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## DataBar is revolutionizing point-of-sale produce identification

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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*Newark, Del.* – The Produce Electronic Identification Board (PEIB) has seen the future of produce product identification coding, and it is the DataBar.

PEIB, the PMA board responsible for creating produce price look-up (PLU) codes and standardized Universal Product Code (UPC) numbers – i.e., those beginning with 033383 – began shifting its focus away from commodity marking for product identification at point of sale (POS). With the emergence of GS1’s new barcode called DataBar, the buying and selling community now has a viable information technology option that will provide a broad range of operational efficiencies as well as enable key information to travel along with produce items.

“With the use of the DataBar, produce companies can now begin enjoying benefits that packaged goods companies have enjoyed for decades,” said PEIB Chairman Mike Agostini, merchandise manager for Wal-Mart. “The DataBar provides product movement data and shrink information for each grower/shipper, while also providing scanning efficiencies and resolving pricing errors caused by price differences between organic and conventional products.”

The DataBar carries the 14-digit Global Trade Item Number (GTIN). Analogous to the ubiquitous UPC, the GTIN identifies the grower/shipper as well as the physical item carrying the mark. This allows the retailer’s POS system to gather product information by grower/shipper, a boon to category management efforts. And because the DataBar is a much smaller barcode than the UPC, it fits on most of today’s produce PLU stickers. Recognizing the transition that will be needed to move from a four- or five-digit PLU number to a 14-digit GTIN, the sticker that will now be affixed to loose produce can bear both the DataBar barcode and the PLU number as a back-up. Having the human-readable PLU number on the sticker will allow a transitional period for retailers who may not be ready to begin scanning the DataBar immediately, as cashiers will still be able to see the PLU number on the sticker. Other information traditionally shown on the PLU sticker, such as country of origin labeling or company logos, can also be included on DataBar stickers.

Most POS scanners manufactured after 2002 already have the ability to read the DataBar with a flip of a switch, reports Produce Marketing Association Vice President, Industry Technology and Standards Gary Fleming. To be able to read the codes, retailers will need to modify their item information databases to include the 14-digit GTIN, if they do not already do so. In addition, growers/shippers will need to provide their GTIN numbers to their buyers in advance, so that retailers can add them to their POS databases before product is scanned at POS, says Fleming.

The PEIB recommends that growers/shippers assign GTINs at the same level of granularity that exists for PLU numbers – that is, by commodity, by variety and by size group. This will now mean that retailers will have to store a unique

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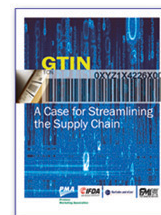
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14-digit GTIN for each supplier from whom they buy each commodity. Most likely, the retailers will link the PLU number to each of the supplier's GTINs that supply the commodity, says Fleming.

"The benefits of having product movement data by grower/shipper will be advantageous for both the buying and selling community," said Tim Gagnon, PEIB vice chairman and director for C.H. Robinson Company Worldwide.

"Growers and shippers will now be able to measure the success of their products at POS versus their competitors, and thus target marketing and demographic campaigns. Buyers will now be able to move away from commodity-based category management and toward unique product category management akin to packaged goods."

Fleming noted the movement toward the DataBar is beginning to gain momentum, with rollouts from Wal-Mart and Loblaws leading the way with over a dozen fresh produce suppliers, and other rollouts just around the corner. The vendor community has already anticipated the transition to the DataBar, including scanner manufacturers, software vendors, labeling vendors and scale manufacturers. The DataBar is also getting traction in the other fresh food sectors, as the technology recommended by seven different fresh food associations referenced in the document entitled "Industry Roadmap: The Fresh Food Supply Chain of the Future." In addition, the coupon industry is also beginning to transition to the DataBar, with its increased capability to hold more data.

While the transition from PLU codes to DataBar is ongoing, the PEIB is encouraging retailers to accept product stickered with both the DataBar and PLU codes, even though they might not yet be scanning DataBars at point of sale.

"The needs of the marketplace are changing, including the need for more information and the ability to track product to a specific grower," said PMA's Fleming. "The DataBar allows for exactly this, while minimizing the impact a new technology can have on members of a supply chain. Chances are, you have probably already seen the DataBar on some apples, bananas, avocados, peppers, tomatoes and other commodities. If you haven't, don't be surprised because you soon will."

Questions regarding the DataBar can be directed to any member of the PEIB, or to PMA's Gary Fleming ([gflaming@pma.com](mailto:gflaming@pma.com)) or Director of Voluntary Leadership and Industry Standards Alicia Calhoun ([acalhoun@pma.com](mailto:acalhoun@pma.com)).

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#### **About Produce Marketing Association (PMA)**

Founded in 1949, the Produce Marketing Association 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](http://www.pma.com).