



## Subject: Fruit Stickers & PLU Code Functional Use

To Whom It May Concern,

Across the globe, governments at all levels are examining the issue of plastics and the impact on the environment. This has led to various initiatives, and in some cases legislation, which seeks to find measures to mitigate this impact. The fresh produce industry supports efforts to find solutions that remove unnecessary and problematic plastics but urge extreme caution when determining items to be eliminated to ensure consumers, and the supply of fresh fruits and vegetables, are not negatively impacted.

In 1990 a system of numbering for use as produce item identification was established to ensure accuracy in the price consumers are charged for fresh fruits and vegetables sold bulk or loose at retail. These numbers are the IFPS PLU codes and are administered and governed by the [International Federation for Produce Standards](#) (IFPS). The IFPS is composed of national and multi-national fresh produce associations from around the globe. In conjunction with stakeholders in the industry, the IFPS is focused on the improvement of supply chain efficiency of the fresh produce industry by developing, implementing and managing harmonized international standards.

The IFPS PLU is a global produce identification scheme that assigns numbers for use on small stickers placed directly on fruits and vegetables and used at the retail checkout to identify the item and charge the consumer the relevant price per kilo or pound. Identification on the stickers is the ONLY efficacious way to enable the continued offering of bulk produce in retail stores. Without this capacity, all produce will need to be packaged to capture the required produce identification thereby introducing additional packaging into the environment.

On behalf of the Board of the IFPS, I am submitting this information to ensure a complete understanding of the use of produce stickers as background to decision-making amongst regulators.

I would be happy to answer any questions about the IFPS PLU stickers and their use and hope that this information will ensure there are no unanticipated consequences to decisions made relative to packaging for produce.

Sincere regards,

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### International Federation for Produce Standards

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## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

- PLU codes are 4 or 5 digit numbers which have been used by supermarkets since 1990 to make check-out and inventory control easier, faster, and more accurate.
- The PLU code scheme was created to enable the efficient and accurate point of sale process.
- The PLU code ensures that the correct price is paid by consumers by removing the need for cashiers to identify the product; e.g., whether or not it is conventionally or organically grown.
- PLUs are primarily assigned to identify individual bulk fresh fruits and vegetables, related items such as nuts and herbs, and will appear on a small sticker applied to the individual piece of fresh produce.
- The PLU number identifies produce items based upon various attributes which can include the commodity, the variety, the growing methodology (e.g. organic) and the size group.
- The 4-digit PLU codes for produce are assigned randomly within a series of numbers within the 3000 and 4000 series. The 4-digit codes are for conventionally grown produce. 5-digit codes are used to identify organic produce. The prefix of '9' is placed in front of the 4-digit PLU code to create the code for organic produce.
- Studies have revealed that the usage of PLU codes on stickers reduce the time to enter the item at point of sale from 10 seconds to 4 seconds. When the PLU Sticker includes the DataBar Stacked omnidirectional barcode, the time per item is reduced to 1 second.

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