Prairie Farms Dairy keeps milk, juice, butter flowing with Cleo Integration Cloud

Company:
Prairie Farms Dairy
Founded: 1938
Headquarters:
Edwardsville, Illinois
Industry: Agriculture, manufacturing and distribution
Employees: 5,700
Annual sales: $3B+
Business need:
Secure MFT and cloud-based managed services

Based in Edwardsville, Illinois, Prairie Farms Dairy is a dairy cooperative comprised of 900 farms throughout the Midwest. Since 1938, Prairie Farms has been producing high-quality dairy products, including milk, cheese, yogurt, butter, sour cream, dips, juice, and ice cream, distributing them to retail and wholesale grocers and other facilities in the food service industry, including schools, hospitals, and elder care facilities. With approximately 5,700 employees, 45 manufacturing plants, and more than 100 distribution facilities, Prairie Farms is one of the largest and most successful dairy co-ops in the Midwest, and relies on its digital data communications to serve its loyal customer base across the U.S.

Prairie Farms needed a managed file transfer (MFT) solution to support trading partners that required AS2 but also other file transfer protocols. Already a Cleo customer, Prairie Farms was interested in the Cleo Integration Cloud's file transfer portfolio, but the co-op lacked expertise in software installation/configuration, hardware purchase and maintenance, network configuration, and the overall implementation of a redundant solution. It was at Cleo's annual user summit that Prairie Farms personnel discovered that they could get everything they wanted in a managed MFT and integration solution.

Prairie Farms Dairy keeps milk, juice, butter flowing with Cleo Integration Cloud

IT Challenge

Prairie Farms makes thousands of inbound and outbound connections per month, many of which contain multiple customers' data files within one connection. These exchanges include all manner of EDI documents for the company's largest and highest-transaction-volume customers. Prairie Farms previously used file transfer solutions by EXTOL, a longtime Cleo partner that Cleo acquired in 2016, and quickly saw the benefits of the entire Cleo Integration Cloud solution at the Cleo Connect customer event in fall 2017.

There, Prairie Farms learned about upgrading from the Cleo ESX tool to the Cleo Harmony enterprise data movement solution to support other communications protocols in addition to AS2. The company also learned that it could continue to use the Cleo EEI EDI translation software running on its IBM iSeries to support all the B2B integration requirements of its customers, and all of it could be done in a managed services model.

Scott Heffren, EDI analyst and programmer at Prairie Farms Dairy, attended Cleo Connect and remembers the "aha!" moment.

"Once we learned how Cleo's cloud managed services solution could simplify our in-house data communication requirements, by leveraging Cleo's technical expertise and using the Cleo Harmony software, we immediately saw the benefit," Heffren said.

> "Cleo continues to provide outstanding solutions and support to allow Prairie Farms to meet the e-commerce requirements of our customers."
>
> **– Mike Mennerick,**
> Director of Customer Information Systems, Prairie Farms Dairy

Prairie Farms Dairy keeps milk, juice, butter flowing with Cleo Integration Cloud

The Solution

Prairie Farms leveraged the Cleo Integration Cloud for MFT as a service and received the precise solution it needed to meet the e-commerce requirements its partners demand.

A Prairie Farms customer, for example, recently required files be sent to them via SFTP, and Prairie Farms uses Cleo Harmony in the cloud to manage this process. Prairie Farms sends customer invoice data to the cloud, which sends it to the customer via SFTP. The managed services team and the Cleo software collect the data files, append subsequent data to the customer file if it has not yet been retrieved, and assign a unique file name based on the requirements of the customer.

Additionally, since making the decision to use Cleo Harmony in the cloud, Prairie Farms did not need to invest in additional education, hardware, or internal time spent maintaining the platform on-site.

"Cleo's managed services team has responded quickly to configuring our new partners and has alerted us to any file transmission issues that have occurred," Heffren said. "This has allowed on-site Prairie Farms staff to commit resources to other projects."

Heffren also points out an important networking benefit of the Cleo Integration Cloud. Using a cloud-based file transfer platform has enabled Prairie Farms to minimize the number of outside connections through its firewall. With previous on-site file transfer solutions, Heffren said, firewall access was made for each trading partner, and sometimes multiple addresses were allowed per partner as needed.

"We have been able to reduce our firewall allowances from 85 to 0," he said. "We now only connect to the cloud via our corporate-based IBM iSeries using SFTP, and the only network configuration our administrator needed to make was a port and port range."

Overall, Prairie Farms appreciates the Cleo Integration Cloud's advanced MFT and B2B integration capabilities, Cleo's technical expertise on data communications, and the attention to detail delivered via its managed services.

"During our conversion from Cleo ESX to Cleo Harmony in the cloud, Cleo's managed services team was and continues to be very responsive and sensitive to the business requirement of accurately moving data to and from our customers," Heffren said. "We've loved everything about Cleo and feel we have a technology partner we can count on to deliver added value to the Prairie Farms Dairy business."