

CONAGRA FOODS



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COUNCIL BLUFFS



COMPANY BACKGROUND

ConAgra Foods® is proud to make the food people love, manufacturing and marketing leading branded and specialty food products to retail and foodservice customers in the United States and internationally. The company's consumer foods are found in 97 percent of America's households, and 25 of them are ranked first or second in their category. The Council Bluffs plant manufactures exclusively frozen foods brands, including Marie Callender's®, Banquet®, and Healthy Choice® meals. The plant is built on a 17-acre plot of land and employs more than 850 people.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

ConAgra Foods operates a frozen meal assembly plant located in the business district of Council Bluffs, Iowa. ConAgra Foods maintains a comprehensive safety, health, and environmental management program at the plant. The program includes engineering, education and enforcement provisions for hazard communication; spill preventions and response; hazardous waste; universal waste and oil management; wastewater and storm water management.

INCENTIVES TO CHANGE

In 2009, ConAgra Foods outlined five long-term sustainable development goals to work toward becoming a more environmentally-friendly company. One of these goals is to divert at least 75 percent (or 10 percent above the baseline, if greater) of the company's solid waste from landfills. Achieving these goals will not only benefit the environment, but may also result in significant cost savings to the company as well. The Council Bluffs plant currently diverts 50 percent of its solid waste, including wooden pallets, plastic and metal barrels and corrugated cardboard.

RESULTS

Plant-Wide Recycling Initiative: In order to track the amount of recycling the plant was undertaking, the intern compiled and summarized data to create a baseline of current and historical landfill and solid waste disposal costs. The landfilled and diverted waste tonnages, as well as the associated revenue/costs are recorded monthly in ConAgra Foods' Sustainable Development Reporting Tool (SDRT). This tool is used by all ConAgra Foods plants to

measure the extent to which the certain sustainability goals, including solid waste diversion from landfills, are being met. Information is now compiled in one organized location to track all streams.

Organizing and implementing a sustainable, plant-wide recycling program is the intern's main task. The plant has three



main areas of production, and each area has three production lines that are each capable of producing many different types of meals, causing variability in the amount and type of recyclables produced. The intern will develop a plan for collecting recyclables on each production line for every type of meal, and will develop and conduct employee training accordingly.

While the recycling process is being designed, the intern will form and lead a "green team" of employees across the plant interested in driving the sustainability movement. This team will work with the intern to train employees, organize recyclable collection, and maintain the recycling program after the internship is complete.

Wastewater Reduction: The flooding during the summer of 2011 caused a heightened awareness concerning the company's wastewater handling, and provided the opportunity to handle the liquid waste and the solids removed from wastewater in a more economical and ecological manner. Historically, leftover liquid ingredients and wastewater sludge were collected in a pump truck and disposed of at a municipal waste facility in Omaha. The intern researched options and proposed a plan to dry the plant's wastewater sludge and use the cake for land application or composting, reducing trucking costs as well as vehicle emissions. The intern will continue to search for the best outlet for the liquids, and will make recommendations accordingly.