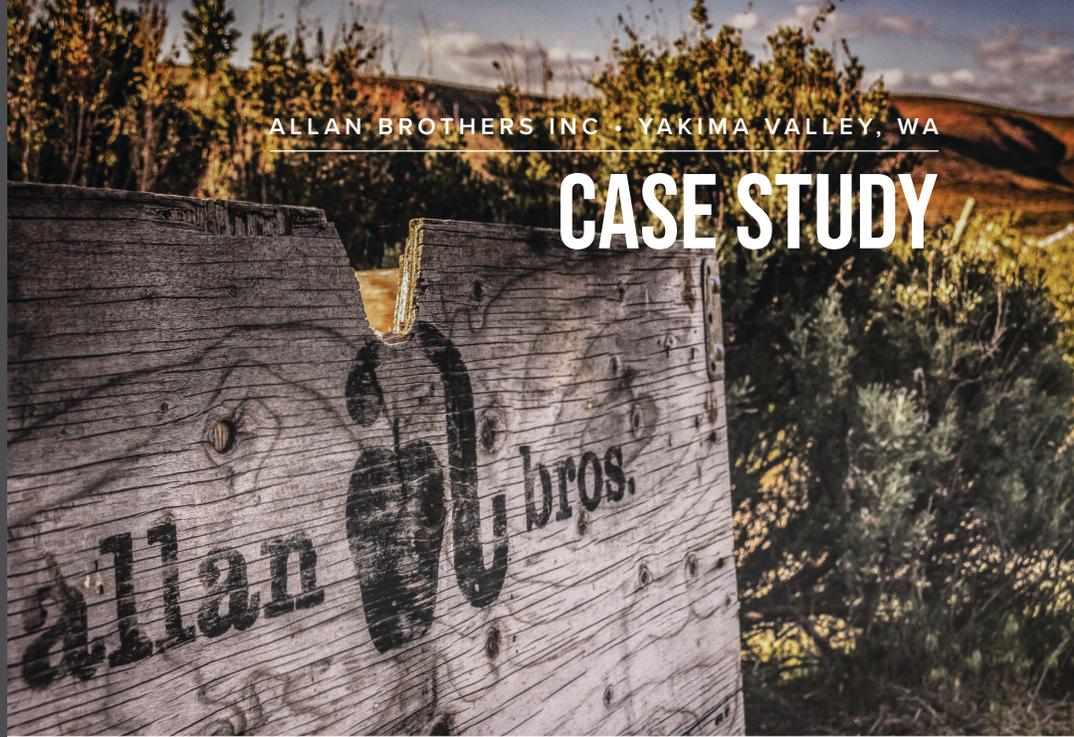


# CASE STUDY



## MANAGING A LARGE FRUIT ORCHARD OPERATION IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

Finding an a-peel-ing way to track orchard inputs.



### Allan Brothers Inc

TYPE **Agronomic consultancy**  
LOCATION **Yakima Valley, WA**  
CROPS **Apples, Cherries, Grapes**  
SIZE **2300 acres**  
EMPLOYEES **100+**

“To me, this is what Agworld offers us: improved safety, easier communication, less risk and of course a good dataset of inputs used.”

Luke Anderson

Allan Brothers Inc. Yakima Valley, WA



### CHALLENGE

Allan Brothers manage a large number of orchards as part of their fruit growing, packing and shipping operation. With their Yakima Valley Orchards comprising over 700 individual blocks of apples, cherries and grapes, they realized a sophisticated digital solution was needed to track their inputs and operations.

### SOLUTION

In 2015 Allan Brothers decided to implement Agworld across their orchard operation. 16 key staff members got access to Agworld and started to record all fertilizer, insecticides and herbicides used throughout the season.

### RESULT

Through recording critical input information for over four seasons now, the Yakima Orchards team have a good field history available. They are also able to use Agworld reporting to create the information needed for their food safety, organic and food export audits.



## Four generations of fruit growers

The original seeds for the Yakima Valley Orchards got planted by the Allan family well over a century ago. The first fields that the Allan family started planting around Nachos, WA with row crops 20 years earlier got converted to cherry orchards around this time and the Allan Brothers fruit operation was born. Over time, around 2,300 acres were planted with cherries, apples and grapes to form Allan Brothers' Yakima Valley Orchards as they are now. The Allan family not only grow their own fruit, but also packages and ships their own and third-parties fruit; their fruit gets sold in the United States as well as Asia, Canada, Mexico and other countries. In recent years the fourth generation of the Allan family, Tom and Travis Allan, have assumed leadership roles and company ownership to continue the legacy of the Allan name within the Washington state tree fruit industry.



## Changing methods

Although the same family is still in charge of the orchards after all those years, lots has changed as well. Co-owner and Manager Travis Allan: "We have learned to become a lot more accurate with our inputs. In our area, for example, we have plenty of water available for irrigation, so we used to water our orchards a lot; through using specific technology we have now found out the damage that over-watering causes in our orchards. So instead of just over-watering because we can, we try to provide the exact amount of water our trees need for optimal production. And that is just one example – the same goes for all the inputs we use: we want to make sure we provide enough but not so much that it causes damage. In order to achieve this, we found that the first thing we needed is a good digital solution that helps us track those inputs that we have applied."

Allan Brothers Orchard Manager Luke Anderson comments: “Between myself and two other orchard managers we manage nearly 700 individual fields so, to say that Yakima Orchards is a complex organization, is an understatement. We knew we had to implement a digital solution to help us track our inputs and in 2015 we decided that Agworld is our tool of choice. Because we have 16 people all working together with entering data combined with the need for accurate reporting it was really only the Agworld platform that filled our requirements. Another big point of distinction for us is the in-field capabilities: we are all pretty remote, but everyone has a cell phone with them anyway – Agworld’s mobile and offline-enabled app really makes a difference to us.”

Travis adds to this: “Because of the sheer size of our operation, we have so many people working for us that constantly need to know basic information such as the field size for any of our 700 fields. Due to Agworld’s platform structure, we can just give them free basic access to our data via Agworld. They cannot enter data but can see all the information they might need, and that is exactly what I want: not having people waste time calling around for basic information, but also not have the potential of them entering wrong information or delete other critical information.”

## Audit reporting

As is the case with any food producers in the United States, Allan Brothers have to be certified by a number of quality assurance agencies. In Allan Brothers’ case, they have global GAP, organic, food safety, food export certifications, WSDA and others – all of which they get audited for on a regular base. Luke comments: “The aim for us with Agworld is to get a solid database of all inputs that have been applied in every field of our orchards. We want to be able to look back at exactly what we have done so we can use this information for a number of different reasons, the biggest reason being audit reports.”

“Although chemical and fertilizer inputs are only part of these audit report, they are a big part and they can potentially be the most labor intensive to compile. Because we record all this information in Agworld, it is easy for us to run the right kind of reports and send them to the auditing authority. Ideally, these organizations would use Agworld too so we could automatically send them the information they need through Agworld, but that is unfortunately not the case yet.”

## Growing and Improving

When he thinks about the future of their family operation, Travis has the following ideas: “If you look at where we come from as a family operation, we have grown a lot over the past 100 years. The way I see it, this will continue into the future – economies of scale dictate that agricultural operations either keep growing or they get taken over by someone else. It’s digital technology like Agworld that allows us to keep improving our economies of scale, which in turn enables us to keep growing and improving our operation. If it wasn’t for Agworld and other technology we use in different parts of our operation, we would not be able to manage an operation of this size with ease like we do now.”



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**Luke Anderson**

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“A lot of new technology helps our orchards become a safer work environment and helps us mitigate risks. I think that picking robots for example will take over some of the riskier tasks from humans in the coming decade – 80% of our injury claims currently involve ladders, I can’t wait to get rid of them! Agworld is already doing this exact thing for us – it helps us mitigate risks and makes the work environment of our employees safer than it was before.”

Luke concludes with: “Because Agworld automatically calculates our exact tank mixes and how much product we have used in general, we don’t have to use handwritten records and guesswork anymore. It then also lets us create maps that show our REI and PHI – we can easily print them and display them in the staff canteen – but obviously our staff has access to this information on Agworld as well. The same goes for having chemical labels available in Agworld’s library – instead of having to search for it or handle a grungy chemical bottle out in the field, everyone can just find this information on their iPhone or iPad. To me, this is what Agworld offers us: improved safety, easier communication, less risk and good dataset of inputs used.”



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