

THE REQUIREMENT to print 100 percent field-readable HarvestMark barcodes on fresh produce labels led Best Labels to invest in an MCS Eagle UV inkjet system. Danielle Jerschefske reports

Best practice

Best Label is a broad range supplier of pressure sensitive labels to a wide variety of industries. With three plants, including one in Mexico, it is one of the largest label manufacturers on the US West Coast, supplying labels to pharmaceuticals, agriculture, health and beauty and food and beverage industries.

One of its most accomplished achievements was to be among the select label producers to attain certification for HarvestMark. Harvestmark is the tracking barcode used to identify and make fresh produce easily traceable, tracking it back to the grower, the field, and the date of packaging. There are now 40 such certified partners in the world.

The HarvestMark application requires a small two-dimensional data matrix barcode to be scanned quickly and accurately in the field. This means that a high print quality is required, preferably with a high dpi.

To meet these requirements, the company acquired an MCS Eagle UV inkjet system.

Says John Crammer, general manager of Best Label, 'Going through MCS's entire pre-install process, they were very thorough, and it was obvious that they were a quality company through and through.'

Although the system has not long been installed, several jobs have already been produced and gone out the door. 'We had been looking for a higher dpi output and better speed. MCS is higher on both accounts than any other product out there,' says Crammer. 'The print width is unique to anything in the industry. And the product uses much less ink, so we're saving roughly 50 percent on ink.'

The MCS Eagle UV Inkjet system can produce barcodes, numbering and graphics at up to 600x600 DPI, at speeds up to 325 feet (100 meters) per minute. With four and a quarter inch and eight and a half inch print heads, barcodes



and graphics can be printed in any orientation without concern about the problem of stitching. They can be combined for a total width of 17 inches. The drop size is just 14 picoliters, which would account for the ink savings Best Label is enjoying.

The MCS equipment is moved, as required, between presses and re-winders, 'so we don't need multiple units in one location,' says Crammer. 'Overall, I would say we can do more with less, in a faster, more efficient way.'

Crammer says his operators have noted the consistency of output. 'It's very substrate-friendly, and extremely flexible. There are no dropping jets, no skipping marks, no stalling out – all of the things we had grown accustomed to with other equipment.'

Sales manager Travis Gilkey says the main benefit of the equipment is consistent printing of the HarvestMark. 'Of course just having HarvestMark has helped us. But there are other applications we can now sell, in new markets that we have not served before. For instance, the gaming industry. We can print the game pieces, such as scratch off cards, and print a 600dpi image under the scratch area. This is huge. Until we got the eight and a half inch web width (with MCS Eagle), this capability was non-existent,' says Gilkey.

Concludes Crammer, 'I have actually pursued a digital color print solution, going to Labelexpo year after year with checkbook in hand and expecting to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars for the solution I was looking for. And then we found MCS. It's like having an inline black digital press.'