

LANSA Case Study

The Greenery beats the clock with LANSA Integrator

The Greenery B.V. is a distribution, sales and marketing company for fresh produce. With a turnover of €1.6 billion, The Greenery is one of the leaders in the vegetable, fruit and mushroom sectors in Europe. The Greenery uses LANSA Integrator for exchanging real-time information between its LANSA-based core iSeries system, Windows-based auction and sales systems and external parties.

Peter Boertjes, development manager at The Greenery, says, “LANSA Integrator lets us tightly integrate systems, but have them loosely coupled. Where available, we prefer packaged solutions above in-house development. Easy integration lets us pick the best available solution. We can replace any of our systems without worrying about the impact on other systems.”



Changing Markets

The Greenery needs to adapt to an ever changing market and is now more focused on negotiating long-term contracts with large retailers that want to buy in big volumes and plan their advertising campaigns. Contracts also let growers plan crops based on demand.

Boertjes explains, “We want to actively manage the chain and make more money for our growers. To get more influence in the chain we are actively buying trading houses, directly negotiating with retailers and arranging our own transportation.”

“But auctioning is still the best method to trade niche products, special quality products and products with a small or irregular delivery and accounts.”

“Our old auction system was outsourced, expensive and didn’t offer online trading over the Web. Integration with our iSeries was in batch mode and manually driven from the iSeries. We found a Windows-based fruit and vegetable auction system, nicknamed GreenMate, that met most of our requirements. But we had to integrate this solution with our core system.”

The Greenery’s core iSeries administration system, called USVA, has been developed and maintained in LANSA for over 12 years. USVA manages all grower information, compensation and payments, incoming produce, invoicing and distribution. Financial modules and management of container returns is in SAP on the iSeries.

A Windows-based system for crop planning collects information when the products arrive at any of The Greenery’s ten warehouses.

“Easy integration lets us pick the best solution and replace any of our systems without impacting on other systems.”

“Where available, we prefer packaged solutions above in-house development and company mergers and acquisitions contribute to the variety in systems as well. Creating fast and reliable links between these heterogeneous systems is becoming more and more important,” says Boertjes.

“Because we have been developing with LANSA for over 12 years, we had a look at LANSA Integrator first. We are happy to consolidate as many technologies as possible in LANSA, because it is expensive and difficult to manage too many technologies.”

The Auction Solution

Like most fruit and vegetable auctions in Europe, The Greenery’s price Clock starts at a high price and decreases till someone makes a bid. Traditionally the only Clock was on the wall of the auction room, but with the new Windows-based auction system, buyers in the auction room each have a PC with a copy of the clock and continuously updated produce details. Buyers can also bid over the Internet.

Produce is auctioned from 7:00 am till about 10:30 am. Depending on demand, the auction duration for each product varies so a schedule determines the sequence of products, not the exact start time. GreenMate collects and publishes produce data 30 minutes before auctioning, with an RFI refresh of information just before auctioning.



Marcel Driessen, GreenMate project leader, explains, “Just before the auction of a certain product starts, GreenMate automatically collects information (such as produce quantity, quality and origins) from the iSeries using LANSA Integrator’s Remote Function Invocation (RFI) capability.”

“While the auctioning of tomatoes is still happening, GreenMate collects information for the broccoli, or whatever product is next in schedule, and publishes this in a corner of the screen.”

Another LANSA Integrator managed data link, this time driven from the iSeries, sends produce data for publication in GreenMate’s HTML catalog.

GreenMate also uses RFI to trigger a daily FTP transfer from the iSeries to its SQL Server database of less dynamic information, such as buyer address and credit limit. Another LANSA Integrator managed data link sends produce data from the iSeries for publication in GreenMate’s HTML catalog.

“Because we are dealing with fresh produce, sales transactions from GreenMate must be sent immediately to our USVA system for distribution and invoicing,” continues Driessen. “Currently we send sales transactions by data queue, but we may use LANSA Integrator’s XML Queue service for easier management.”

A Smoother Process

“Remote buyers can now bid over the Internet,” says **Ary van der Waal**, The Greenery’s auction master. “But just as important, the whole process of auctioning is smoother because of LANSA’s fast and automated integration between GreenMate and the iSeries.”

“Previously, one or two auction assistants sat at an iSeries screen in the auction room continuously sending small files with produce information to the old system. There were very many small files because data is separated by product, location, grower and quality.”



The Greenery has a fully automated logistical infrastructure.

Company and System Information

- The Greenery B.V. has a turnover of around €1.6 billion and has 1,800 employees in the Netherlands and 400 in Belgium, Germany, Spain, Italy and the United Kingdom. Auction revenue is over €85 million. The Greenery is owned by Voedings Tuinbouw Nederland, a horticultural cooperative whose 2,500 producer-owned members sell their products via The Greenery. The Greenery exports fresh vegetables, fruit and mushrooms to more than 60 countries, with the European Union, Eastern Europe, North America and Japan as its most important markets. For more information visit: www.thegreenery.nl
- The Greenery’s IT department has 70 people with 20 focused on application development. Six of these are skilled in LANSA. The Greenery runs its core USVA system on an iSeries 810, with separate LPARs for development and production. Greenery runs SAP version 3.1.1 on HP UNIX.
- GreenMate, from Aucxis Trading Solutions in Belgium, runs on a Compaq CL380 with Windows 2000 clients and an SQL Server database. For more information visit: www.aucxis.com.

“As growers can deliver produce during the morning, even during the auction, information kept on changing. Warehouse staff advised the auction assistants and the data had to be resent. This started at 6.15 a.m. and continued during the entire auction.”

“LANSA applications are reliable and fast. LANSA just works.”

“Occasionally data was so late I had to pause the auction, or auction out of schedule.”

“With the new integrated auction system, I don’t need auction assistants to send files manually. Even if there is a last minute problem with the produce, I can push a button in GreenMate to trigger an ad hoc refresh of data. I have everything under my control,” says van der Waal.

Easy Integration

“LANSA Integrator lets us tightly integrate systems, but have them loosely coupled,” concludes Boertjes.

“By loosely coupled I mean that we could replace any of our systems without worrying about the impact on other systems.”

“Easy integration lets us pick the best available systems and consolidate transactions from multiple sources in one central and reliable core system.”

“Sales transactions from our Windows-based negotiated sales and GreenMate systems come together real-time in our iSeries core system for invoicing and distribution to the customer and payment to the grower. We have very complex rules in USVA that we don’t want to copy to other systems.”

“Because LANSA Integrator’s RFI has proven to be superior in performance and reliability, we plan to use it for all new real-time data integration.”

“We may replace existing FTP and data queue synchronization with RFI. RFI is a real-time call to logic and a real-time exchange of data from one system to another. With FTP you cannot call any logic and must wait for the data to arrive. It is not real-time.”

“LANSA applications are reliable and fast. I don’t worry about them. We had outsourced the auction system since the beginning and initially I was worried when we took on responsibility for the new auction system ourselves. But the system performs well and without any problems. LANSA just works,” says Boertjes.

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