



Canadian Produce
Marketing Association
Association canadienne de la
distribution de fruits et légumes



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Produce Traceability Initiative Steering Committee creates milestones for traceability

At its third meeting held recently in Boston, the Steering Committee of the Produce Traceability Initiative reached consensus on the critical milestones needed to accomplish whole-chain traceability for the produce industry. The committee consists of over 40 leading companies from across the produce supply chain and is chaired by Cathy Green, chief operating officer of Food Lion.

“There was remarkable participation and collaboration that took place both in our meeting and in various subgroups to reach alignment on what is needed for whole-chain traceability,” said Green. “We’ve reached a vital step to help companies know what needs to be done to ensure the ability of this industry to quickly and efficiently track and trace product up and down the produce supply chain. We are now moving forward to develop timelines as part of an overall action plan for industry implementation.”

“We also look forward to getting feedback from the boards of the three associations that created the initiative – Produce Marketing Association (PMA), United Fresh Produce Association (United Fresh) and Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA) – to ensure the support of their respective memberships,” said Green. “They will be the ones who ultimately will help drive our work forward.”

To educate their industry members and to solicit members’ input, all three associations will provide a summary version of the committee’s latest activities, as well as other resources being used by the initiative. Members will receive information on how to access these materials directly from their associations.

The Boston meeting was the third for the group. Since the steering committee’s prior meeting held in late February, members had been involved in subgroup discussions to reach consensus on two key items. One subgroup, focused on buyers in both retail and foodservice channels, developed a clear agreement on the need for commitment throughout the supply chain to apply Global Trade Item Numbers (GTINs), lot number and pack/harvest date to cases, and to have these used by buyers downstream. The other subgroup examined the potential for case serialization as an alternative to GTIN application, but decided against this option.

At the meeting in Boston, a new subgroup was appointed to work on standardizing the format and size of case labels that should be used to display the barcode and corresponding human-

readable data. Both human-readable and bar-coded data elements are being recommended by the committee.

As part of their commitment to the work of the initiative, the boards of PMA, United Fresh and CPMA will be discussing the recommendations developed thus far during their respective meetings over the next several weeks. Support from the associations' leaders and memberships will be essential in moving the work of the initiative forward.

Outreach to the broader industry will also take place during the education programming at the Food Marketing Institute (FMI) and United Fresh conventions in Las Vegas, Nev., in early May. At that time, Green will also brief members of FMI's Food Safety Task Force on the work of the initiative.

Association staffs have also been briefing regulatory authorities in both the United States and Canada on the work and direction of the initiative. Government representatives from both countries will be invited to attend the steering committee's next meeting on June 12.

The following is a summary of key elements and milestones for implementing produce GTINs as developed by the committee thus far and for consideration by the association boards.

1. Brand owners must obtain a GS1-issued company prefix.
2. Brand owners must assign 14-digit GTINs to all case configurations. The steering committee highly recommends that companies use the number assignment strategy already created by the trade associations to minimize the number of GTINs created and to allow for consistency across industry segments.
3. Brand owners must provide and maintain their GTIN information (and corresponding data) to their buyers.
4. All parties must have the systems to capture and store GTINs and subsequent information.
5. Those parties packing the product are responsible for providing the GTIN, lot number and pack/harvest date in a human-readable form on each case (Note: Pack/harvest date is optional if it is already embedded in the lot number).
6. Those parties packing the product are responsible for encoding the GTIN, the lot number, and the pack/harvest date in a GS1-128 barcode. (Note as above: Pack/harvest date is optional if already embedded in the lot number).
7. Each handler of the case must read and store the following information both one step up and one step down the supply chain: GTIN; lot number; pack/harvest date (if not already included in the lot number); shipper ID; shipper name; shipper address; receiver ID; receiver name; receiver address; date of shipment; date of receipt; quantity; unit of measure; and shipment ID.

The steering committee will meet next on June 12 in Chicago to identify timelines for implementation of each of the above milestones.

“Now that there is industry consensus on what needs to be done, the three sponsoring produce associations will also take on greater outreach to other fresh food trade associations to ensure compatibility and alignment,” Green said. “We want to make sure that this process will not cause unnecessary work for both the buying and selling community, whether sold in retail or foodservice, or required from suppliers in various fresh food sectors.”

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About Produce Marketing Association (PMA)

Founded in 1949, the Produce Marketing Association (PMA) is the leading trade association serving more than 2,100 companies representing every segment of the global produce and floral supply chain. Members rely on PMA year round for the business solutions they need to increase sales and consumption, build strong professional relationships, and expand their business opportunities. For more information, visit www.pma.com.

About Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA)

The Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA) is a not-for-profit association founded in 1925 and committed to increasing the market for fresh fruit and vegetables in Canada, by encouraging cooperation and information exchange among all segments, in both the domestic and international arenas. The CPMA represents over 675 Canadian and International companies within a vertically integrated membership involving all levels of the produce supply chain from the grower/packer/shipper to retail and foodservice. For more information, visit www.cpma.ca.

About United Fresh Produce Association (United Fresh)

United Fresh Produce Association is a leading industry trade association committed to driving the growth and success of produce companies and their partners. United Fresh represents the interests of member companies throughout the global, fresh produce supply chain, including family-owned, private and publicly traded businesses as well as regional, national and international companies. The association was founded in 1904 to represent the produce industry, and recently took the name United Fresh as a result of the 2006 merger of the United Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Association and the International Fresh-cut Produce Association. For more information, visit www.unitedfresh.org.

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