time Warehouse Management System built around its core activity. A key requirement was that the different work processes and business rules, or unique requirements of each customer, had to be integrated so that each step, or action, was guided. Deviations are either rejected or an alert raised. An example of this is of an incoming load with pallets needing to be split between frozen and chilled areas. Each pallet must be scanned individually and the system will literally refuse to accept it as stock into the chamber if the temperature regime is not correct. In the same way the pallet barcode identifier automatically triggers any specific instructions appropriate to the type of food, the customer's rules or the company's conventions on, for example, pallet location or placement.

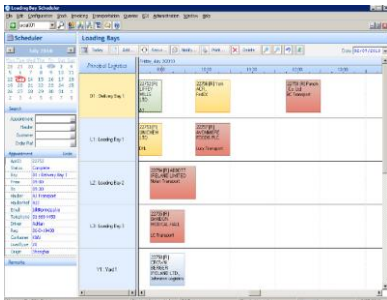
The previous Warehouse Management System could not handle varying customer requirements. In-DEX WMS administers, and ensures adherence to, any number of specific requirements and business rules.

"It has proven a robust way of ensuring that the operatives know exactly what they are doing. The instructions pop up on their screens and they just work away. Behind the scenes, the system is filtering those instructions through a complex set of business rules. The customer preferences are there, of course, but so are our internal preferred ways of doing things such as location or rack heights. It means that we are consistent and efficient without having to rely on the experience and memory of our operatives. We have quite a big site, so the ability to move staff around to different working locations is important"

Linda Grocott, Managing Director, Grocontinental Ltd.



**Purpose-built
35-acre Whitchurch,
Shropshire site with
197,000 pallet spaces
of multi-temperature
storage**



**In-DEX Yard
Management and
In-DEX Document
Imaging Modules –
speeding-up Goods
Inwards & Goods
Outwards processes**

A redesign opportunity: The process gave Grocontinental the opportunity to redesign its warehouse coding and to modify its working methods and processes, both for increased efficiency and flexibility. In fact, the company ended up using more In-DEX WMS functionality than almost any other customer. The deployment of a powerful and integrated system has virtually eliminated paper from the operational side of the business. It has enabled complete visibility across all aspects of warehousing operations with auditable records for Grocontinental's and its customers' needs.

In-DEX Yard Management and In-DEX Document Imaging modules deployed. All inbound, or outbound, loads must first request a booking time slot. Once the confirmation is made, In-DEX Yard Management automatically emails a confirmation to the relevant party(s). Drivers arriving on site must present the confirmation which date and time stamps their arrival on site and starts the Goods In process. Transactions in In-DEX WMS can be linked to these bookings. Any driver documentation is removed from the process upon arrival on site by the security office scanning hardcopy documentation using In-DEX Document Imaging – This links the now electronic copy of the paperwork to the relevant transactions in In-DEX WMS.

Robustness and flexibility: A further key customer requirement was robustness and flexibility. This is a fast moving and constantly changing business sector and the company needed to be able to introduce new services for its customers, or to change the ways it does things without complexities or delay. There was also great consideration given to the fact that the regulatory environment for the food and distribution sector had become much stringent, introducing the need for auditable traceability on behalf of customers

Seamless integration: While In-DEX WMS became the operational core of Grocontinental's business it needed to seamlessly integrate with various other systems. The company's website features a secure portal allowing customers to review their stock position in real-time, their supply chain positions, and to generate reports about order status, *best before dates*, historic stockholding, and *proof of delivery*, and shortages or discrepancies. Secure communications between Grocontinental and its customers include EDI and automatic email alerts of pre-set notifiable events such as minimum product stock levels. Customer invoicing information is generated by In-DEX WMS and exported to the company accounts system.





“Grocontinental was delighted with the final systems deployment. Everything is controlled by In-DEX WMS, from the scanning of incoming pallets through to put away and then pick and despatch. The systems capture and record everything required on every pallet. They include intelligent elements such as efficient routing – this is important when racks need moving – and a *start from present location* pick list. Grocontinental needed the system to be operationally flexible and dynamic. For example, when responding to urgencies or changing order priorities.”

Joe O'Shea, Director, Principal Logistics Technologies



ABOUT PRINCIPAL LOGISTICS TECHNOLOGIES

Principal Logistics Technologies, part of Principal Systems Ltd., is the industry leader in innovative Warehouse Management & Supply Chain operation optimisation solutions. We bring over 25 years experience, with considerable technical know how gained from applying our globally patented In-DEX WMS Warehouse Management System to hundreds of successful upgrade and optimisation installations.

Our focus is on reducing OpEx enabling increased revenue for our clients. Operations range from single-site family run businesses with standalone Warehouse Management Systems to multinationals with complex multisite, end-to-end, supply chain operations. Our business sector knowledge spans 3PL, Bulk Commodities, Cold Storage, Chemicals, Chill Picking and Cross Docking, Distribution and Manufacturing operations, and more.