

## WaudWare's expertise in traceability drives growth

BY GERRY WEAVER

Brampton-based WaudWare is celebrating 25 years of steady growth in the software development field. The company has two flagship products focused on the produce industry: Produce Industry Control System and Produce Industry Control System for the Web. The comprehensive software offers everything necessary to run a business and is particularly adept at handling traceability and case labeling requirements. According to company President F. Charles Waud, that expertise is paying off for the business.

"This current year has been fantastic," Waud said. "We've got several new customers and we're extremely busy. That's really nice given the recession in the previous three or four years. An awful lot of what we work on these days is traceability, so we're visiting all our customers and talking to them about the impact of traceability and how we can help them meet their needs."

Waud sees the impact the "Farm to Fork" initiative on traceability has had on the industry, as both the United

States and Canadian governments put laws into effect and require companies to have food-safety audits. At a more granular level, he's had a lot of conversations about the challenges and benefits of using one PTI label on products from packing through to final destination.

"The software can do it. Our users are trying to figure out the best way to do that," said Waud. "When the load comes in, if it's already labeled, you scan those labels into your system or enter them manually, which ever you like. If they aren't labeled, you have to break down the pallet and label it yourself. People who pack the product have a big part in this process. So the better labeling job they do, the less difficult it is for wholesalers and smaller distributors."

Waud is also keeping a close eye on renewed customer interest in Radio Frequency ID tags. RFID technology features a chip in the sticker, which can be read by a portal and is already used in many distribution industries.

In the produce industry, a distributor could take an order from a restaurant, put the packages with RFID stickers on a pallet and drive the pallet through a portal. The portal would then read all of the tags



WaudWare president F. Charles Waud said the company celebrated its 25th anniversary with a party on Sept. 25 to say thank you to its customers and business partners.

on the packages, confirming the order was packed correctly as it is leaving the warehouse.

"That would be wonderful, because it would cut tons of labour out of barcode scanning

each box," said Waud, noting his company had done some pilot RFID projects a few years ago. Those projects revealed an issue other companies had also found. "The technology has trouble going through liquid, so some of the product couldn't be scanned properly. The RFID industry has been working to address that with different frequencies and tweaking the technology so it will work better with wet product. I think that will be talked about an awful lot over the next several years because the opportunity there is huge."

WaudWare is in the midst of its own large project, which it began a year ago — rewriting the PICS software in Java. The ongoing project will replace the current product.

"We are completely rebuilding the whole thing from scratch, but we still want the typical user to be able to just get up and running within minutes," Waud noted. The Java software will allow the company to be more efficient in developing and supporting the

product and more easily able to add new features.

One of those features will be multi-lingual capability, with plans for English, French and Spanish to start. Other languages may be added at a later date. The company gave a presentation on the progress of the project at its 25th anniversary party on Sept. 25. The party was also an opportunity for WaudWare to thank many of its customers and other business partners.

Waud is very involved in the produce industry, sitting on the board of the Ontario Produce Marketing Association and taking part in the Common Data Working Group for the Canadian Produce Marketing Association, as well as the Produce Traceability Initiative — Technology Working Group. He's surprised more people in the industry don't join the regional and national associations.

"They may not be aware of the benefits that come from their membership dollars, but we on the board and committees that are formed with other people do a lot of work on behalf of the whole industry."