

Case Study
Agriculture

RICOH
imagine. change.

Canadian Seed Growers' Association **pioneers digital-first agriculture** with the innovative transformation from paper-based to **automated digital workflows**



About the customer

The Canadian Seed Growers' Association (CSGA) is a respected, science-based, digitally driven global leader in seed quality assurance and genetic traceability committed to growing an innovative, profitable and internationally competitive Canadian agricultural sector. CSGA is a national non-profit organization, designated in the federal *Seeds Act* as the standard-setting and seed certification body for all Canadian seed crop kinds, except potatoes. Each year, CSGA certifies approximately 1.2 million acres of over 60 different crop kinds of 2,000 varieties for nearly 3,100 seed growers, and 2,500 seed-growing businesses coast-to-coast.

To continue strengthening Canada's global reputation for producing high-quality seed, CSGA has been at the forefront of seed crop certification system modernization and digital transformation for many years.

Challenge

CSGA needed a way to connect with seed growers, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and private seed crop inspection services across Canada to seamlessly share information, accelerate certification and support the production of high-quality seed. CSGA also aims to:

- **Information mobility** – simplified and convenient access to information that is contextual, relevant and actionable
- **Workflow efficiencies** – automate approvals, key business processes and workflows for better efficiency, transparency and regulatory compliance
- **Space management** – eliminate storage of physical and paper-based records
- **Business continuity and disaster recovery** – ensure continuous operations, and develop a strong infrastructure for data protection and recovery



Solution

In the past, the Canadian government provided inspection services for thousands of fields seeking seed crop certification annually. In 2012, however, the government announced that it would no longer provide those services. Going digital was the solution to seamlessly connect CSGA, the CFIA and 23 different inspection companies across the country, and ensure coordinated access to information.

The association then embarked on a “CSGA 2.0” business plan that includes a focus on digitalization or providing transparent, digitally enabled, enhanced traceability services that reduce administrative burden and add value. Under Miller’s watch and with the support and expertise of Ricoh, CSGA transformed its entire business process to a paperless, semi-automated, electronic platform using Laserfiche, an [enterprise content management](#) (ECM) system.

To simplify CSGA’s seed crop certification and verification process, the association worked in close partnership with Ricoh and leveraged [electronic forms](#) and [business process automation](#) to create SeedCert, an online portal and a one-stop shop to streamline and accelerate the seed crop certification and verification process for its over 3,000 members.

“In any given year, we receive roughly 16,000 to 20,000 applications. The vast majority of these are processed through Laserfiche. We’ll have over 1,000 workflows running in the background. It essentially runs our business.”

Doug Miller,
Executive Director, CSGA



Results

Streamlining key business processes

Today, SeedCert enables the processing of thousands of applications per year, accelerating seed certification and simplifying the coordination between CSGA, its network of growers, inspectors and the government.

By logging into SeedCert, seed growers can conveniently request certification online and submit an electronic form that is routed to staff for review. Approved applications are then transmitted to licensed crop inspectors who submit completed inspection reports online, even when they are out in the field.

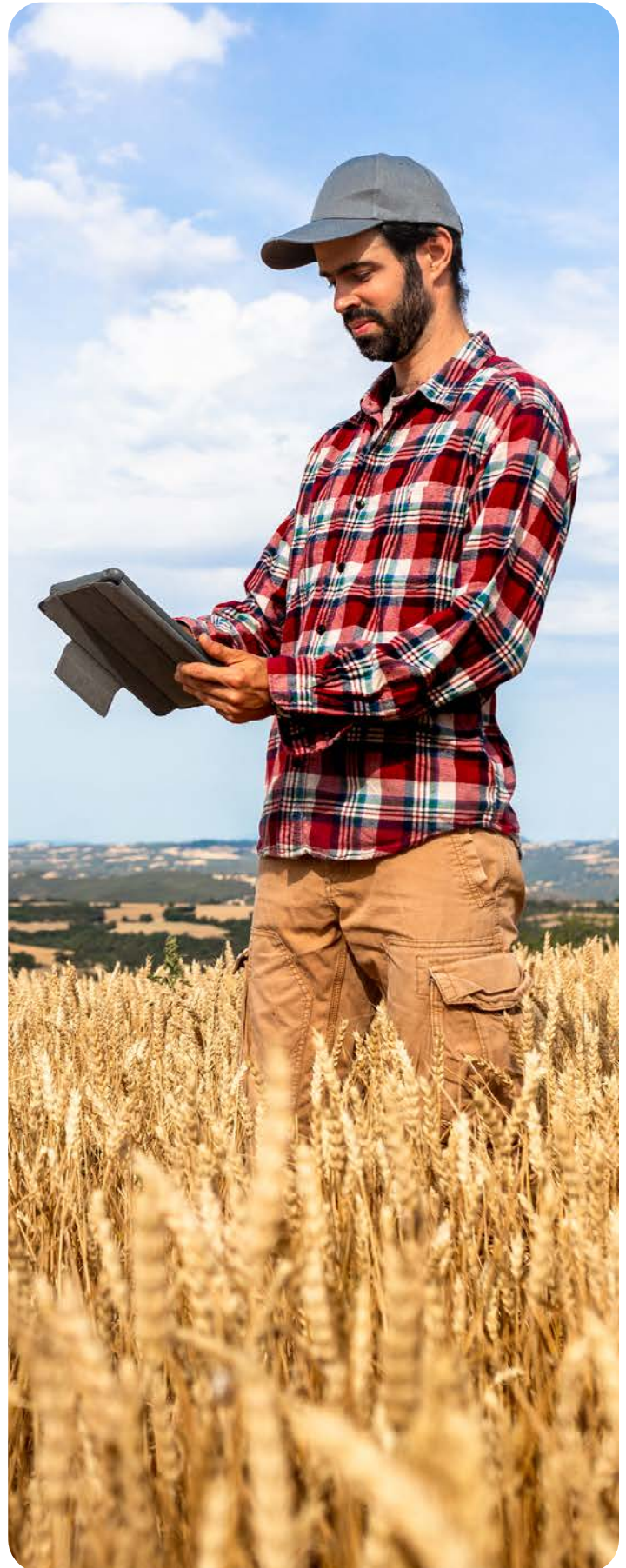
By removing paper and the manual flow of information, CSGA has created a more user-friendly, standardized, and simplified experience for members, inspectors and staff. With convenient and quick access to reports, CSGA can promptly communicate any issues identified with the seed grower, allowing for a quick turn around time for the seed grower to address those issues and obtain certification before the harvest period.

A data-driven approach to decision-making

What initially started as a challenge ultimately drove innovation for CSGA. "Our whole system was paper-based and back-logged. Now, processing only takes days," says Miller. The new digital processes enabled the association to scale up, and CSGA's SeedCert platform now helps coordinate 23 different Authorized Seed Crop Inspection Services (ASCIS), and organize inspections and their 250 individual inspectors — saving CSGA's staff countless hours.

CSGA-certified seed crop information is stored in a database, allowing staff to dive deeper into the data. With access to key data, CSGA can identify patterns and gather insights that could influence strategic decision-making, improve processes and operations, and strengthen relationships between seed growers and regulators — all to serve CSGA's members and the sector as effectively and efficiently as possible.

Furthermore, the move to digital-forward processes helped improve pedigreed seed traceability, enabled the potential to develop new services, and allows CSGA to track annual production data of more than 2,000 varieties of 1.2 million acres of seed crops produced in Canada. "The crop inspection report provides useful information on disease pressure, objectionable weeds, off-types, purity, presence of seedborne diseases, and the list goes on. In the old paper-based process, that information was being lost once the crop was certified and the report was moved to storage. Under this electronic system, all of this information is being captured. We are able to analyze multi-year data and identify national and regional trends and opportunities," says Miller.



A digital-first future for business



CSGA is finding new ways to leverage technology every day. During the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, inspectors used electronic forms to report if they are unwell, allowing CSGA to reassign in-field inspections when necessary. Electronic forms also allowed the association to quickly communicate COVID-related travel restrictions with inspectors. In a time of uncertainty, the improved communication process facilitated the continuity of essential operations.

Looking into the future, CSGA expects to see a new, more diverse wave of younger producers and agricultural professionals who expect digital-first, intuitive interfaces, and quick responses to requests. This highlights the need for the agricultural sector to keep pace with new innovations and technology-driven solutions. “Regulated sectors like agriculture are going to have to adopt digitization technologies as a necessity,” Miller says.

With the help of Ricoh and digital solutions like electronic forms and document records management, CSGA has adapted to this new set of expectations and changing business climate. “We’re looking ahead for the next generation of seed growers and the entire pedigreed seed certification system. We’ve already launched our digital crop certificates and taken big strides forward to a digital end-to-end seed crop certification system. Leveraging digital platforms will elevate the seed sector and Canadian Agriculture,” Miller says.

Process automation has made it possible to certify seeds faster, and electronic forms have made it easier for CSGA to coordinate among its large and growing network of growers, inspectors and the government. All these improvements are critical to CSGA’s mandate to deliver a national third-party seed crop certification system for Canada.

Miller says the seed sector’s unique role in agriculture and food production keeps him around — from being the first link in the food chain all the way down to the consumer level. “CSGA is proud to have been a part of the digital transformation of the seed sector, helping the industry adopt new digital strategies and solutions,” Miller says. “Through the adoption of digital solutions, we’ve been able to transform our service delivery model and provide more timely access to information for our producers and stakeholders — reducing certification decisions from weeks to hours. In Canada, we certify over 64 different crop kinds ranging from the big three (corn, wheat and soy) to niche and innovative crops that will be the next alternative biofuels, superfoods, and cover crops needed to fight climate change,” he says.

“When you take a step back and consider that nine out of ten bites of food globally start with a seed, it is truly incredible and signifies our sector’s importance in feeding the world.”¹

Doug Miller,
Executive Director, CSGA

¹SeedWorld - Doug Miller’s Drive Comes from the Overlap of Agriculture and Technology

Empowering digital workplaces

With 85 years of global experience developing the technology that shapes how people work, Ricoh understands what it takes to support the priorities of Canadian organizations with the right technology that puts people first. Our solutions connect people to information – and each other – so they can innovate and collaborate to drive growth.

Your workplace needs experts, which is why we're here. We work in close partnership with our customers to understand their unique challenges and provide expertise where they need it the most. With teams across Canada, we can provide our award-winning enterprise-level support and guidance, but on a local basis and tailored to your specific needs.

As digital workplaces pave the way to the future, the need for better processes, better collaboration and better results while supporting agility has become critical – and this is where Ricoh can help. Through our portfolio of innovative technologies and services, we can support your journey towards digital transformation, so that you can better focus on serving your communities, customers and partners.

Ricoh is a leading provider of document solutions and a market leader in process automation. We have been instrumental in shaping workplace innovation solutions for organizations across Canada for more than a decade. Let us help you redefine work and **Change. For better.**



WHY RICOH?

- ✓ A trusted partner in supporting the priorities of Canadian SMBs with solutions that champion their unique needs
- ✓ 500+ customers nationwide, including 350 Fortune 500 companies
- ✓ 20+ years of experience processing key documents and workflows
- ✓ 4 document processing centres located across Canada
- ✓ Flexible BPaaS solutions that will optimize your budget and scale with you
- ✓ Business process consultants with deep expertise in a range of industries — from government to education and more

Learn more about Ricoh Digital Document Management, Electronic Forms and Process Automation [here](#).