

# How Thermo Pac Found a Complete Food Safety and Quality Partner with Mériieux NutriSciences



## World Class Food Safety and Quality

Providing some of the highest quality packaged food for the food industry, Thermo Pac is one of the most reputable go-to suppliers when it comes to producing, packaging and assembling portion controlled food products to major branded food companies, food service and the United States Department of Defense. Acquired by AmeriQual in 2008, Thermo Pac specializes in packaging hot-fill, liquid and dry powder products in a wide range of cup, pouch and stick formats. The company also processes and fills portion control vertical and horizontal pouches and stick packs.

Over the years, Thermo Pac has experienced varying periods of high customer demand causing them to increase manufacturing output by maximizing the uptime of their product lines. The result of this has been an increased emphasis on sanitizing, sampling and product testing in order to meet the quality demands that accompany extreme variations in supply requirements.

Almost one year ago, Tim Tisdale, then recently hired Manager of Quality at Thermo Pac, noticed the company was still using a manual spreadsheet to track, monitor and administer their environmental monitoring program. This had become quite a project at the company, as Thermo Pac was executing numerous changeovers every week in order to run multiple complex processed products.



“When I first arrived, I noticed the complexity of the process. Because we have so many samples, it would often take a long time when we received results to double check that the correct samples and locations were pulled before we added it back into our spreadsheet to share with our customers and other auditing bodies,” says Tisdale.

The incoming new team members are forced to completely learn a complex program in order to gain an understanding of all the moving parts.



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## A Food Safety Partner to Trust

With a manufacturing facility located in Stone Mountain, Georgia, that prides itself on employing world-class food safety and quality programs, Thermo Pac was lucky to have a nearby partner that understood the plant's specific needs in order to help them meet their internal and external quality standards.

The food safety and quality partnership between Mérieux NutriSciences and Thermo Pac has been going strong for more than 20 years. From analytical and physical product testing to environmental sampling and shelf life studies, Mérieux NutriSciences' laboratory, also located in Stone Mountain, has helped develop the backbone of Thermo Pac's food safety and quality infrastructure.

Tisdale was no stranger to Mérieux NutriSciences' offerings. Having worked previously as the Quality Manager of a local food manufacturer, he was aware of the company's array of services. However, when he heard about **ENVIROMAP®** Mérieux NutriSciences' new automated environmental monitoring program solution, he quickly jumped at the opportunity to get Thermo Pac onboard. ENVIROMAP® is just one of Mérieux NutriSciences' three newly launched digital solutions, allowing companies to implement automation processes into their environmental monitoring program in order to **save time, money and streamline activities** in the food safety supply chain.

"When we were first introduced to ENVIROMAP®, I knew right away this would be something we would want to implement. The installation process for ENVIROMAP® was pretty simple. We sat down with the installation team on day one and developed

the protocols, frequencies, locations and rooms for the sampling and then built the sampling plan and algorithm, which was customized for our plant. Day two was spent training the pre-op person on printing labels and submitting samples," reports Tisdale.



## Proof is in the Pudding

While it has now been nearly five months since the installation of ENVIROMAP®, Tim and his team started seeing improvements with their environmental monitoring program after the first few weeks.



*"We needed some time to really work out our comfort level using an automated system like ENVIROMAP®. When you are used to a manual process, minor issues, like using the printer, take time to adjust to and iron out all the kinks to get it working smoothly," Tisdale says. "Now, it's really simple for us to manage our EMP, which was the whole reason I chose ENVIROMAP® to begin with. Currently, there is a huge emphasis on cross-training our staff. ENVIROMAP® gives us such an easy process that my new hires can almost come in and do pre-op right off the bat. Once they learn how to click on their schedule, the system will just print all their labels for them. They put the labels on the bags and look at the plant map from within the software to show them exactly where to find the sampling location. They take their swabs, print out and submit the SARF. **It easily saves us a significant amount of time weekly, and the cost savings we are incurring are far exceeding our expectations. It's pretty amazing.**"*

Thermo Pac is still working on adjusting their ENVIROMAP® reporting to be “just right” in addition to tweaking their sampling frequency, but the team is confident that switching to an automated system was the right decision. *“In the world of quality, especially at Thermo Pac, we’re always changing our procedures to improve the value our customers receive. Nothing stays the same for long. Right now we’re in a really good place internally, and a lot of that is thanks to Mérieux NutriSciences. We have the confidence that our processes are safe and we can pull reports to support that and be comfortable showing our customers the results,”* remarks Tisdale.

Tim and the Thermo Pac team plan to continue to work hand-in-hand with the Mérieux NutriSciences’ lab as their food safety program continues to evolve. *“I remember visiting the nearby lab with my supervisor recently and the difference between the lab now from when I visited it years ago is night and day. With the remodel and expansion the lab experienced a few years back, it’s like a completely different facility. I would encourage any company that has looked at other labs, to reevaluate Mérieux NutriSciences because I have been extremely impressed with the level of expertise and customized service Thermo Pac has received,”* Tisdale states.



The relationship between Thermo Pac and Mérieux NutriSciences exists as a result of two companies that share the same values when it comes to safety and quality in the food industry and work to bring a healthy product to the hands of the consumer. Tim comments, *“I would highly recommend Mérieux NutriSciences as a food safety and quality partner, and I do! It’s not just at the lab level, although the response time and customer service are top notch. Mérieux NutriSciences has the expertise to back up everything else. There’s so many other resources that Mérieux NutriSciences offers, it’s like a one-stop shop.”*



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