

# Early Success with Ignition Leads to Expanded Role

## Food Producer Using Software Throughout Facility

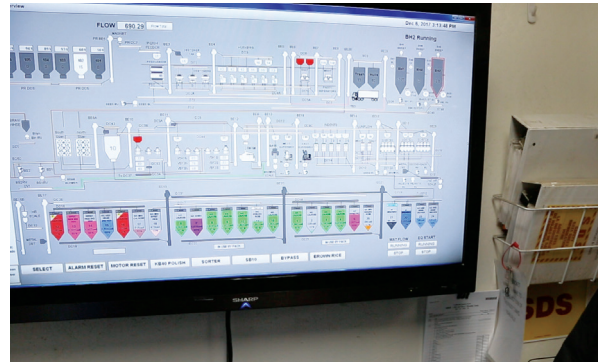
California Family Foods (CFF) is a leading rice mill and storage facility based in the heart of California's rice-growing region — an area of 450,000 acres in the northern part of the state. Based in Arbuckle, CFF dries and stores more than 200 million pounds of paddy rice each season. The company handles about 10 percent of California's rice crop each year.

When CFF wanted a comprehensive software package that could run processes across several departments while collecting and analyzing data, it turned to Ignition by Inductive Automation®. Ignition is an industrial application platform with numerous tools for building solutions in human-machine interface (HMI), supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA), and the Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT).

System integrator Industrial Automation Group (IAG) helped CFF select and implement Ignition. IAG is based in Modesto, Calif., and has extensive experience in the food and beverage industry.

California Family Foods began using Ignition in 2016, and has been impressed with the results ever since. The company has expanded its use of Ignition throughout its facility, and will continue to do so. CFF has seen benefits in data access, business analytics, mobility, reporting, food safety, and more.

CFF is using Ignition in three key areas — receiving, mill operations, and packaging. Austin Bartholomaeus, a controls engineer at IAG, helps CFF get what it needs from Ignition. "Industrial Automation Group sees Ignition as a very versatile tool," he said. "Once you show the customers how powerful it is, you can really get a lot out of it."



California Family Foods has greater insight into several of its processes with Ignition.

### Big Effect

CFF has plans for expanding its use of Ignition in 2018 and 2019. "We're going through a multi-year process of upgrading all our equipment and automation systems, and Ignition is a big part of that," said Dave Volkman, engineering and safety manager for CFF. "It'll allow us to control everything from receiving through the packaging and out the shipping door — all with one system." Future plans also include integration with the company's ERP system.

In the receiving department, Ignition ensures that each truck bringing in new product is routed to the proper receiving pit (dropping product in the wrong pit can compromise food safety). A correct barcode scan by the driver is required before a truck can gain access to a pit. If the wrong code is scanned, the door to the pit won't open and the truck can't enter. The new process has taken

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— John Konkle,  
Director of Operations, California Family Foods

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human error out of the equation. “Before we had Ignition, all of this was a manual process,” said Volkman. “Now, our receiving process has become a lot smoother, and much more organized.”

Ignition also provides CFF with greater capabilities for business analytics. “The plant runs a significant amount of time, so we’re collecting a lot of data — and the data analytics are really going to help drive our strategies in the future,” said John Konkle, director of operations for CFF. “And we’ll be adding even more data acquisition points, now that we’ve seen what Ignition can do. In 2019, we’ll revitalize our packaging department. That will include quite a bit more automation, and automation controls that we plan to connect into Ignition to do the data collection and the analysis work.”

CFF was drawn to Ignition in part because of its open architecture, which provides greater flexibility than other systems. Ignition’s unlimited licensing was another big factor for CFF, which wanted the freedom to add tags, devices, users, screens and more without having to pay extra fees. “The further we get into this, the more important the unlimited licensing becomes,” said Konkle. “If we had to do separate licensing on all the data-collection points we want to, it would price us out of the market. We would not be able to do what

we intend to do. The unlimited licensing we get with Ignition will have a huge effect on our future.”

#### **Mobility and More**

Ignition’s mobile capabilities have brought additional benefits. Using tablets, operators can now control the plant from wherever they are. “Before, we were always stuck in the control room,” said Efren Maldonado, process shift supervisor at CFF. “Now I can just grab the tablet and go wherever I need to go. We have a pretty big facility; there are three different floors. I’m able to take that tablet to any floor, and I can still control all the same stuff.”

By bringing the tablet to production meetings, Maldonado can see what’s happening on the plant floor even though he’s in a conference room. And he can show what he’s seeing to others in the meetings. CFF plans to leverage tablets even more in the future.

Reporting is another area in which CFF has seen improvements since bringing in Ignition. “Ignition allowed us to remove the Excel spreadsheets and various Word documents that the operators had to use every day,” said IAG’s Bartholomaeus. “It allowed us to contain all the reports in one central location, for ease of use.”

With Ignition and other upgrades to its systems, CFF is more prepared than ever to handle massive volume with a smooth workflow throughout its facility.

*Industrial Automation Group (IAG) serves the food and beverage industry. IAG has implemented complex automation solutions across North America. The company is based in Modesto, Calif., and also has locations in Sacramento, Fresno, and Visalia, Calif., and Reno, Nev. For more information, visit [automationgroup.com](http://automationgroup.com).*

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