

Industry Action Plan

Produce Traceability

PURPOSE: In order to track and trace product across the entire supply chain having multiple systems, multiple processes, and multiple hand-offs, the Produce Traceability Initiative has endorsed the use of minimum standards to serve as a linkage between each member of the supply chain and the use of barcodes to allow for the automated capture of this vital information. It has been acknowledged by the Initiative that companies will have different internal traceability systems, as their specific needs will vary by segment and by company. The incorporation of the standards below will allow industry members to maintain their existing traceability systems, with slight modifications to incorporate key elements below, while providing a traceability path between handlers of the product.

KEY ELEMENTS: There are three key elements that must appear on every case of produce and subsequently stored at each point in the supply chain:

1. GTIN (Global Trade Item Number) – a 14-digit identification number that encompasses a Company Prefix and a Reference Number. The Company Prefix is assigned and managed by GS1 (www.gs1.org) and uniquely identifies the brand owner from any other company in the world.
2. Lot # - information vital to the grower/shipper/packer/processor pointing to the location of the field or plot of land from which the product was grown. In the case of a packer or processor, this could also be their batch #. This number is assigned by those who are packing the product.

Subsequent information that must be tied to the key elements above include: who you received it from, when you received it, where you received it, quantity, who you shipped it to, when it was shipped, and where it was shipped from, including both the transporter and non-transporter.

MILESTONES AND TIMELINES FOR ENHANCED PRODUCE TRACEABILITY

***NOTE: The completion dates below assumes a start date of September 1, 2008. Work on each milestone should begin immediately and is expected to be completed by the completion date listed for each milestone.**

MILESTONE #1: Obtain Company Prefix **COMPLETE BY:** Q1 2009

Brand owners must obtain their own GS1-issued Company Prefixes. To find the GS1 organization in your country, visit www.gs1.org.

MILESTONE #2: Assign GTIN numbers **COMPLETE BY:** Q1 2009

Brand owners must assign 14-digit GTINs (Global Trade Item Numbers) to all CASE configurations. It is highly recommended that companies use the GTIN Assignment Strategy as a guide to allow for consistency (see www.pma.com, www.cpma.ca, www.unitedfresh.org for GTIN Assignment Strategy).

MILESTONE #3: Provide information to foodservice buyers **COMPLETE BY:** Q3 2009

Brand owners must provide their GTINs (and corresponding data) to their buyers. This is necessary in order to understand the information behind the GTIN once the number is scanned.

MILESTONE #4: Show human-readable information on case **COMPLETE BY:** Q3 2010

Those packing the product are responsible for providing human-readable information on each case (GTIN, Lot #). At minimum, the information should be shown together on at least one side of the case.

MILESTONE #5: Encode information into a barcode on the case **COMPLETE BY:** Q3, 2010

Those packing the product are responsible for encoding the GTIN, Lot # in a GS1-128 barcode. In order to get accurate scans of the 128 barcode, the barcode must be printed on a white label, and then the label affixed to the case. (See Best Practices on Case Labeling)

MILESTONE #6: Read and store information on INBOUND cases **COMPLETE BY:** 2011

Each subsequent handler of the CASE must have the systems and capability to read and store the GTIN and Lot # from each case of produce received. (See Best Practices on Pallet Labeling)

MILESTONE #7: Read and store information on OUTBOUND cases **COMPLETE BY:** 2012

Each subsequent handler of the CASE must have the systems and capability to read and store the GTIN and Lot # for each case of produce shipped.

NOTE: Find below a proposed list of FAQs that could accompany the Action Plan. A more detailed list can accompany any type of education and outreach done beyond what would be included in this document.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who needs to get a Company Prefix (milestone #1)?

Any company that owns the brand must obtain a Company Prefix from their regional GS1 member organization. If the grower wants to maintain their brand, they must obtain a Company Prefix and use their GTIN on the case. If a packer packs a case using their brand, they become the brand owner and therefore need to obtain their own Company Prefix and use their GTIN on the case after it is repacked. If the buyer asks a packer to repack the case using the buyer's brand, the buyer will need to obtain a Company Prefix and notify the packer of the GTIN needed to be used on the case. For more information on the rules of Company Prefix, see www.gs1.org.

What level of granularity is needed when assigning GTIN numbers to case configurations (milestone #2)?

See the GTIN Assignment Strategy for a detailed explanation.

Does the GTIN number change with each change of possession?

The only time the GTIN number will change is when the case configuration or pack is changed in any way, shape or form. If the case remains unchanged throughout the supply chain, the case will have the same GTIN number, same Lot # and same Pack/Harvest date that were assigned to the case at its inception.

How does the GTIN number change when re-packing product?

It is the responsibility of each handler of the case to read and store the GTIN and Lot # from each case received. If, however, you change the content or packaging of that case, you are creating a "new item" and therefore have to assign a new GTIN and Lot # to the new item. Whether you have one or many products that you co-mingle into a new "finished goods" product, you will have to link the new GTIN and Lot # to each item that makes up the new finished product. So, for example, if you have three items that were used to create one new finished item, you will have to link the new GTIN and Lot # that came from each of the three original items. Once the new item is put into distribution in the supply chain, it will then be tracked using the new GTIN and its associated Lot #. It will then be your responsibility as the packer/re-packer to "explode" your GTIN to identify the GTIN and Lot # of each of the three products that comprised your new item.

How do we communicate the GTIN information to our buyers (milestone #3)?

The same way you communicate your new item information to your buyers today. As there are many methods to do this, the decision on how this is done is between the buyer and seller.

What information should be communicated along with the GTIN (milestone #3)?

Again, the amount of information needed by the buyer can differ greatly. It is recommended that you provide the same information you would include for a new item introduction. This is also a decision between the buyer and seller.

What is a GS1-128 barcode (milestone #5)?

It is a "linear" barcode that is supported by GS1 (a global standards organization) that can encode up to 47 characters of information and, consequently, has enough capacity to hold the GTIN and Lot #. Because of the precision needed to scan this barcode, it is recommended that the barcode be printed on a label, and then the label affixed to the case.

Are there Best Practices that could give industry members some insight as to implementation tips and/or efficiencies when implementing the milestones?

See Traceability Milestone Best Practices or "Fresh Produce Traceability: A Guide to Implementation" (www.pma.com, www.cpma.ca, www.unitedfresh.org).