

Pharmaceutical company Sanofi transforms R&D inventory management with passive RFID



By deploying RFiD Discovery's passive RFID inventory management solution across two international R&D sites, Sanofi – a global pharmaceutical and healthcare company – has gained real-time visibility of its inventory and faster access to critical materials. By increasing accuracy from 75% to 95%, the solution gives teams greater confidence in stock data and stronger control over stock levels to help avoid overstocking, stock-outs and materials going out of date.

By reducing the time to take an inventory from two hours to just five minutes, the solution has helped Sanofi to streamline stock checks, reduce manual handling and improve day-to-day efficiency for R&D teams, establishing a scalable and standardised approach across sites in France and the United States.

Background

Sanofi – headquartered in Paris, France – is a global pharmaceutical and healthcare leader with extensive research and development activities. Within its R&D departments, teams manage a wide variety of materials used to support medicine development and transport, from containers and bottles to plastic pouches, tubes and liquid components. The raw materials include both ambient and frozen items, all of which require careful handling and precise storage conditions and, in many cases, have defined shelf lives.

Following a successful tender process, RFiD Discovery has been working with Sanofi for over 18 months on an RFID-based inventory management project.



RFiD labels on stock items

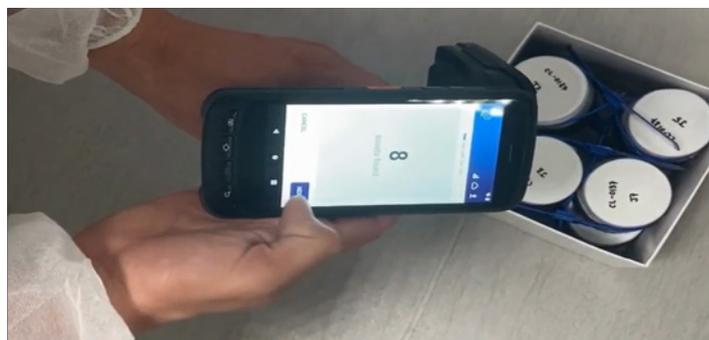
The project covers two R&D sites - Marcy l'Étoile, near Lyon in France, and Waltham, Massachusetts in the United States. While each site has its own local team, the project follows a single, consistent approach across both locations. At this stage, the solution provides a flexible and efficient foundation for R&D operations supporting non-GMP products, ie materials that are not subject to Good Manufacturing Practice because they are not yet part of regulated commercial manufacturing. It also enables better stock rotation and planning.

The challenges

Before implementing RFID technology, Sanofi faced several operational challenges related to inventory visibility, speed and material handling constraints.

Many of the materials are temperature-sensitive and cannot remain outside controlled environments for long periods. Freezers and fridges cannot be left open without triggering alerts, making manual inventory checks both time-critical and disruptive. Teams needed to complete stock checks as quickly as possible, while limiting product exposure to ambient temperatures.

At the same time, inventory visibility was limited. Teams lacked a consistent, real-time view of available stock, including quantities and storage locations. This made it difficult to anticipate shortages, identify excess stock or track materials approaching their expiry dates. With products spread across multiple fridges, freezers and storage areas, it was difficult to determine whether items were already in use. Frozen materials were stored in several on-site locations, requiring frequent back-and-forth during preparation and mixing activities. Ambient materials were stored in a



RFID handheld reader in action

“The RFID solution tailored by RFiD Discovery has significantly strengthened our traceability and stock accuracy, giving us a level of confidence we’ve never had before. The team’s agility and ability to adapt quickly to Sanofi’s evolving business challenges were key to delivering a solution that truly meets our operational needs.”

Frederic Preaux
Vaccines Supply Chain Sponsor
Sanofi

separate warehouse, located in another building, often several minutes’ walk away. Searching for the right product could be time-consuming and, in some cases, slowed down R&D activities.

Overall, the lack of real-time inventory visibility and the time spent locating materials risked delaying development work, increasing the likelihood of duplicate orders, expired materials or unexpected stock-outs and placing unnecessary strain on teams.

Key Benefits

- Inventory accuracy increased from 75% to 95%
- Real-time visibility of materials across two international R&D sites
- Reduced risk of stock-outs, overstocking, and expired materials
- Faster access to critical raw materials for R&D teams
- Minimised handling of temperature-sensitive products
- Less time spent searching across multiple locations



The solution

RFiD Discovery designed and deployed a passive (UHF) RFID solution tailored to Sanofi's R&D processes and material constraints.

Across both locations, Sanofi now tracks approximately 4,000 items. Products are labelled upon receipt using passive RFID labels printed on site, allowing items to be tracked throughout their lifecycle, including usage status and shelf life.

How does it work?

By enabling fast, non-intrusive scanning, the solution removes the need for manual checks, speeds up stock checks and reduces unnecessary handling of sensitive materials. It includes:

- ▶ **Two types of RFID labels**, manufactured by RfiD Discovery's parent company, Paragon ID in Argent, France. For frozen products, a specific adhesive was developed to ensure reliable attachment to plastic zip ties, even in low-temperature environments.
- ▶ **10 RFID handheld readers** per site, enabling rapid inventory checks and full coverage across storage areas, without the need to open fridges or freezers.
- ▶ **Four RFID printers** per site, to support on-demand label printing.

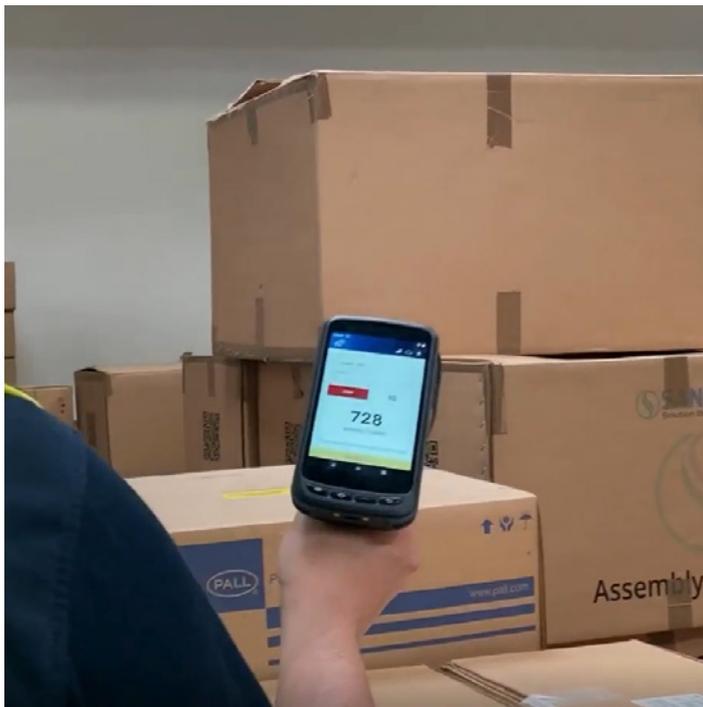


Handheld reader



RFiD label printer

- ▶ A **custom RFID application** for the handheld readers providing advanced filtering and search capabilities to help teams quickly identify available stock, low stock items, or materials nearing expiry.
- ▶ A **central software platform**, providing a consolidated view of inventory across locations to support better stock planning and replenishment decisions.



Fast inventory checks with handheld RFID reader

The results

The solution has been rapidly adopted by Sanofi's R&D teams in France and the United States, with 21 active users across supply chain and laboratory teams and a target of 30 users.

Since implementation teams have completed around five inventories per week. A process that previously took around two hours can now be completed in about five minutes, **reducing the time to take inventories by 95%**.

At the same time, **inventory accuracy has increased from around 75% to 95%**, improving control over stock levels, reducing the risk of stock-outs and overstocking, and strengthening shelf-life management. With 4,000 items currently tracked and a target of 10,000 units, teams benefit from real-time visibility of item availability, quantities and locations, **significantly reducing time spent searching for materials** and unnecessary movement between storage areas.

Why choose RFID Discovery?

RFID Discovery is a leader in integrated identification and location tracking solutions. Used in a wide range of industries as well as over 200 hospitals across the UK, Europe and beyond for over 15 years, RFID Discovery's solutions help organisations increase efficiency, improve safety and cut costs.

We are part of Paragon ID, hold the Cyber Essential certification and our system is GS1 UK approved.

Paragon ID is a RAIN Alliance member and certified to ISO9001, ISO14001, ISO27001 and ISO45001 standards.



For temperature-sensitive products, RFID scanning minimises fridge and freezer opening times, **helping protect product integrity** and **reduces the risk of materials expiring unnoticed**. Overall, the solution supports smoother R&D operations and improved productivity.

What's next?

Looking ahead, the success of the deployment has already driven expansion. Two additional teams are set to adopt RFID, representing approximately 3,000 additional labels across France and the US and five new users. Sanofi also plans to extend the solution to GMP products, more than doubling the scale of the deployment and adding around 10 additional users, to further improve traceability and inventory efficiency for regulated materials.



The RFID system is easy to use, and it gives me immediate visibility into my inventory. It has saved me a significant amount of time in my daily tasks and allows me to focus on what really matters."



User of RFID Discovery system
Sanofi