

Operations

IGA Launches New Program for Groceries Online

IGA is introducing IGA Groceries Online—or “IGA GO” as it will be marketed to shoppers—offering shoppers a way to order grocers online from their local Hometown Proud IGA store.



IGA has named two preferred partners to bring IGA GO to its more than 1,100 IGA-licensed retailers across the U.S. The partners, Digital Foodie and Freshop, began providing their optional online grocery services to IGA retailers immediately, IGA said Sept. 22.

“IGA retailers are in a unique position to offer an online grocery solution when you consider online shoppers migrate toward a trusted brick-and-mortar store, prefer online shopping as a service rather than a premium offering and expect a full grocery experience with access to fresh departments like IGA’s meat, produce, bakery and deli,” said IGA CEO Mark Batenic. “Now our shoppers will have two ways to experience IGA’s personalized level of Hometown Proud customer service: within the walls of the IGA stores they know and trust, and online whenever and wherever is most convenient for them. With the industry’s top two providers behind us, we look forward to the immediate benefit our retailers and shoppers will see from this new IGA offering.”

Digital Foodie is providing an IGA program option that includes retailer-branded web service linked to IGA-branded native mobile applications for placing orders and shopping planning, as well as state-of-the-art in-store picking and fulfillment tools for optimized store pickup and home delivery. IGA and Digital Foodie also established a marketing partnership for digital experiences that draws upon Digital Foodie’s marketing and consumer adoption best practices, leveraging its successes in more advanced European grocery markets. Digital Foodie will work closely with IGA and its retailers to develop marketing offers and training programs for converged groceries proven to achieve a high level of consumer adoption with profitable results for grocers.

Freshop’s program option will provide full digital, personal-

ized engagement and online shopping for IGA’s independent retailers. The company’s full-service offering powers mobile, web and app-clickable circulars, full product catalogs, recipes to shopping lists, list building and the personalized offers critical to IGA’s independent grocers. Freshop also offers integration with loyalty platforms, PCI compliant payments, ADA compliant websites and walkpaths for order fulfillment and outstanding support, all for one charge per store.

“Online grocery is not just for big metro areas—grocers are successfully using Freshop in more than 25 states in communities of all types and sizes,” said Freshop CEO Brian Moyer. “IGA’s partnership with Freshop allows IGA stores to not only compete in online grocery but to go beyond what the ‘big guys’ are offering. Freshop’s powerful, easy-to-use platform enhances each local IGA, highlighting products and personalized services tailored to the community.”

Chep, IFCO Lauded by Kroger for Their Part in Its Zero-Waste Strategy

The Kroger Co. highlighted Chep and IFCO in its 2016 Sustainability Report for their role in reducing waste in the grocer’s supply chain.



Member companies of the Brambles Group

Member companies of the Brambles Group, Chep and IFCO provide shared pallets and bulk containers and reusable plastic containers (RPCs). By replacing more single-use packaging and platforms with reusables, Kroger aims to meet or exceed the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s zero-waste threshold of 90 percent diversion from landfill in its facilities by 2020.

“Kroger is committed to being a positive force for change when it comes to sustainable business practices, and Chep and IFCO play an important role in our effort to meet our zero-waste goals and continuously improve the sustainability of our supply chain,” said Suzanne Walker-Lindsay, Kroger director of sustainability.

The sustainability report states: “Kroger partners with Chep and IFCO, which both contribute to global sustainability through their ‘shared’ business models of pooled pallets, bulk containers and RPCs. These packaging solutions bring both operational efficiencies and environmental benefits.

Compared with one-way packaging, reusable platforms and containers offer a lower carbon footprint, reduced water consumption and less waste.”

In addition, Kroger notes its use of RPCs for fresh produce improved product quality and reduced waste by eliminating the use of more than 73,000 tons of waxed and corrugated boxes.

NAStar Introduces TwoFer Shelf Tags

A “two for the price of one” shelf label product has been introduced by Middleton, Wisconsin-based NAStar Inc. The TwoFer Back to Back, No Liner Shelf Edge Solution affords users twice the number of labels per sheet or carton, as well as twice the number of labels per dollar spent. The label is environmentally friendly, as it has no liner but two face sheets instead. TwoFer Tags are compatible with all shelf tag formats, including cut sheet or individual tags.



The tags have alternating adhesive and release patterns that hold the labels together until the user is ready to apply them to shelves.

Once they’re peeled apart, the two shelf tags adhere securely to the shelving.

And they adhere to virtually all surfaces, the company says, including plastic, stainless steel, glass, room temperature, refrigerated or freezer. When the promotion expires, the labels remove cleanly, and, with a repulpable adhesive, can be placed with waste paper and recycled after use.

The tags can be printed at individual stores, provided completely preprinted in planogram order or produced at the retailer’s in-house print shop/service bureau. The TwoFer Shelf Tag Solution is compatible with most laser, inkjet and digital formats; twofershelftag.com.



Incentivizing Natural Refrigeration Systems—What It Takes and What’s at Stake

by Leigha Joyal, Energy Analyst, Hillphoenix and
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Food stores are among the most electricity-intensive buildings, with refrigeration accounting for the lion’s share of consumption. Energy-efficient refrigeration equipment and technologies, including natural refrigeration systems, can significantly reduce consumption and operating expenses, but upfront costs are often a major deterrent to widespread adoption.

Incentive programs from utilities are designed to offset these costs. For utility companies, it is far more cost-effective to help their customers reduce consumption than to overhaul an aging electric grid that can no longer reliably meet demand. Although both food retailers and utilities benefit from reduced consumption and refrigeration provides one of the best opportunities for achieving this, bringing this opportunity to full fruition is hindered by the fact that energy-efficient refrigeration technologies are treated as “custom incentives.”

Navigating the complexities of custom incentives

Custom incentive programs allow store owners to present natural refrigeration and other energy-saving refrigeration projects to utilities to capture incentives. The onus is on the retailer to demonstrate, or model, expected energy savings from a given project. Modeling savings from a natural refrigerant system in a new store, for example, would require projecting energy consumption for both conventional refrigeration and a natural system in a building that exists only on paper—and providing documentation to support all calculated projections.

Further, there is no uniformity in application and approval procedures or in incentive types and amounts across programs. For a single store, let alone a chain served by multiple utility companies, applying for custom incentives comes with an enormous procedural burden and a great deal of uncertainty. Consequently, many stores will forgo projects either because they failed to capture all the incentives they could have or they were discouraged from seeking them in the first place. This serves neither retailers nor utilities.

Removing barriers to custom incentives

Two things are essential for making custom incentive programs successful for utilities and their customers alike: industry benchmarks and uniform modeling.

Utilities need a baseline for assessing energy use in order to provide appropriate incentive

amounts for new equipment and energy-efficiency upgrades, but there currently is no industry standard. Methods of calculating consumption vary across the refrigeration manufacturing industry, and the set of measures for awarding incentives vary across utilities.

The story is similar for modeling new system performance. Modeling entails determining energy consumption for a particular technology; identifying and factoring in relevant variables; and applying mathematical formulas to calculate predicted energy savings. Yet there is no uniform approach for even conventional refrigeration, let alone natural refrigeration systems. Because of the relative newness of natural refrigerants in the U.S. market, utilities have limited experience with them, and of the few modeling programs that exist within the industry, fewer still address the unique attributes of natural systems.

The result is that retailers end up having to start from square one each time they are dealing with a different utility company, and the incentives they do secure vary widely from region to region.

Bridging the gap between food retailers and utilities

Interest in natural refrigerant technologies is growing intensely, especially in light of the EPA’s planned phasedown of HFCs and other refrigerants with high global warming potential. Groups like the North American Sustainable Refrigeration Council (NASRC) are working to promote and speed adoption of natural systems in several ways. Efforts are directed toward helping retailers make known their interest in natural refrigerants and increasing utilities’ understanding of the types of incentives that are effective for both their food retail customers and themselves.

The NASRC and others are making progress, but with a different program for virtually every utility company nationwide, sweeping change will not happen overnight. Where does that leave food retailers who are ready today to take advantage of the long-term energy savings and environmental benefits of natural refrigerants? The best approach is to work with a manufacturer, supplier or project engineer who is experienced in natural refrigeration system installation. As your project partner, he or she can explain to the utility companies involved why your new construction or remodel projects merit incentive funds and help you maximize the incentives you capture.