San Antonio Farms Gives Its Salsa a "Lean" Flavor

San Antonio Farms, formerly known as Van De Walle Farms, is a manufacturer of Mexican salsas and other tomato-based products. The products are sold to grocery store chains and club stores either under company brands or private labels.

Situation

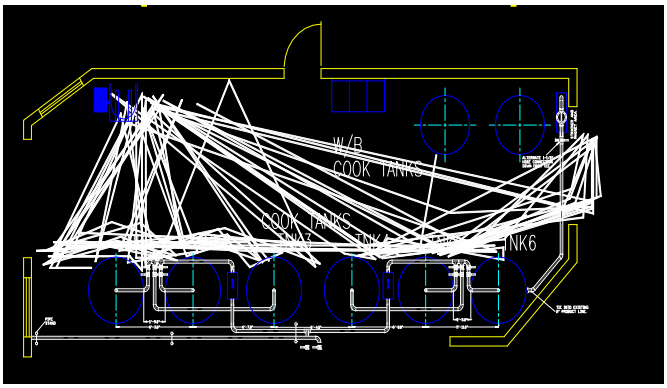
San Antonio Farms' management contacted TMAC to assist them in their journey to becoming a Lean Enterprise. This effort began when TMAC provided introductory Lean training to their personnel through a local community college grant.

The next step was to execute a Kaizen event. The term Kaizen comes from a Japanese word meaning "*to take apart and then put back together in a better way.*" Typically a Kaizen event is a one-week, action-oriented improvement event. A team of 5-8 members focus on an area by defining the current state, then brainstorming improvements and ultimately implementing them before the week's end.

Solution

San Antonio Farms' Kaizen event focused on reducing down time and waste when going from one flavor to the next. Such a flavor change requires a boil-out or flush to remove the previous batch from the kitchen and filler equipment and prepare for the next. When this change-over occurs, the production line goes idle, historically losing 45 minutes of production time.

The Event Team was given the goal of reducing this down time by 50%. The team began by videotaping an actual boil-out to gain insight into the process. They then transcribed the movement of personnel onto a plant layout – shown below. To the surprise of even the operator, it was calculated that one boil-out required over 1400 feet of movement – over a ¼ mile!



The team brainstormed improvements and developed new SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures.) Ideas that precipitated from the meetings included additional spray hoses, installing automatic water fillers (which were already in-stock) and instituting the improved use of radios. Team members participated in making these changes during the evenings of the event week.

Results

With the changes complete, the event team was ready to execute a boil-out and measure the impact. The result was a 19-minute good-bottle-to-good-bottle time! Sustaining improvements can often be more difficult than developing them. San Antonio Farms has been able to maintain their system with a monthly average of 20 minutes.

For more information, call Bill Rafferty at (210) 522-5865.
County: *Bexar*
Industry: *Food Processing*
Services Provided: *Process Improvement/ Lean Enterprise*

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