



The Grower-Packer-Shipper's Software Solution Buyers Guide

How to select the right software system for the future of
your business

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Software System for Growers, Packers, & Shippers

Buyers Guide

Who will benefit from reading this guide?

Organizations within the fresh produce industry that are considering the replacement of a software system for growers, packers, and shippers will benefit from this guide.

Software to run an agricultural business is mandatory for success in the fresh produce industry; it is a reflection of how complex this industry has become. Today's world requires a powerful software system that tracks business resources—cash, raw and packed product inventory, production capacity, shipping information, etc.—and the status of business commitments: orders, purchase orders, and payment. ArmgaSys Inc.'s EnvioAg, like other agricultural business software systems, reaches into all aspects of the Grower/Packer/Shipper business and provides a view of information and data that enables owners and managers to make smarter decisions.

This Buyers Guide will familiarize you with criteria and areas of evaluation that will assist you in the software purchase process. By carefully assessing how important each factor is to your business goals, your organization will be better equipped to select the software solution that best meets the unique needs of your business.

The following individuals and roles within an organization will benefit by using this Guide:

- Business Owners, Principals, and Partners
- Accounting Personnel
- Office Managers
- Food Safety Managers
- Sales Managers and Staff

How to use this Buyers Guide

This guide has been developed to be used as an educational assessment tool. It outlines the Five Decision Factors that go into making the right Grower/Packer/Shipper software purchase decision.

The guide then provides a quick assessment tool that identifies how important each area is for your business.

Whether you are buying your first software system or upgrading from your current system, there are a number of reasons why new software might make sense for your business environment. The right software can help you:

- Improve performance and decrease data-entry errors.
- Improve food safety with compliant traceability for successful Primus Audits.
- Create accurate Trace Recalls in minutes, no matter the volume of your sales.
- Utilize real-time inventory knowledge for sales, to know what product is committed or sold, and where the inventory is located.
- Generate, capture, and leverage data regarding shipment status, delivery and satisfaction.
- Respond to the needs and requirements of large buyer organizations such as Walmart, Costco, and Safeway, with integrated EDI or customer specific box labels.
- Integrate with other packing line equipment like Compac or Westmark so information is not in disparate systems.

To read more about the need and use of Grower/Packer/Shipper software, visit:

1. Integrated Produce Management Software Protects Your Products—and Your Bottom Line <http://www.envioag.com/?p=2289>
2. Minimizing the Impact When Implementing New Produce Management Software <http://www.envioag.com/?p=2392>

Introduction

Why do fresh produce growers, packers, and shippers decide to invest in enterprise software systems? Many of these businesses might not consider themselves big enough to be called “enterprises.” But regardless of size, they all see the advantages of using powerful technology to become more efficient, increase process effectiveness, and to grow profit margins. Reaping these advantages depends upon your ability to find the software system that best matches the unique needs of your company.

While there are many packages and solutions on the market, not all will be the right solution for the way you conduct business. Your company has built its business processes and unique relationships over time, in some cases, over generations. These decisions reflect the way your company runs its operations and how you’ve defined your business culture. You shouldn’t need to adapt your business to the process of a software system. It should be the other way around: the software should adapt to your business.

Our goal is to assist you in selecting a solution that answers your immediate problems while at the same time future-proofs your operation. By choosing software that adapts to the changing needs of your business, you avoid repeating this difficult process in the foreseeable future.

To begin the assessment process, it is important to fully understand why you want to purchase a new software system. Knowing the “why” will help you identify the most important aspects of the decision.

Common reasons for upgrading software include:

- 1. Processes and Relationships:** Your business is built on the operational processes and relationships you have created over the years. You are ready to implement technology that allows you to monitor, measure, and understand the business value of both.
- 2. Business Systems:** Your business has matured, but your software or manual systems have not. You need a flexible system that can make your existing business more productive and that will grow as you grow.
- 3. Manual Data Entry:** Whether you use the back of an order form or a spreadsheet, if your company still enters information by hand you are exposing your business to costly data-entry errors. It is time to automate.

4. **Regulations:** It is clear that the only way to comply with growing regulatory requirements of reporting and providing traceability is to implement automated systems.
5. **Profitability:** To ensure operational success, a profit must be made. Older software solutions may make it harder to stay in the black. An investment in software now will pay off in future profit.
6. **Decisions:** You can't get to the information you need to make decisions, or you don't trust the numbers once you have them (those manual data entry errors again).
7. **Ease of Use:** Your staff spends too much time making the current system work (especially when it comes to reconciliation and reporting) and not enough time actually doing the business at hand.
8. **Ease of Access:** Things have changed. Your business isn't "in the office" anymore. You need access to real-time information no matter where you are.

Whatever your motivation, the reasons guiding your software purchase decisions are unique to your business and organization. Be sure to base your decision on what each software solution can realistically deliver—not on marketing or advertising hype.

The following Five Decision Factors will help you stay clear of hype and can guide your decisions on the things that are the most important to you. Each decision factor is described, related to the list above, and listed with important considerations noted.

Please see [Appendix B](#) to learn more about how ArmgaSys's EnvioAg software meets the needs of Grower, Packer, and Shipper businesses across the United States and Canada.

Decision Factor #1: Impact on your operation

The benefits of selecting the right software can be huge, as can the cost of choosing the wrong one.

Important Considerations:

1. Business processes and relationships are built and refined over time and make your operations run smoothly and efficiently. Software should be adaptable to your business process, not demand that you change your processes to reflect the structure or process of the software.



Tip: Evaluate software on its ability to be customized to your needs.

2. The software must be easy to learn, or there will be a negative impact on productivity. If the software is difficult to learn or use, your staff may avoid using it, which may reduce or delay the return you rightfully expect to see on your investment.



Tip: Evaluate software based on ease of understanding and ease of use.

3. The investment you make in training your staff on a new system can transform the way you do business. Training options like in-person, on-line live, and on-line on-demand will help you reduce the time and expense required for your staff to become proficient in the software environment.



Tip: Evaluate software based on the training options and methods.

4. Look at your current operational workflow: sometimes adding a computer workstation may make production more efficient.
5. There are always unforeseen situations that impact your business. Changes in volume and scale, natural or market disasters, or seasonal changes can affect the way you do business—even the size of your business itself. If you can't quickly adapt your software system to these changes, you may incur expenses that put your business at risk.

Addresses these reasons for change:

- Business Processes
 - Ease of Use
-

- 6. Do you have a software implementation champion? It is important to have buy-in from all the key operational managers to ensure smooth training and implementation.



Tip: Evaluate your software choices based on the flexibility of the vendor’s license and/or usage models.

How important is “Impact on your Operation” to your software purchase decision?

Score the importance of this factor on the scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest).

Importance	1	2	3	4	5
	Low				High

For more information on organizational impact visit the EnvioAg website at <http://www.envioag.com>.

Other Thoughts:

What other organizational considerations would your software need to adapt to?
What challenges do you foresee?

Decision Factor #2: Deployment Options

The deployment options for your software solution are on-premise or cloud-based. Each of these deployment options has advantages and disadvantages.

Important Considerations:

1. The ability to keep your company's data secure is critical. Loss of data is a serious issue during a product recall or safety-related analysis.

 **Tip: Evaluate software based on how secure your data will be.**

2. Part of keeping your operations running smoothly is having confidence in your data. The software solution you choose must enable you to set administrative controls, policies, and visibilities that match your company's operations and culture.

 **Tip: Make sure the software gives you an acceptable level of administrative and configuration control. Controlling who can change or view data will protect your data integrity.**

3. Some vendors try to maintain multiple versions of their software. This may cause confusion if newer functionality and features not accessible in your current version are discovered by your users.

 **Tip: Understand how the vendor handles product updates and versions. Does the vendor maintain multiple versions, or keep customers up to date on the most recent version?**

4. Every new software implementation affects prior software and hardware investments your company has made. For example, if you use QuickBooks for your accounting, will a Grower/Packer/Shipper software package integrate with it?

 **Tip: Make sure that the software you choose is compatible with your existing software and hardware environment. If it isn't, you may need to invest in hardware upgrades (which can sometimes be a good thing).**

.....
Addresses these reasons for change:

- Business Processes
 - Ease of Access
-

How important is the Deployment Option?

Score the importance of this factor on the scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest).

Importance	1	2	3	4	5
	Low				High

For more information on this deployment options see: *The Pros and Cons of Site-Based Produce Management Software*. <http://www.envioag.com/?p=2325>

Other Thoughts:

What other deployment options are important to you? Is your company using mobile applications?

Decision Factor #3: Information Access

The ability to access and utilize information captured in your system is critical to making the right decisions and meeting regulatory requirements.

Important Considerations:

1. Access to information is essential to making the right business decisions. A good software system will capture data about your sales, what has been committed, what is pending, transportation times, lots, and bins. This data provides value only if you can access it when and where you need it—and in a form that makes sense to you.

 **Tip: Evaluate software on its ability to present information (sales, operations, transportation, and financials) in the forms in which you need it.**

2. Reporting capabilities and flexibility should be a key consideration when making your software decision. By viewing large data sets that have been aggregated and summarized, you can gain the insight needed to optimize your operations, reduce waste, and increase profits.

 **Tip: Evaluate software based on its ability to present large amounts of information in a way that helps you make smart decisions.**

Addresses these reasons for change:

- Business Processes
 - Regulations
 - Decisions
 - Ease of Use
-

How important is Information Access on the solution decision?

Score the importance of this factor on the scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest).

Importance	1	2	3	4	5
	Low				High

For more information on Information Access visit the EnvioAg website
<http://www.EnvioAg.com>

Other Thoughts:

What other information-access elements are important to you?

Decision Factor #4: Future Proof

Your decision to purchase a Grower/Packer/Shipper software system will impact your operations for years to come. Select software that will be viable over the long term.

Important Considerations:

1. A good software solution is designed with the flexibility to take advantage of technology innovations such as integrated EDI and automated package lines—or of industry changes such as new regulations or new packaging processes. Flexible software makes it easier for you to run a flexible business.



Tip: Make sure that your software provider is staying abreast of changes in the industry, and of technology itself.

2. The amount of data you collect grows over time, as does its importance in helping to make good business decisions. Data must be safely stored to fully leverage the information to gain business insight.



Tip: Evaluate software based on its capabilities to grow with your organization. Look for software that can both accommodate new functionality and new ways to capture and use data.

Addresses these reasons for change:

- Business Processes
 - Profitability
 - Regulatory
-

How important is Future Proofing to your software solution decision?

Score the importance of this factor on the scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest).

Importance	1	2	3	4	5
	Low				High

For more information on the future of farming see: *Seven Generations of Idaho Family Farmers*. <http://www.envioag.com/?p=2252>

Other Thoughts:

What other future considerations are important to you?

Decision Factor #5: Vendor Performance and Relationship

A software vendor's ability to "deliver" is one of the most critical decision factors. Proper processes for on-boarding, successful implementation, value obtainment, and on-going support are vital to getting the right software system in place.

Important Considerations:

1. A software system implementation process that yields unexpected surprises can often spell disaster. Knowing what to expect during the on-boarding and implementation phases ensures success right from the start.

 **Tip: Evaluate the vendor's on-boarding and implementation project plans. They should be easy to understand, thorough, and responsive.**

2. A vendor's prior experience with other customers is an excellent indicator of their ability to deliver on your project.

 **Tip: Contact the vendor's clients to discuss their experience with the vendor during critical phases of the project, including but not limited to, implementation, on-going use, and support.**

3. The vendor's references and portfolio of customers are also good indicators of a company's ability to deliver value to your business.

 **Tip: Contact the vendor's clients to discuss the outcomes of the software following successful implementation. Once installed, did the software save the company time and money? Did it open up new sales opportunities or make it easier to comply with regulations?**

Addresses these reasons for change:

- Future Proofing
 - Profitability
-

How important are Vendor Performance and Relationships to your decision?

Score the importance of Vendor Performance and Relationship on the scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest).

Importance	1	2	3	4	5
	Low				High

For more information see EnvioAg's story:
<http://www.envioag.com/about-us/>

Other Thoughts:

What other vendor information is important to you?

Other Considerations

1. There will be a variety of costs associated with your implementation that are not represented by the license fees of the software. This includes items such as hardware, training, loss of productivity during transition time, and data conversion.

 **Tip: Evaluate your vendor based on the total cost of ownership. (Consider a time period of at least three to five years.)**

2. Your vendor should be able to demonstrate a history of responsiveness to its customers. The ability of your vendor to integrate the feedback and recommendations of its customers will illustrate how closely the vendor will listen and respond to you.

 **Tip: Ask potential vendors about customer feedback and ideas used to improve the software. Is there a system in place to capture user input, or is it purely casual?**

3. Successful implementation of Grower/Packer/Shipper software requires considerable investment by both parties. Your organization should choose a “project champion” (see Appendix A) to work directly with the vendor to ensure successful implementation and to manage communication.

 **Tip: Ensure your company has a single point-of-contact that serves as the project Champion. See Appendix A: *Your Project Champion* for more information.**

How important are these Other Considerations on your software decision?

Score the importance of these other factor(s) on the scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest).

Importance

1	2	3	4	5
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Low

High

Assessing your Priorities

Record in the box below how you scored each of the Five Decision Factors. The relative importance of each Factor will help you evaluate software system alternatives. If “other” Decision Factors are important to your business, identify and rate their importance too.

Decision Factor	Importance				
	Low				High
Impact on Your Operation	1	2	3	4	5
Deployment Options	1	2	3	4	5
Information Access	1	2	3	4	5
Future Proof	1	2	3	4	5
Vendor Performance & Relationship	1	2	3	4	5
Other	1	2	3	4	5
Other	1	2	3	4	5
Other	1	2	3	4	5

Once you have a clear understanding of the key factors that go into your decision, you can begin to evaluate your alternatives based on what is important to your business — not what a software vendor might try to tell you is important. Knowledge is power.

Conclusion

You are the best assessor of what you need to make your business successful. With a clear understanding of what is important, you are ready to make your selection, and then to work with your vendor to implement a solution that will best meet your unique requirements.

Appendix A: The Role of the Project Champion

The role of the Project Champion is critical for a successful implementation of a software system that will touch many parts of your organization. Your business is making a significant investment in software and technology. The leadership capabilities of the Project Champion will be a large factor in the overall success of the project.

The Project Champion should possess a mixture of these qualities:

- **Strong character and conviction:** he or she must understand how important a successful project is to the overall success of the company. He or she must be committed to success, confident, and not afraid to jump into new things.
- **Business awareness:** the Champion must be knowledgeable in all areas of the operation that will be involved in the project.
- **Balance:** he or she must understand the processes people use to do their jobs, and what the impact of changing those processes would be.
- **Technology friendly:** the Champion must understand that applying technology in certain areas of the business can have a great impact on productivity and profitability. The Champion need not necessarily be the most technically knowledgeable member of the team, but he or she must have an ability to foresee the impact of that technology on the business.
- **Management authority:** the Champion must be fully vested with the authority to make project-related decisions and engage resources as necessary to ensure project success.

Candidate: _____ Qualification

	Low				High
Character & Conviction	1	2	3	4	5
Business Awareness	1	2	3	4	5
Balance	1	2	3	4	5
Technology Friendly	1	2	3	4	5
Management Authority	1	2	3	4	5
Other	1	2	3	4	5
Other	1	2	3	4	5
Other	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B: ArmgaSys and the Five Decision Factors

Our goal in creating the Five Decision Factors is to provide you, the potential software system purchaser, with a convenient, thorough map for making your choice. Here's an explanation as to why the EnvioAg software for Growers, Packers, and Shippers ranks high in all five categories.

Decision Factor #1: Impact on your operation.

- **Customization:** ArmgaSys believes in striking a balance between providing strong core functionality and working with individual customers to make sure EnvioAg meets each organization's unique needs and work processes.
- **Ease of Use:** The design behind EnvioAg is based on more than 30 years of experience in the fresh produce industry. Those familiar with the industry will find EnvioAg's navigation system easy to understand and consistent from screen to screen.
- **Training Options:** ArmgaSys is dedicated to providing training that is tailored to each organization's unique needs. Using a remote connection, we can work with your team on your computers with your data. If you prefer on-site training, we will come to you. Telephone and email support are also readily available.
- **Adaptability:** Much of EnvioAg's ability to adapt to different situations comes from the depth of the software itself. ArmgaSys constantly listens to its customers, integrating into the core product new functionalities that customers have requested to help them deal with unique situations. When you purchase EnvioAg, you are gaining access to the collective wisdom of other companies like yours.

Decision Factor #2: Deployment Options

- **Data Security:** Changes in technology are having a profound impact on data storage. One of the most important changes is the ability of companies to store data "in the cloud." EnvioAg customers can choose to deal directly with data storage companies, including cloud-storage providers. At your request, ArmgaSys can also work with the storage provider you choose—provided that the provider meets ArmgaSys's standards.

- **Access Control:** EnvioAg software is designed to give companies the ability to determine who among their staff can enter, view, change, or share data. For example, EnvioAg enables you to give an employee permission to create pallet tags, but not to void them.
- **Version Control:** ArmgaSys's policy is to support one single version of EnvioAg. Our customers receive periodic updates to the software. We believe that this policy simplifies life for us and for our customers—while giving our customers access to the most recent technology.
- **Software and Hardware Compatibility:** EnvioAg software is designed for the Windows OS environment using Microsoft SQL server technology. (Example: EnvioAg is specifically designed to integrate with QuickBooks and Microsoft Dynamics GP.)

Decision Factor #3: Information Access

- **Information Types:** One of the unique features of EnvioAg software is the ability of users to create “grids” that can display a variety of data on one screen. This feature gives users the flexibility to view specific combinations of data.
- **Useful Representation of “Big Data”:** Grids are very useful when the customer wants to view a limited amount of data. When a broader overview is necessary in order to make important decisions, EnvioAg offers customized Reports that combine and summarize large data sets.

Decision Factor #4: Future Proof

- **Keeps Pace with Technology Changes:** There are two continual changes in the fresh produce software development companies must respond to. The first is change in the industry: new regulations, new tax policy, and new ways of packaging produce. The second is change in hardware design: storage methodologies, file formats, and in new ways of sharing information.
- **Scalable:** There is no limit to the number of EnvioAg user licenses a company can purchase. Whether you have one or one hundred users, we can accommodate them. The software itself is also scalable and able to integrate with many other data sources and applications. EnvioAg is a dynamic growing and evolving project. Over time, the core product has evolved to represent an aggregation of the best practices from across the industry.

Decision Factor #5: Vendor performance

- **Onboard/Implementation Plans:** After more than 30 years working with customers to install Grower/Packer/Shipper solutions, ArmgaSys has developed a very exacting implementation checklist that takes all of the surprises out of the process.
- **Customer References for Critical Phase Experiences:** One measure of how well a software works is customer loyalty. EnvioAg is proud of its long-time, loyal customer base. Customer References are available upon request.
- **Customer References for Derived Value:** Our customers are our best spokespeople for the value gained by the use of our Grower/Packer/Shipper software. Again, references available upon request.

ARMGASYS

About ArmgaSys

ArmgaSys, Inc develops software solutions that power businesses from the Agriculture Industry to Defense, and everything in-between.

Solving problems and helping our customers overcome challenges isn't just what we do, it's why we do it. Every member of our team is driven to create the right answer for your business issue, designing solutions to help you dominate your industry.

In 1983, the company (then known as Robco Data Systems) launched its first turn-key fresh produce industry solution. It has continued to improve, add to, and customize its produce software products to meet the industry's ever-changing needs.

ArmgaSys Inc. currently services customers in the following industries:

Federal and State Government, US Department of Defense, US Department of Navy, Agri-business, Commercial Construction, Power, Finance, Semi-Conductor Manufacturing and Education.

Our Core Values

- Relationships
- Responsibility
- Acumen
- Readiness
- Quality

About EnvioAg

EnvioAg has been successfully meeting our packer-shipper-grower clients' needs since 2006. It is a proprietary and highly customizable platform which integrates all sales and operational functions while integrating into various popular accounting packages like QuickBooks and Microsoft Dynamics GP.

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