

Case Study Natures Way Foods reduce their water use by over 20%

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We have just had our second site water review. The first mainly focused on water monitoring and accountability across the sites – preparing water balances. This time we concentrated on ‘quick wins’ to further reduce water usage within the production processes themselves. It was surprising what we found: a potential additional 11.4% water saving at one site, and a further 8.6% at another. What also pleased us is that all reductions identified should be achievable with very little or no capital expenditure.”

Kevin Bowditch, Facilities Manager, Natures Way Foods Ltd



Natures Way Foods are leaders in fresh produce manufacturing, supplying bagged salads, prepared fruit and salad bowls and trays. They employ around 750 people at three factories in the Chichester area of West Sussex.

Natures Way Foods pride themselves on being one of the most advanced and innovative fresh produce companies in the UK and became a signatory of the Federation House Commitment (FHC) in September 2009.

All sites are significant water users, consuming in excess of 360,000 m³ of water per year in total. Water efficiency has always been important to the business; the majority of effluent from the sites has been recovered and re-used for irrigation on neighbouring farms for many years.

Natures Way Foods recognised that there is further benefit to be gained from better water efficiency within process operations. To help achieve this, all sites received onsite FHC technical support visit with the specific aim of identifying further water management and water efficiency opportunities.

Opportunities identified include:

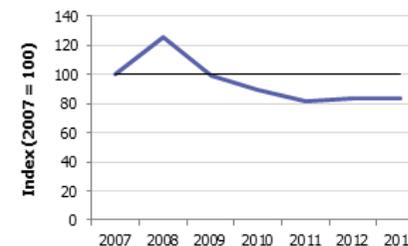
- improving water balance accuracy (by better metering and inclusion in telemetry system);
- addressing ‘quick wins’ to reduce water use within the process (e.g. repair of pump seals, improve control in ‘autofill’ systems to prevent overfilling of wash baths, reduce pressure in distribution systems to drop hoses); and
- understanding the true cost of water; the cost of water is not just the supply cost (53p/m³) but also the ‘added value’ e.g. softening costs or energy costs from heating or chilling.

Since 2007, Natures Way Foods has reduced their total water use by around 20% and significantly reduced their trade effluent, with total water-related cost savings amounting to over £65,000 per annum.

Improvements in water use are shown in Figure 1 (water intensity is expressed as water use per tonne of finished product).

A slight increase in water use from 2011 to 2012 can be attributed to operational changes associated with the transfer of production of certain product lines to the new Merston site.

Figure 1: Water intensity trend since 2007



There is still more to do; the recognition of the benefit of water use reduction as part of continual improvement will mean that the water efficiency opportunities recently identified will be addressed and implemented. This should further reduce water consumption – with of a target of over 10% across the group.

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