

## The Benefits

In only eight weeks, IMC organised the selection, purchase and delivery of Harris Farm's new equipment in order to restore and resume the company's IT operations hub. "In fact, the new system is even more robust," enthused Harris.

"Our next big priority is to finally implement a fully functioning DR site. We need to establish a second IT space mirroring our main control room that we can switch to quickly in the case of another disaster."

IMC have implemented a DR solution using VMware that has virtual servers at the Production site and replicates these to the DR site. Using virtual servers has the benefits of flexibility, lower hardware costs and lower operational costs at both sites. The recovery time objective for critical applications will be under 6 hours.

IMC will be called upon to make sure the new DR facility is in top working order and will review and test the equipment every six months to maintain and update all systems.

Harris warns any businesses without DR facilities to be aware of the consequences should the unexpected strike and they lose their vital information and means of communications.

"Be fully prepared and ready to deal with the situation because it happens without warning and all of a sudden you wake up in the middle of a nightmare.

"The two most valuable pieces of advice I can give are to quickly call on experts like IMC that can help you get up and running as quickly as possible; and to ensure you have confidence in your service providers as we did because you need to give them a certain amount of control in order to get the job done."

Said Andrew Gifford, Technology Services Director at IMC Communications, "The DR back up plan is imperative because even if you place an order for replacement IT equipment the minute disaster strikes, it usually takes a minimum of eight weeks to be delivered and installed. Preparation is the key."

Gifford concludes, "We were proud to ensure Harris Farm was able to continue effective operations immediately after the fire. Our team was driven by the objective of minimising damage to both financial performance and brand loss that could potentially result in negative, long term business ramifications."

## The Outcome

It took approximately three months to return to normal Harris Farm operations with all the new hardware and software in place. "The past three months have created a huge strain on our employees here at Harris Farm due to the challenges faced day to day within our operations while we were attending to the recovery", said Angus Harris. "Our employees have been terrific in the way they stepped up to the challenge of the added stress of working under difficult conditions with compromised resources. It has been a steep learning curve with the fire a catalyst for an overall review on ways in which we can improve our overall operating system," added Angus

# IMC Recovers From the Ashes: Harris Farm's IT Nerve Centre

## Case Study: Harris Farm



Angus Harris & Jason  
Withers from IMC in  
the new IT hub

### AT A GLANCE:

**Customer:** Harris Farm

**Industry:** Retail

**Challenge:** to recover the Harris Farm business operations after the IT hub was destroyed by fire.

**Solutions:**

- IMC Services
- IBM i series & X series
- VMWare
- Cisco – firewall, routers, switches

**Outcomes:**

- IMC established a Harris Farm DR & replication strategy
- Temporary IT hub operational within hours
- Consolidated IT hardware & software

# IMC Communications

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# IMC Communications

An approved Cisco IP Communications Specialist



Fire damage at Harris Farm

At 6.45am on 13 March, Andrew Gifford at IMC Communications received a call from Angus Harris after a fire had ripped through the Harris Farm premises and gutted the company's IT hub. Harris Farm needed immediate disaster recovery assistance.

Like Harris Farm's produce, the solution needed to be fresh and delivered fast.

## Background

Harris Farm is a family owned and run NSW fresh produce retailer that has operated for over 35 years. Its 800 employees service customers in 20 different retail locations.

Harris Farm's headquarters is located in a 3,000 square metre warehouse at Sydney's Paddy's Markets, Flemington. The site is the hub of all Harris Farm activities. It is the point at which all stock is delivered before being distributed to the outlets for consumer consumption. The office seats 50 employees based in accounts, finance, retail sales, administration, HR and IT.



Fire damage at Harris Farm

## IMC Communications Technology Centre

IMC Systems state-of-the-art disaster recovery centre at Homebush provides:

- 24x7 secure access
- Leading edge hardware – including HP servers and workstations, tape drives, network infrastructure, PABX, Internet and remote access connections, protected power and cooling.
- Secure storage – a safe location to store copies of all software, licensing details, passwords, etc., that would be required during a disaster situation rebuild.
- Non-disaster test restore sessions
- Access to IMC Engineers



Fire damage at Harris Farm

## Challenge



In the wee hours of 13 March 2007, a fire – caused by a suspected electrical fault sparked under the floor – ravaged the Harris Farm IT centre. The fire destroyed everything in its aftermath. Harris Farm had no disaster recovery (DR) plan to fall back on.

"Despite having identified the need to establish a fully-functioning DR location, we had not commenced its implementation – it just never seemed an immediate priority," reflected Angus Harris, chief financial officer, Harris Farm.

One of the big casualties of the fire was Harris Farm's Central Market System, a proprietary software program the organisation has developed over 25 years. The system was designed to store data and provide intelligence on purchases, sales, management accounts, daily stock and sales information. It is also relied upon for profit and loss potential analysis.

The unanticipated disaster resulted in the loss of five days worth of valuable data. Those based at Harris Farm's operations centre were left with no record of the stock coming in – including what and how much needed to be distributed to retail outlets across the state – that morning.

"One of the most stressful days in my entire working life began when I was called to the warehouse at 1am," said Angus Harris. "Once the police and fire services granted us access to the premises, we were left with the confronting realisation that we had no communication facilities or access to specific order data. Despite the disaster, all our shops were fully functioning and needed their stock for the day without delay, so we set up camp temporarily in the car park and sent out quantities of fruit and veg blindly based on guessed estimates."

By 7am all stock had been dispatched but the real urgency of the situation was just beginning. Harris had to turn his attention to getting the communications facility up and running as quickly as possible. It was imperative they could receive stock take updates from each store and orders before the end of business for next day's trading.



## Rescue

As a long standing client, Harris Farm relied on IMC Communications in the past for IT hardware, new servers and communications consultancy. With a sense of critical urgency, Angus Harris called on them again.

"I reached Andrew Gifford as IMC were about to commence an inhouse engineering workshop... which, upon hearing of our dilemma, was promptly changed to a DR planning session for us."

"IMC dropped everything to beg, borrow – all but steal – in order to source for us all the technical equipment we needed to get our IT system up and running in time. Astoundingly, by midday IMC had all the necessary replacement equipment to us and my team of electricians had cables re-routed to a makeshift IT centre in one of our offices not affected by the fire."

By 6pm the computer room had been set up with a file server, AS400, mail server, routers, switches, firewall and tape back-up, so when the buyers came in the following morning they could access all stock levels and order information sent from the stores.

