

A boost to dairy operations

Etisalat takes Al Rawabi to fresh pastures



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Al Rawabi, Dubai's largest dairy farm, has a reputation for keeping things cool when the heat is on, quite literally. Since 1989, the company's herd of Holstein and Friesian cattle has been at home among the dunes, coping with the desert heat thanks to a state-of-the-art cooling system that keeps the cows comfy and the milk flowing.

Beginning with just 500 cows imported from Holland, the herd's headcount now numbers over 15,000, providing fresh milk twice each day. As the country's market leader in milk and fruit juice distribution, the company directly supplies over 12,000 outlets in the UAE, Oman and Qatar, with delivery partners in other territories like Iraq, Sudan and Yemen.

System overload

In the early days, the farm's production planning suffered constant disruptions as the telecom network struggled to cope with the increasing demands placed upon it. The existing copper cables only allowed 4MB of data, which made overloads a common problem heightened by the communications and operating systems working in isolation.

When Etisalat joined forces with Al Rawabi to address these issues, the result proved a game changer. The systems upgrade that followed helped transform the company's productivity and laid the foundations for achieving long-term goals.





Greater data

Al Rawabi's success story is built on innovation and connectivity: the dairy production facility was updated, automated and integrated wherever possible, linking people and processes through better communications. By replacing the farm's sluggish copper cables with fibre-optic cables, Etisalat's engineers boosted the site's data capacity to 100 MB providing a super-speedy, reliable framework that brought sweeping changes to the way the business was able to operate. The appetite for innovation meant it soon required a second, third and fourth increase in fibre-optic capacity. Armed with weighty, high-speed, stable Wi-Fi, disruptions became a thing of the past and the door of opportunity opened to more complex automation, communication and integration. Mohammed Aleemuddin, IT Administrator at Al Rawabi, explains, "Before the upgrade, working with lower bandwidth made it a challenge to maintain accuracy and efficiency when counting, sorting and filling trucks inside the depot, which affected distribution to the supermarkets. Now, it's a lot more efficient; this revolutionary technology has put us well ahead of the curve and to gear up for future business growth". Instead of worrying whether a server will have a problem or a system will go down, Mohammed Aleemuddin and his team can now focus on daily business with peace of mind.

Integrated business functioning

Al Rawabi has fully exploited the new capabilities created by Etisalat's framework, taking systems' automation to the max. The company's ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) system houses a central database, and integrates planning, production, inventory, sales, marketing, finance and other business functions.

Using advanced Wi-Fi infrastructure, every aspect of production and distribution is now planned, recorded and tracked. For example, the system allows CCTV to send continuous live feed to a central server monitored by an on-site vet; changes in the herd's behavior act as an early warning system, indicating if a cow is fertile, calving or sick.

After milking, each fresh batch is given a barcode and its journey from cow to supermarket shelf is followed, using hand-held scanners to record progress at each stage, beep-by-beep. Once a barcode is scanned, the hand-held device uploads the batch information to the system, which helps other departments down the line to maximise storage and distribution efficiencies.

Everything that enters the production facility or moves through the farm is logged and controlled by the barcode scanning system: from pulp for juices to feed for the cows, milk bottles to final products.

As well as providing the framework to integrate the different aspects of the farm's operations, Etisalat's Virtual Private Network (VPN) technology enables seamless data flow between the central office and Al Rawabi's depots in Oman, Qatar, Abu Dhabi, Ras al-Khaimah, Al Ain and Beda Zayed. Dr. Ahmed Eltigani Al Mansouri, CEO of Al Rawabi, views this connectivity as essential to the company's expansion plans. He states, "As well as improving efficiency, all parts of the business can now function like a single brain, rather than as separate entities. Etisalat has put the infrastructure and support in place to make business easier."

Future farming

As a company built on innovation, the sophisticated systems and technology in use today are a world apart compared to the ancient technology on display in the company's dairy farm museum – or "Mooseum" as the sign reads to the daily busloads of schoolchildren that visit the farm. While acknowledging the past, Al Rawabi is setting its sights firmly on the future. Assisted by Etisalat's infrastructure and technical knowhow, the company has big expansion plans, which means more innovative products, more output, more exports and more customers in existing and new markets to cater to.

