

Modernising the IT Ecosystem

Digital transformation takes server and network infrastructure to the next level

With its eye on the ever-evolving digital horizon, Southern African Fruit Terminals (SAFT) set out to upgrade its IT infrastructure to embrace new and emerging technologies.





SAFT provides solutions for the cold storage of fruit and other perishable products, predominantly fruits & vegetables for the export market.

Beyond its local footprint, SAFT is part of the SEA-invest Group in Belgium. SEA-invest is one of the world's largest terminal operators for fruit, dry and liquid bulk.

"We identified that there was a gap between our current IT environment and where we were headed," explains Marius Nel, Group Risk & Systems Manager at SAFT.

Finding the right partnership.

A few years ago, SAFT began the search to find a digital transformation partner to guide it through this new mission. First Technology firmly stood out as the best option. This was thanks to a highly knowledgeable sales representative with a deep understanding of the First Technology ecosystem and partnership network, and how to best leverage it to address SAFT's specific set of needs.

"First Technology could immediately offer a solution for every issue we presented. They were able to cater to our full range of needs with great confidence and knowledge. We were impressed by the coherency between its departments. This allowed us to enter this partnership with ease," says Nel.

The project started in 2019 with the commissioning of a brand new cold storage facility, SAFT Atlantic, which was established with the helpful guidance of First Technology. This new site included top-tier hardware and network infrastructure, with a strong focus on installing high-quality servers.

SAFT Atlantic served as the new infrastructure benchmark that guided the on-par upgrades of SAFT's existing sites, SAFT Killarney and SAFT ColdHarvest in Paarl.

"Prior to the digital renovation project, it was challenging to obtain additional server resources. Our infrastructure made the backup process very challenging and time-consuming."

Marius Nel, Group Risk & Systems Manager at SAFT

"It took around five hours to fully restore servers. First Technology's solutions brought that down to a mere 30 minutes. We were also working on a flat network that lacked any VLANs to protect the servers from the rest of the virtual environment," says Nel.



The evolution begins.

First Technology implemented a world-class network & server infrastructure across all SAFT sites, all done according to best international practice. This put the power of technology back in the hands of SAFT.

With the automated and optimised capabilities of the new infrastructure, SAFT now has the freedom to direct its attention to further innovation within the IT ecosystem.

The infrastructure was also implemented with scalability in mind, allowing SAFT to perpetually explore and implement new technologies as needed.

Additionally, First Technology implemented top-tier CCTV surveillance systems for enhanced security, installed robust fibre cabling, and provided licensing for a range of software - all complemented by a wide variety of future-ready peripherals.

Furthermore, each existing site was designated a Disaster Recovery (DR) site counterpart. For instance, SAFT Atlantic acts as the DR site for SAFT ColdHarvest in Paarl, while SAFT Killarney is the designated DR site for SAFT Atlantic, and vice versa. This means that if any of the other sites go down, operations can instantly be shifted to the DR counterpart to ensure seamless business continuity.



New horizons.

“With our new, upgraded and well-maintained server & network infrastructure, we no longer receive complaints about slow network or server performance,” says Nel. “This increased reliability allows us to focus on proactive, rather than reactive, objectives”.

SAFT has grown into a burgeoning cold storage solution provider with First Technology as a partner. Its openness to emerging technologies, coupled with First Technology’s ability to rapidly identify and evaluate relevant tech trends, perfectly positions SAFT to become an established leader within the market.

“It’s a pleasure to collaborate with a client that truly embraces innovation and is open to discussions. It allows for a fruitful and growing relationship that affords us the opportunity to add real value to SAFT,” adds Fairuz Jaffer, Chief Technology Officer at First Technology.

“I can now approach new developments with confidence, knowing the rest of the operations are in good hands and running smoothly.”

Marius Nel, Group Risk & Systems Manager at SAFT



