Teamwork 2.0:

Higher machine availability, maximum efficiency and compliance in the food industry with better collaboration.

IFS Ultimo

Working at the highest level in production

High-tech machines, sophisticated processes and qualified employees: The food industry works at the highest level in the production of food and beverages. On the one hand, these factors ensure cost-effectiveness and efficiency in production and, at the same time, ensure that all hygienic and food-safety specifications are taken into account during production. Only flawless goods leave the factory - for the benefit of the consumer and the reputation of the company.

But what about the maintenance of the equipment? Unclear responsibilities in the team, too little or too late reporting and a lack of exchange between departments often lead to unplanned and unnecessarily long downtimes - and thus to high costs, production loss and, in the worst case, to safety risks for employees and consumers. This does not have to be the case: We show you how to increase uptime and efficiency through better collaboration and optimal enterprise asset management. And how production, maintenance management and QHSE can be optimally integrated to improve the overall productivity and safety of your facilities.

Inefficient maintenance management costs uptime and endangers security

Maximum asset availability is by far the most important performance indicator for asset managers - and yet unplanned downtime is part of everyday life in a production operation. Both findings come from IFS Ultimo's latest Enterprise Asset Management (EAM) Trend Report 2022. Equally clear, according to the study, are the factors and risks that threaten the uptime of production facilities in companies in the food industry: lack of operator training and poor communication between departments involved in operations, maintenance and repair (30.8 per cent). In addition, there are usually other factors, such as employees leaving the company and taking important expertise, experience and machine knowledge with them. The fatal consequence of this situation is often inefficiently carried out maintenance measures.

Inadequate or incorrectly performed maintenance in turn leads to defects and thus to further unplanned repair and downtime of the equipment. Moreover, if compliance guidelines and requirements from the areas of quality, health, security and environment (QHSE) are disregarded, they can seriously endanger the quality of the products and the health and safety of employees and consumers. This must be avoided at all costs - especially in food production.

Communication and process management: Key factors for successful maintenance management

As described, there are various factors that can lead to inefficient maintenance management and thus to declining efficiency and productivity. However, on closer examination, two key factors can be identified: Lack of communication and inadequate process management. 46 per cent of the food industry companies surveyed in the IFS Ultimo Trend Report state that they have implemented measures to improve communication within the company in the previous year (2021) in order to be able to react better to unexpected events. Improving communication is ahead of other measures such as investing in human resources (35,6 per cent) and new technologies (19.2 per cent). The majority of companies indicated that they consider their communication between production and the maintenance department to be only average or in need of improvement.

Reasons for poor communication in maintenance management

Plant operators, maintenance officers and HSE/QA: Who is responsible for maximizing the availability of assets and ensuring that tasks are carried out regularly, effectively and efficiently? Ultimately, this is a shared responsibility of all those involved in the process. However, from the operator's perspective, the blame often lies with the maintenance staff. "How can I do my job if the machine keeps breaking down?" is then the question asked of the production manager, who in turn suffers from the downtime and corresponding pressure on productivity.

The people in charge of maintenance tasks, in turn, often look for the cause of defects and downtimes in the operators of the equipment, who they assume do not handle the machines carefully enough and recklessly accept the failure. At the same time, many companies lack the budget for a comprehensive retrofitting or modernization of equipment; and in general, maintenance staff are often more concerned with problem solving and unplanned maintenance than with the strategic development of maintenance processes and the long-term maintenance of their assets. Staff shortages - especially of technicians - make matters worse.

Process management for maintenance: challenges in the food industry

On top of all this are the requirements for quality assurance and from the HSE area (Health, Security & Environment). HSE managers are faced with the challenge of often not being able to directly accompany the situation at the machine and the implementation of maintenance measures, but at the same time having to check that specifications and guidelines are complied with. This often requires this compliance to be documented in a verifiable manner - while operators and maintenance managers often have to carry out maintenance and repairs under high time pressure in order to keep the downtime of the plant as short as possible. Accordingly, they have little interest in also carrying out administrative work, the sense of which is all too often not immediately apparent to them.

At the same time, the HSE department is often too far removed from the requirements of the employees directly at the machine or during maintenance, and response times are often too long to allow effective participation. The result is non-existent or non-compliant processes with all their negative consequences. If a machine or system fails in this situation, the house of cards of efficient food production collapses: All the advantages of high-tech production are gone if the plant comes to an unexpected standstill and processes are missing to be able to react quickly and in an orderly manner to the unplanned condition.

Put a stop to poor communication

This vicious circle must be broken - in the truest sense of the word: Assigning blame is neither sensible nor effective. As shown, it is mostly structural conditions that lead to inadequate and inefficient maintenance management. The good thing is this insight is not new - and the causes can be remedied. Data silos, lack of or poor communication and inefficient sharing of data, knowledge and experience were also cited in the IFS Ultimo Trend Report as reasons for inefficient maintenance management.

The latest edition of the report in 2022 shows that as many as 60 per cent of the asset managers surveyed already rely on mobile technologies for maintenance management. Their goals: Improve maintenance management efficiency (64.7 per cent), Get more accurate data for more insights and better analytics (15.4 per cent) and improve response rate and time (14.0 per cent).

Taking collaboration to a new level: 5 ways to improve communication

With this realization, the first step has already been taken. The following measures help to optimize communication and cooperation - and thus maintenance management as a whole.

1. Common goals for all departments

Maintenance management is complex and multi-layered - and efficiency is the result of good teamwork. This requires the elimination of data silos and communication barriers between the departments involved. Regular exchange, direct communication channels and a common, intuitively usable platform for communication, data exchange and documentation around the assets of a company help.

In addition, tasks around maintenance and repair need to involve all departments: Instead of a clear separation between the operators of a plant and experts for maintenance, maintenance and operation should become a common task. Operators often know the equipment best anyway - they work directly on the machines every day. Accordingly, they can notice abnormalities immediately and report and rectify them directly if they are authorized by corresponding processes and involved in the execution of simple maintenance tasks. In addition, one possibility for practical implementation is to define MTBF (Mean Time Between Failures) and MTTR (Mean Time To Repair) as common KPIs for production and maintenance. This is an incentive for production to avoid failures (MTBF) and cooperate in diagnostics to accelerate MTTR.

2. Understanding and mutual appreciation

At the same time, common goals create proximity between production employees, maintenance specialists and the HSE department or quality assurance. Through mutual participation, understanding and easily comprehensible specifications, compliance with corresponding guidelines and the corresponding documentation then does not become an additional bureaucratic effort, but instead increases safety for all involved, all the way to the consumer.

3. Structured, low-threshold communication

A prerequisite for the described cooperation is close communication between all departments involved in the maintenance and repair of plants in the food industry - with regular meetings, short communication channels and quick feedback. For this, corresponding digital platforms must be created that replace Excel lists and other solutions that are no longer up to date. What has often worked in the past - "we've always done it that way" is a typical expression - often stands in the way of transparency and collaboration and is simply easier, faster and more efficient with modern tools and technologies.

4. Simpler reporting on anomalies, failures and actions

Improving the efficiency of actions and management around maintenance and servicing means collecting comprehensive data, learning from past events and registering downtimes and costs, etc. This is the only way to make informed, cost-efficient decisions, plan predictive maintenance and further optimize processes. This requires that this data is collected as simply as possible and stored and analyzed in a central platform - accessible to all those involved. Mobile solutions for data collection, for support in the implementation of measures and for documentation ensure that all information can be collected and processed quickly, easily and exactly where it is needed - i.e. directly at the plant if possible. Barcodes, QR codes or NFC tags help to specify the defective system and to record its data quickly and easily - ideally together with a photo of the damage or the source of the malfunction.

5. Plan for downtimes and use them efficiently

Maximum uptime of a plant for food and beverage production increases productivity - the connection is as simple as it is correct. Nevertheless, downtimes can hardly be avoided in practice, as the results of the IFS Ultimo Trend Report show year after year. However, it is important to distinguish between planned and unplanned downtimes: A defect or unplanned maintenance work always affects production planning, causes stress for everyone involved and often leads to inefficiently implemented measures.

Plant managers, operators and maintenance staff should work together to prevent this by planning and carrying out maintenance proactively and with foresight. In the best case, downtimes that are necessary anyway, for example for retooling a production plant, can be used optimally so that the losses in productivity are as low as possible. Here - as with all the points mentioned above - consultation and coordination between the departments is necessary.

Tools for better teamwork and successful maintenance management in food production

The five points show: There are simple measures that can provide more efficiency and productivity in the maintenance and repair management of a company in the food industry. Successful implementation, however, requires the right tools to overcome data silos and use information across all departments to make processes and collaboration more efficient, ultimately optimizing the uptime and efficiency of a production facility in the food industry. This is exactly what the cloud-based Enterprise Asset Management (EAM) solution IFS Ultimo was developed for.

How an EAM system improves communication and processes in food production

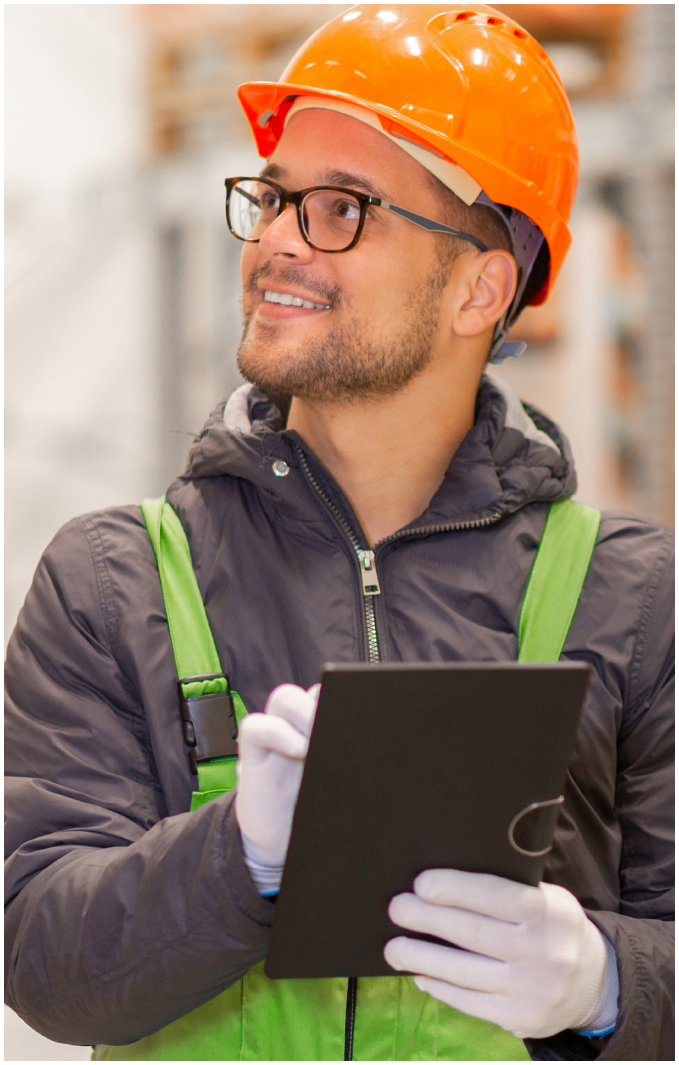
An EAM system is a holistic platform for all topics related to the management and maintenance of all assets of a company. This includes all physical assets, i.e. buildings, plant and machinery as well as vehicles. An EAM system provides a comprehensive overview of the productivity and costs of the assets as well as all related measures. This enables optimization of uptime as well as cost control and extension of asset life through ideally coordinated maintenance management. IFS Ultimo also integrates all topics related to health, safety, security and environmental protection, enables efficient knowledge retention and creates a platform for optimal resource allocation and communication between the individual departments of a company.

IFS Ultimo thus combines the modules of classic Computerised Maintenance Management Systems (CMMS - also called Maintenance Software or Maintenance Management Software) and Asset Management Systems as well as the functionalities of HSE software (Health, Security and Environment) in one platform.

The future is mobile!

Almost 90 percent of the companies surveyed in the IFS Ultimo Trend Report stated that mobile working will be an integral part of their maintenance management and maintenance strategy in the next five years. Nevertheless, only about 60 percent of the companies currently use corresponding mobile technologies. IFS Ultimo is designed as a cloud-based EAM software for food production and other industrial and manufacturing operations and is specifically geared towards mobile working.

The platform makes corresponding data available to every authorized user, regardless of whether they access Ultimo via PC, tablet or with corresponding iOS and Android apps from their smartphone. This enables completely new, highly efficient ways of communication and collaboration.



Circle of cooperation: Production, maintenance management and QHSE go hand in hand

But what does this optimal cooperation look like in practice and how does IFS Ultimo improve communication, process management and ultimately the availability of the plant? With IFS Ultimo, production staff have access to all relevant information on the current status of the production line directly at the machine. Important modules here are, for example, shift handover, which documents and passes on any anomalies on a machine with the least possible effort.

In addition, Total Productive Maintenance (TPM) provides operators with a tool for task scheduling, checklists and documents; this allows relevant jobs to be carried out in a safe and traceable manner. For example, during autonomous maintenance, standardized processes and procedures are followed and all work is carried out consistently and independently of the respective operator.

The concept of autonomous maintenance means that repetitive tasks or basic repairs can be done by the operators themselves. This helps to free up valuable time for the maintenance team so they can focus on more complex tasks like complex repairs, complex preventive maintenance, machine modifications and improvement projects.

Higher maintenance efficiency, lower costs and time for strategic maintenance

While production workers are thus involved in maintenance, maintenance workers also make use of the operators' experience and knowledge of the machines and equipment: They often know best the peculiarities and requirements of the equipment they work with every day. IFS Ultimo thus ensures decentralized responsibility and thus the highest possible degree of effectiveness and efficiency. This takes into account the common goals and mutual appreciation between departments when operators and maintenance managers share a common responsibility for the condition of the assets.

In addition, the operators at the machine can react immediately and - if they are authorized to do so - carry out necessary measures in the shortest possible time. In the food industry, for example, this autonomous maintenance includes maintenance tasks such as cleaning, inspection and regular lubrication of plant components, including documentation of the measures taken. In this way, knowledge about the assets is documented directly at the machine and is not lost due to a lack of communication.

Downtimes of the machine that occur during maintenance are also recorded directly by the operating personnel on site via the Downtime Registration module (sill level analysis), so that exact times and information are collected without subsequent entries or time offsets.

If the operators carry out the maintenance tasks mentioned, this is often the most cost-effective option for companies - apart from the time required and the longer downtime if maintenance staff have to be called in first, in the worst case even from an external source. In turn, maintenance staff and maintenance managers gain time if they can delegate these tasks for the daily care of the machines.

This time can be ideally used to plan and carry out strategic preventive maintenance measures (Preventive Maintenance / Predictive Maintenance), for which there is otherwise little time in the day-to-day business. Thanks to close communication, you can still stay in touch, plan projects and optimize processes.

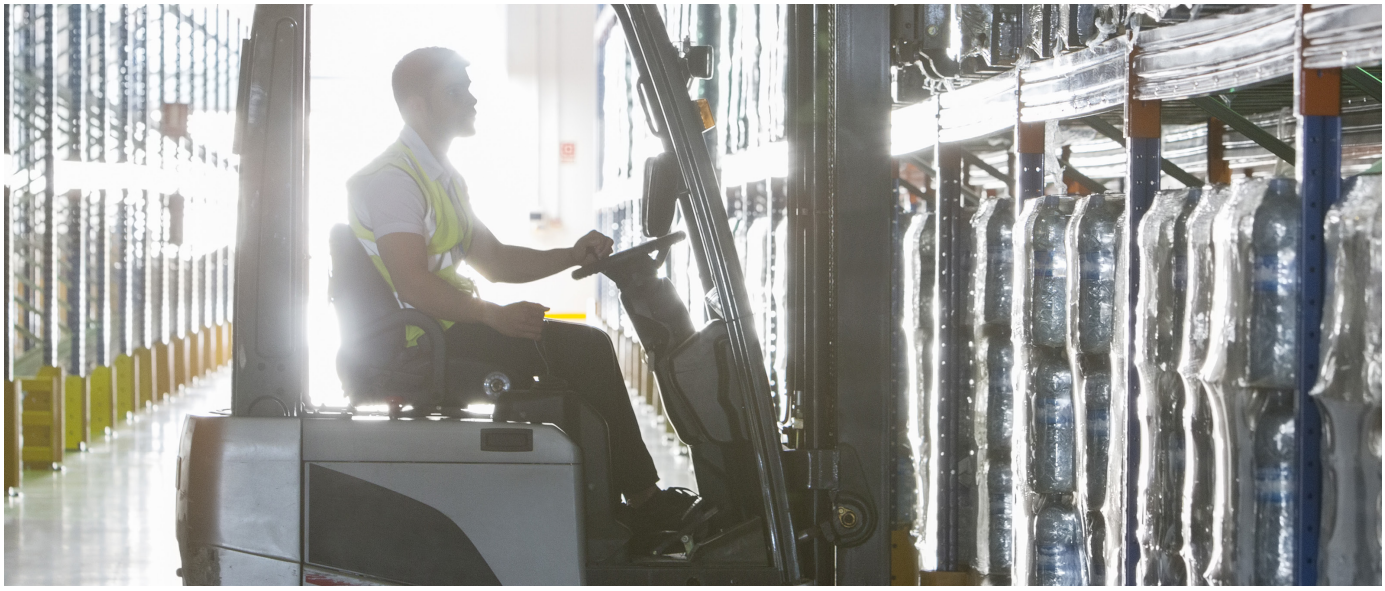
Thanks to the seamless integration between IFS Ultimo and technology partners, the software offers comprehensive functionalities for remote collaboration and jointly performed maintenance. This includes, for example, the integration of video chats and the transmission of live plant data. The result: Even in the event of unplanned plant defects and under high time pressure, processes and maintenance specifications are adhered to. One example of this is the Sign of by Production function: This enables production employees to confirm previously carried out measures in the course of maintenance, for example the cleaning of the plant and the removal of material and tools. This procedure for the step-by-step processing and confirmation of maintenance is of enormous importance, especially in the food industry, in order to prevent the contamination of products with lubricants and other agents used during maintenance and to adhere to all compliance requirements, including the corresponding documentation.

HSE issues are an integral part of maintenance management

Compliance also includes adherence to measures to protect employees and their health and to reduce environmental impact. A major source of risk for these QHSE issues is unplanned maintenance. In order to reduce these risks for both planned and unplanned maintenance and repairs, the enterprise asset management system IFS Ultimo integrates its own modules for QHSE management. They ensure compliance by, for example, only allowing maintenance tasks to be carried out if the stored safety measures have been taken beforehand and confirmed in IFS Ultimo. These step-by-step functions ensure safety when carrying out maintenance measures and at the same time take over direct documentation, so that additional work and unnecessary effort are avoided.

Start collaboration 2.0 in food production

It turns out: Common goals, better communication and access to one and the same database from any location are the central challenges for more efficiency in maintenance management, better plant availability and higher productivity in food production. This requires a rethink in collaboration - with appropriately adapted processes and a common platform for the company-wide exchange of data, knowledge and information. IFS Ultimo is the optimal tool for this. The cloud-based EAM software counteracts data silos, improves information and data exchange across departments and enables completely new, mobile ways of collaboration. When using IFS Ultimo, companies benefit from a better overview, cost- and resource-efficient and strategic maintenance management and thus from maximum machine availability and productivity - all this combined with maximum security and compliance.



About IFS Ultimo

IFS Ultimo is a SaaS EAM solution from IFS, focused on maintenance & safety and well known for a rapid deployment, ease of use and an unparalleled time to value. Details about IFS Ultimo can be found at Ultimo.com.

About IFS

IFS develops and delivers cloud enterprise software for companies around the world who manufacture and distribute goods, build and maintain assets, and manage service-focused operations. Within our single platform, our industry specific products are innately connected to a single data model and use embedded digital innovation so that our customers can be their best when it really matters to their customers—at the Moment of Service™. The industry expertise of our people and of our growing ecosystem, together with a commitment to deliver value at every single step, has made IFS a recognized leader and the most recommended supplier in our sector. Our team of 5,000 employees every day live our values of agility, trustworthiness and collaboration in how we support our 10,000+ customers. Learn more about how our enterprise software solutions can help your business today at ifs.com.

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