



FMI Backs Produce Traceability Initiative

Progressive Grocer

The trade group gave it nod to the plan to create a standardized system for electronic traceability of fresh produce products through the supply pipeline.

(Nov 3, 2008) The board of directors of the Food Marketing Institute late last week gave a thumbs up to the recommendations of the Produce Traceability Initiative, which is an industry-created coalition charged with setting plans for adoption of a standardized system of case bar-coding for all produce sold in the United States, so that product can be quickly and accurately traced back through the supply chain if food safety issues arise.

Under the recommendations of the PTI, the steering committee for which is chaired by Cathy Green, c.o.o. of Southeastern grocery chain Food Lion, fresh produce products would be quickly and efficiently tracked through the distribution chain. This would maximize the effectiveness of the industry's current traceability procedures.

The proposed program would build on current internal traceability systems by using the existing international standards from GS1. It would foster external traceability by standardizing and incorporating the Global Trade Identification Number (GTIN) and a lot number, thus bringing new connectivity between companies across the supply chain.

Information to be labeled on each case would also be in human-readable form, so that it could be read and understood by personnel throughout the supply chain. The machine-readable barcode would also appear, which each member of the supply chain would be able to scan and maintain in their computer systems.

PTI identified six steps for supply chain electronic traceability by late 2012:

1. By first quarter 2009, brand owners must obtain their GS1-issued company prefix and assign 14-digit GTINs to all case configurations.
2. By third quarter 2009, brand owners must provide and maintain their GTINs (and corresponding data) with their buyers.
3. By third quarter 2010, packers will be responsible for providing human-readable information on each case (GTIN and lot number).
4. By third quarter 2010, those packing the product are responsible for encoding the GTIN and the lot number on case labels in human-readable form and machine-readable barcodes using a standard case label.
5. By 2011, each handler of the case must read and store the GTIN and associated lot number for inbound cases.
6. By 2012, each handler of the case must read and store the GTIN and associated lot number for outbound cases.

Created by retailers, growers, shippers, brokers, terminal markets, distributors and foodservice companies, PTI is sponsored by Produce Marketing Association (PMA), United Fresh Produce Association (United Fresh), and the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA).