



Printing solution 'grows' horticultural efficiency



MARKET:
Horticulture/green industry

APPLICATION:
Label and print solutions for green industry

MODEL:
MB240



Background

Horticultural producers have to contend with the weather as well as controlling plant diseases and pests; organic producers additionally are bound by stringent regulations. Sowing, planting and harvesting processes need therefore to be meticulous and efficient. One organic fruit and vegetable farm, founded by Max and Therese Apfelbacher in 1980 in Germany's North Rhine-Westphalia region, has discovered that having its own TSC Printronix Auto ID thermal printer has improved the speed, legibility and flexibility of its plant and produce labelling processes.

Johann Apfelbacher now leads the second generation family business along with his brother Franz. Their farm is on 20 hectares of fertile, loamy soil near Bornheim-Brenig, not far from the Rhine river. They grow a mix of fruit and vegetables like radishes, cabbages, lettuces, tomatoes and peppers that they sell online and from their farm shop. Pick your own is now as popular as ever with customers during warmer seasons.

Since 1995, they have delivered crisp, fresh produce on subscription to households in Cologne. In 2010, they also started selling directly from the farm. Some three hectares of naturalised garden around their farm invites people to pick their own seasonal produce as well as learn, on a small scale, how organic farming works.

Johann and Franz's enterprise was one of the first farms in the region to become certified by Bioland, the leading association for organic farming in Germany. As such, it is subject to controlled regulations plus annual inspections by Bioland and the EU.

During the main season the Apfelbacher farm needs to accurately produce around 10,000 stick-in plant labels as well as 1,000 durable, weatherproof loop-lock labels. For many years, the two brothers relied on A4 die-cut labels and an Excel/Word combination to daily label large numbers of plants and bushes but it proved both cumbersome and time-consuming.

Solution

"With just the touch of a button, we can now generate a wide variety of labels, from one-offs to large batches," says Johann. Güse supplies rolls of matt, white stick-in rigid PVC plant labels containing recycled content to make them more sustainable than conventional plastic labels. They measure 25 x 120 mm, are 350µ thick and suit the thermal transfer print process well. They offer both weather resistance and chemical resistance and are easily inserted in topsoil or pots.

Güse also supplies polyethylene, matt loop-lock labels to Apfelbacher, which are used mainly to identify the farm's soft fruit shrubs, perennials and woody plants. These labels are available in different sizes and materials, with and without perforation, and in up to eight film colours. They're not only suitable for professional thermal transfer printing but can also be hand-written.

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The brothers now produce all their labels using a self-managed Excel database, which, together with the MB240T printer's fast speed and integrated label software has meant real increase in efficiency on the farm.

And thanks to thermal transfer technology, the printing is permanently legible, especially on labels exposed to harsh outdoor conditions.

Benefits

- Easy to use high-contrast 3.5-inch colour touch LCD panel with six buttons
- Fast throughput; 203 dpi print resolution and print speed of up to 254 mm/second
- Wide open angle for media handling
- Quick set-up/update features

Functions of the product series

The two models in the MB Series of industrial thermal label printers have a small footprint, quiet operation and very fast throughput. They are as equally at home in offices and on shop floors as in challenging environments like greenhouses.

The menu of the MB240T user-friendly printer can be customised so that frequently used functions can be placed directly on the start screen to save time. Data transfer is fast and secure via wired or wireless interfaces. Ethernet, USB, USB host, RS232 are included as standard with optional 802.11 a/b/g/n wireless slot-in module or internal Bluetooth 4.2 interface.

The printer's TSPL-EZD firmware includes a file manager and programming language that supports standalone and downtime programming, allowing the Apfelbachers to continue to print labels without connection to a host computer or in times of network failure. Seagull BarTender label software makes designing and automating label layouts a breeze, helping create text, graphics, barcodes, serialization, not to mention compliance with important standards.

About Erdt

Güse is an innovative and creative plant labelling company and has been a reliable partner in the German green industry since 1954. It is also a sales partner of TSC Printronix Auto ID.