



# Product Identification Standards

Product Standards Committee

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## Product Identification Standards



- PLU – Product Look Up Code
- DataBar

## Product Identification Standards - PLU



- In 1988 PMA created the Produce Electronic Identification Board (PEIB) to develop a standard system for coding fresh produce sold in bulk form at retail
- The PEIB was formed in response to concerns regarding the effective identification of the increasing number of produce items offered in supermarkets

## Product Identification Standards - PLU



- The PEIB was a collaboration of Sellers and Buyers of produce in the US and included representation from UK and Canada where implementation was also occurring
- The purpose of the newly formed PEIB was to streamline the amount of coding being used to identify identical items which were being supplied by multiple suppliers

## Product Identification Standards - PLU









- The Produce Look Up (PLU) code was created by the PEIB in 1988
- The PLU code label was developed



## Product Identification Standards - PLU



- 4 digit PLU   
- Organics are coded by adding a 9 in front of the four digit PLU code  
- Genetically modified produce are coded by adding a 8 in front of the four digit PLU code
- This is NOT an example of a GMO label! 

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## Product Identification Standards - PLU



- The growers and shippers of the commodities sold in bulk at retail were asked to start putting the PLU code labels on the individual item
- Industry worked with label suppliers to develop the right labels for each commodity
- To date, more than 1,400 PLU codes have been assigned

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## Product Identification Standards - PLU



- The PEIB worked to determine how best to structure a relationship with EAN International, Eucofel and others to achieve international harmonization regarding use of PLU codes, UPC numbers, RSS codes, and case codes in the produce industry
- In conjunction with Fruit Logistica in Berlin, Germany on January 19, 2001, the PMA sponsored an International forum to discuss global coding issues

## Product Identification Standards - PLU



- Countries concerned with the PLU formed an international organization in 2001
- In 2002 industry representatives from New Zealand, Australia, France, Chile, UK, Norway, Canada, and the U.S. began work to expand the North American list to create one harmonized list for use in all countries

## Product Identification Standards - PLU



- The International Federation for Produce Standards (IFPS) was incorporated in September 2006
  - To approve new applications for PLU numbers
  - To provide an international forum to address issues in the produce sector
- PMA is the secretariat for the IFPS – the Fresh Produce Consortium is the registered office of the IFPS


## Product Identification Standards - Databar



- The use of PLU codes at retail has significantly reduced errors at the cash register and has increased the productivity of the cashiers
- Reducing the time per produce item at the cash register to 4 to 5 seconds was a great improvement
- The retailers wanted more.....

## Product Identification Standards - Databar



- GS1 had developed a new family of barcodes to be used in space constrained applications called Databar
- The barcode developed for use on bulk/loose produce is the Stacked Omni-Directional Databar 
- DataBar implementation includes coupons, Fresh Foods, Pharmacy and other applications

## Product Identification Standards - Databar



- The addition of a scannable GTIN on the PLU label would:
  - Increase accuracy on ticket rings
  - Provide movement data by supplier
  - Provide specific item identification
  - Increase accuracy of category management
  - Vastly reduce human errors leading to “shrink” at the front end/cashiers (e.g. organic vs. conventionally grown)
  - Increase speed of cashiers



## Product Identification Standards - Databar



- The implementation of DataBar for produce requires an upgrade or replacement of some retailers front end scanners
- DataBar requires the assignment of GTINs to all suppliers PLU labeled product
- The GTINs must be shared with all trading partners



## Product Identification Standards - Databar



- PMA developed a central repository, Databar Online, for their grower/shipper members to load their GTINs linked to the PLUs for the retailers to upload
- Over 80% of PMA members who subscribe to this tool have completed their data load
- Various countries currently using PLU stickers are now moving to utilize GS1 Databar



## Product Identification Standards - Databar



- The first retailer in the US has made the Databar on the PLU label mandatory in 2011
- Current GS1 standards for DataBar do not allow for the inclusion of country or industry specific human readable identification such as the PLU code
- GS1 standard allows for only the human readable GTIN and barcode GTIN on the label

## Product Identification Standards - Databar



- Proposed GS1 migration path

**Example A**

GS1 DataBar and Commodity Code

to 2010

**Example B**

GS1 DataBar, Commodity Code and GTIN

2011 to 2014

**Example C**

GS1 DataBar and GTIN

2014

## Product Identification Standards - Databar



- The produce industry requires the PLU number on the label as a back up for when the GTIN will not scan



- Our retailers cashiers eyesight must not be as good as the GS1 staff!

## Path Forward



- IFPS is attempting to work with GS1 to examine the potential for inclusion of the IFPS PLUs as a human readable component of the GS1 DataBar for bulk produce. (i.e. the Stacked Omni-Directional DataBar)



# Questions?