# Q&A
## with Giant Eagle



**D**elivering the freshest products for consumers for on-shelf availability 24 hours after harvest." Giant Eagle talks about the ins and outs (and benefits) of automated fresh ordering. They are an industry pioneer.

Founded nearly 90 years ago, Pittsburgh-based food, fuel and pharmacy retailer Giant Eagle is considered a pioneer of the modern supermarket, consistently at the forefront of modernizing its business with new technologies. Giant Eagle has been using Invafresh's automated replenishment solution for a decade now. The retailer first rolled out the solution in its meat department and has since expanded to produce and seafood.

Invafresh's fresh ordering solution uses intelligent forecasting to track historical sales patterns for all sales channels, product price, promotion type, holiday, seasonality, cannibalization and expected balance on-hand at time of delivery to proactively recommend ordering quantities. To further support its grinds and prepared food, Invafresh tracks yields as backroom ingredients are transformed into sellable products.

**Invafresh** spoke with **Laura Miller**, Sr. Manager of Retail Inventory Systems, and **Erin Frey**, Manager of Fresh Item Management about their experiences using an automated replenishment solution.

*This interview has been shortened for brevity.

## Invafresh is big enough to deliver, small enough to care.

### Why did Giant Eagle decide to use automated ordering?

**Miller** The reason we moved to automated ordering was to help our meat leaders manage their inventory and know how much they needed to be ordering. If you were an experienced meat leader and you were at the same store for 20 years, you knew what to order. But, if you were brand new or if you moved between locations, you struggled to know what the store did and how to more efficiently ensure the shelves were full, but not too full.

### How does Invafresh compare and contrast to your other ordering systems?

**Frey** Our center store application is used for non-perishable items. Invafresh is similar to that mentality; however, as perishable items can be more complex Freshology meets the needs of the business.

**Miller** Our internally built ordering platform is not automated. If somebody doesn't transmit and approve an order, they're not going to get chicken tomorrow. Whereas if somebody forgets, with Invafresh, they're still getting chicken tomorrow because Invafresh's fresh ordering solution is going to automatically order it.

### What does your stores' ordering process look like?

**Frey** We enabled Invafresh's ordering solution on our in-store tablets so leaders can physically take their order out to the floor and place the order while directly in front of their case. The process is to log in before 8:45, review your order, make any changes you need to and approve it.

**Miller** We also utilize item sequencing, where items are grouped together within the screen so that it's easier to review an order.

### Why is tracking aggregated demand for ingredients and sellable items important for Giant Eagle?

**Miller** Pineapples are coming in and we're transforming them into several different products in the store. When that item sells, it decrements whatever that percentage is of the product that is made up of pineapples directly out of the pineapple inventory. This automatically triggers the system to order and makes sure that we have the freshest in-store products that we possibly can.

Another thing our other ordering system can't do, that really sets Invafresh apart, is how production data from scale labels can actually be captured appropriately so we have real-time insight into product inventory. That really is a game-changer because knowing yield allows us to create those recipes for our cut fruit and cutting tests for meat. Fresh is just that much more complex.
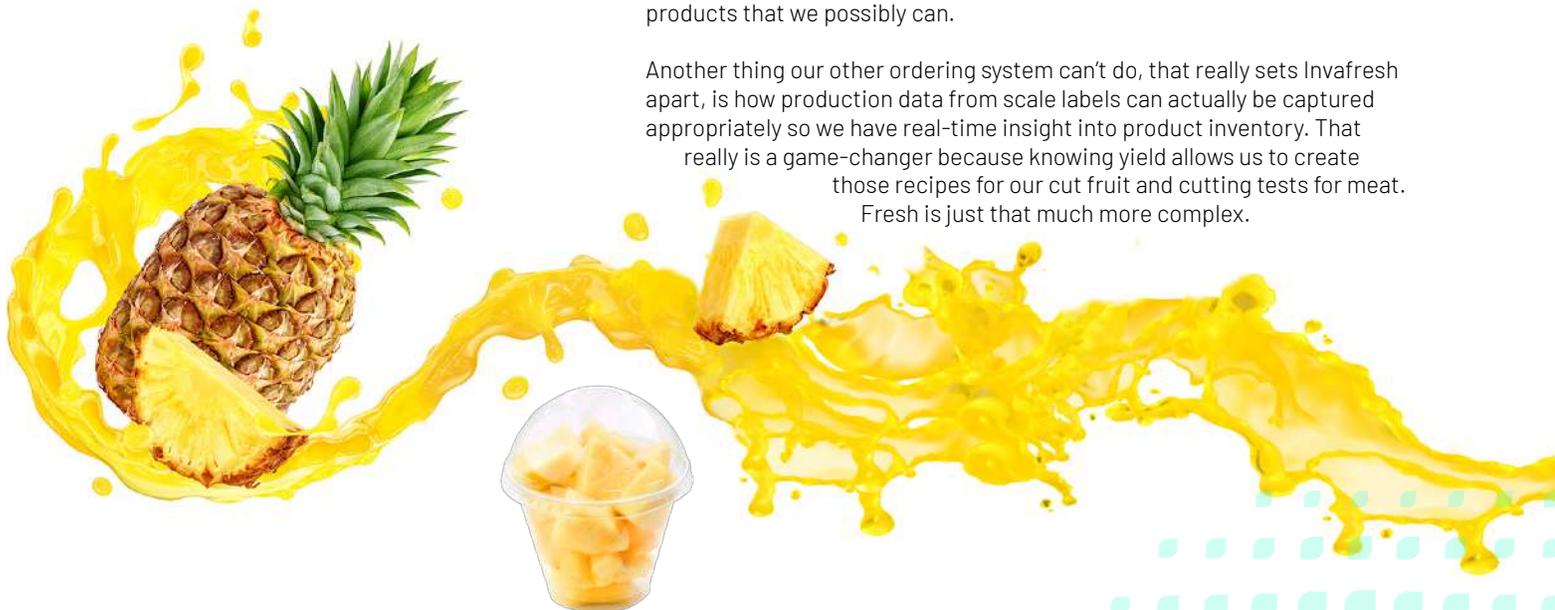
**How accurate have you found Invafresh's ordering recommendations to be?**

**Frey** I would say in a normal week it's 95% accurate, if not greater.

**What kind of labor savings have your stores experienced?**

**Frey** You can cut the ordering process down to five or 10 minutes.

**Has Giant Eagle seen an increase in sales and a corresponding reduction in shrink?**

**Frey** Combining expanded Invafresh ordering capabilities along with other initiatives across the Organization for the fiscal year 2020 we saw significant growth in sales compared to last year on items in meat, seafood, and the produce departments. We also experienced notable reductions in Known Loss % to Sold. This is a testament to a better in-stock position and a higher quality position for our customers.

**Giant Eagle prides itself on having the freshest produce in the region. How has automated ordering helped you achieve this goal?**

**Frey** Without a forecasting guide, I think we had a lot of stores that would order enough to over guarantee they were in a good in-stock position for their customers. With data-based forecasting from Invafresh's platform, stores are bringing the product in tomorrow morning for what they're going to sell for the day, alleviating the need for heavy, if any, backstock.

And even now, whenever we're training new stores, we are reinforcing that this isn't about just ordering anymore. It's about managing your inventory and providing the freshest product you can to your consumers and utilizing the resources we have at our disposal.

**Conclusion**
In **Giant Eagles'** continued entrepreneurial and innovative spirit, it was **Invafresh's** first partner to adopt the Fresh automated replenishment and ordering solution. Together our two companies share a passion for innovation to challenge the status quo and differentiate the in-store consumer experience. We continue to work together to optimize Giant Eagle's fresh operations over the years, with visible results every step along the way.

**About Giant Eagle**
Pittsburgh-based Giant Eagle operates more than 470 stores throughout western Pennsylvania, Ohio, northern West Virginia, Maryland and Indiana. The company is No. 37 on The PG 100, Progressive Grocer's 2021 list of the top food retailers in North America. For more information, please visit www.gianteagle.com.

**About Invafresh**
For more than 30 years, the heritage of Invafresh enabled fresh food retailers to create extraordinary store operations performance and differentiated consumer experiences. As the leader of freshology, Invafresh is deployed in more than 25,000 grocery stores spanning a global reach of 15 countries to provide software platforms for omnichannel demand forecasting, merchandising, replenishment, and sustainability and compliancy support. We are freshologists building freshology on the mission is to empower food retailers with the #1 platform for fresh food retail operations and accelerate the transition to fresher demand and supply. Invafresh is headquartered in Mississauga, Ontario. Think forward. Think fresh. For more information, please visit www.invafresh.com.