

LABELLING

Sinclair oversees labelling evolution

The development of the produce labelling industry has been a journey that Sinclair have observed from an early stage, with DataBar labels merely the latest step

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Sinclair, the UK-based labelling specialist, has for many years been a market leader focusing on the loose produce segment, and is again making innovative strides forward with the move towards trademark protected GSI DataBar labels.

To understand where the industry is going, it is important to review where it has been, with the function of produce labelling changing considerably over the years. Indeed, 25 years ago Sinclair's label and application equipment systems had a significant hand in helping fruit marketers attract brand recognition.

"They realised that the label is a cost-effective way to convey a fruit brand to the consumer: the label stays on the fruit right

through to the fruit bowl at home, while other forms of packaging are discarded straight away," says Tim Watkins, European regional sales and marketing manager at Sinclair. "And this is still very important to our customers today."

The mid-1990s saw retailers strive to include Price Look-Up (PLU) numbers on labels in addition to produce variety, allowing retailers to optimise management of produce categories, in turn leading to more accurate checkout pricing and enhanced marketing.

Since those early stages, a host of additions have been made to the labelling pool, such as country of origin labelling (COOL), promotions, specially protected region of origin labelling, organic labelling and quality labelling.

The next move towards scannable labels has been swift, with the roll-out of

GSI DataBars in both the UK and the US. The label employs a 14 digit GTIN and fits onto a conventional-sized fruit label.

"As we speak, many US packhouses are in the process of switching over to DataBar labelling as US retailers are requesting new codes," notes Rick Goddard, vice-president of marketing and sales at Sinclair. "In the US, the switch to bar coding is being driven as much if not more by category management considerations as by speed and accuracy at the checkout."

At Sinclair we also believe that individual produce labelling has helped the loose category to thrive at the retail level," Mr Goddard adds. "Our research supports the view that shoppers prefer to self-select their produce – and of course the loose category helps to minimise the use of extra packaging."