



SCM: SAP add-on for agricultural machine manufacturer

Managing increasing material volumes without extra personal

Because of its high export ratio, the German agricultural engineering industry is heavily dependent on international developments – and not only on the agricultural sector as the buyer of its products. Alongside ever-stiffer competition caused by globalization, the protectionist policy of the USA, the sanctions between the EU and Russia and unclear trade relations with the United Kingdom owing to Brexit all pose challenges to the agricultural engineering industry. In order to be able to respond with agility and solid supply-chain processes to these increasingly complex market conditions, one European market leader in agricultural machine manufacturing has opted for the GIB Dispo-Cockpit, a certified SAP add-on for optimizing logistics processes within SAP. The Dispo-Cockpit modules not only enable orders to be triggered that are optimized to requirements and stocks, but the software also offers cross-plant transparency and thus supports optimal control of the entire company.

CLAAS KGaA is an internationally operating manufacturer of agricultural machinery. Its headquarters is based in Harsewinkel, near Gütersloh in eastern Westphalia, Germany. With about 11,000 employees around the world, the company is one of the market and technology leaders in harvesting equipment. Structural changes in the agriculture industry, biotechnology and genetic engineering, Brexit, digitization – the market conditions confronting the eastern Westphalian agricultural machine manufacturer CLAAS are diverse.

Consistent data transparency

The agricultural engineering group has secured its international competitive position by focusing on high manufacturing quality and strong innovations at the product and process levels. To make its supply chain more transparent and thus more efficient, the company employs an SAP add-on that guarantees consistent data transparency. “We wanted to identify tomorrow’s potential material bottlenecks now, so that we can counteract them. That was our main concern,” says Ludger Grothusheidkamp, IT coordinator for the SCM division at CLAAS. The greatest requirement, however, was: “We wanted transparency in all areas.” During the search for appropriate software, they came across GIB. This certified SAP add-on is an integrated tool that supports all logistic processes within SAP. “Before 2008/2009 we were just using the SAP standard,” adds Grothusheidkamp. “At that time we had the problem that each of the MRP



controllers would identify their own material bottlenecks and define their own solutions, so that one of the division managers would then have to combine the different solutions of 50 employees involved in the SCM process.” Given that at that time there were some 30,000 product-relevant material masters on average plus further masters relevant to spare parts, this was an unwieldy, complex and error-prone process, one that the Dispo-Cockpit has standardized and made more transparent. Today, by clicking on the Harsewinkel plant, one can see straight away whether there are future material bottlenecks and what they are in detail. In just a few clicks, division managers can now see who is working on what, complex assemblies can be surveyed at a glance, and the persons responsible can provide information promptly. If an employee becomes unavailable due to sickness, a substitute can take over their most recent process on the spot with just a few clicks.

Unique pairwise comparison

“The deciding factor for our choice of the Dispo-Cockpit Operations (DCO) and Controlling (DCC) modules was, on the one hand, the pairwise comparison that made it glaringly obvious to us how much we needed such a solution, and on the other, the consistent data transparency that this add-on ensures,” says Grothusheidkamp. No longer do the MRP controllers have to switch between Excel and other systems and then go through the procedure of logging back into SAP; all relevant data is now held in one system. This not only reduces the amount of time involved but also lowers the susceptibility to errors. Introduction of the Dispo-Cockpit began in July 2009; starting in January 2010, it then went live successively in all production sites in Germany, France, Hungary and Russia, with over 500 employees. “Had we opted for the standard version, and had there not been a delay on our side because of problems reading from the archive, we could have gone live in just eight weeks,” says Grothusheidkamp. However, the manufacturer also attached importance to the integration of additional features, such as RAL key figures that provide information on particular materials for just-in-time deliveries. CLAAS also requested comment codes and so-called “druids’ lore”, additional text fields in which the MRP controllers can indicate types of materials and the reason for ordering. Depending on the authorization level of particular employees, write-protection options should also be available for the latter. Alongside the implementation of the Dispo-Cockpit, key users were given the appropriate training. “For new employees we have created an 8-page quick guide that enables them to learn the first steps in using Dispo-Cockpit in less than two hours, even without materials planning experience,” adds Grothusheidkamp.



Meanwhile about 50 employees are using the DCO, and rising, in Harsewinkel alone – and 20 are using the DCC. Positive feedback has been obtained for both ease of use and results. “The system is convenient to use, particularly because it saves time. The processes initiated are carried out quickly. In the case of slow-moving items alone, we have been able to cut these by 10 % between 2010 and 2016,” summarizes Grothusheidkamp. “But apart from overcoming the issues of slow movers or material bottlenecks, the main advantage is that while materials requirements planning is becoming ever more complex, we are still able to manage it well with our existing team, as before.”