



## **Questions and Responses - Case Date Coding (July 2008)**

### **1a. What are the Canadian retail store scanning capabilities and practices?**

Currently, most Canadian retailers scan products, including Direct Store Delivery (DSD) products, at distribution centres and stores. While retailers scan case Global Trade Item Numbers (GTINs) using the Interleaved 2 of 5 (ITF) symbology, they are unable to scan the GS1-128. (Refer to protocol section 4 - Implementation Timelines, Phase 2.) One retail store network includes technology for scanners in distribution centres (i.e. use of symbol 9050). While another retailer does not currently scan DSD cases at the store level, it scans pallets shipped to stores at the warehouse level.

### **1b. Do code dates need to be bar coded on Direct Store Delivery cases?**

Yes.

### **2a. What is the business process for scanning code date bar codes? (E.g. Scan at receiving/picking/shipping/store/shelf stocking, etc.?)**

Some retailers do not scan inbound products at the warehouse but do scan outbound shipments to stores. In the future, they may require scanning on inbound products for produce traceability. Other retailers scan products at the time of receiving.

### **2b. Are shipping/receiving/store areas automated to scan this information? (i.e. Do they use mounted or handheld scanners?)**

Some retailers scan products using handheld units, while other manually key Best Before Dates on targeted product.

### **3. Who is requesting the Case Date Coding?**

Canadian retailers and distributors dealing with date sensitive products are requesting case date coding.

### **4. Since 'Expiration' and 'Production' are spelled the same in English and French, can we print these words only once (vs. 'Expiration/Expiration') to minimize confusion and redundancy on the label?**

This will be confirmed. To date, the information collected shows that the decision is made at the discretion of the retailer. One retailer's practice is that as long as the English and French descriptions are identical, only one date description is required; otherwise, both descriptions are required. Another retailer plans to review the process for private label development due to its concern with scanner limitations of 26 characters for older technology. And still another retailer will gather information on multilingual requirements to comply with regulations.

### **5. If the case is also the consumer unit, does the date need to be printed separately in a GS1-128 symbol?**

Yes. If the case is also the consumer unit, the consumer unit would be bar coded with point-of-sale (POS) symbology (a GTIN-8, GTIN-12, GTIN-13 or GTIN-14 using UPC-A or EAN-13 symbology). However, GS1-128 and Interleaved 2 of 5 (ITF) symbols are used only on cases. (Refer to protocol Appendix 1 – sections A & B). The technology in one retailer's warehouses and store systems can handle GTINs at different levels, and its front end systems scan GTIN-14s. This retailer may also require GS1-128s for fresh item management in the future.



6. **Can we add a label with the GS1-128 case date bar code to a different side than the GTIN bar code (UPC/EAN)? (e.g. Preprinted GTIN bar codes on two sides, code date label on one end.)**

No. As a best practice, both the GTIN and encoded date information should be printed on the label for ease of data capture at point of reception to save time and minimize the risk of errors. The case date information is added on a label using the GS1-128 symbology near the preprinted GTIN to capture both the GTIN and case date data.

#### **GS1 General Specifications (V8.i2)**

##### **Section 5.4.8.5 Mixing GS1-128 Symbology with Other Symbologies**

Global Trade Item Numbers (GTINs) may be carried in any of the GS1 System endorsed symbologies. When additional data is required beyond the GTIN, GS1-128 bar code symbols are used. The GS1-128 symbology specification does not eliminate other GS1 symbologies. In these cases, the GTIN is printed using an ITF-14 symbol or other GS1 System symbologies and additional data using a GS1-128 bar code symbol.

7. **If we have a single item pallet of product, can we bar code the code date on the pallet/logistics unit label rather than on each case?**

No. Each case requires individual identification, including code dates, to ensure continuity throughout the supply chain. Each case is marked with the human readable case date code and the specific case markings, such as GTIN, Brand Name, Product Type, etc. Individual case information is required when removing the outer pallet wrapping.

8. **Are global manufacturers concerned about meeting Canada's bar code requirements?**

Yes, global manufacturers are concerned and expect a global standard is needed in order to get full implementation. Supply chains are now global and requirements for one country impacts production on a global scale. An alignment between the US and Canadian markets is a required step to begin implementation.

9. **Have retailers been surveyed on the impact of adding a code date to the GS1-128 symbol?**

Yes. The industry protocol report contains a statement that addresses the commitment from all stakeholders, including retailers, distributors and manufacturers to meet the industry deadline. Retailers agree that adding the Best Before Date in a standard format adds value to trading partners.

10. **If manufacturers switch to GS1-128 bar codes and include additional data elements, will retailers have the ability to parse the GS1-128 bar code data string and pull out the specific data attributes they need? [E.g. GTIN and Application Identifier (AI) coded data]**

Yes. The GS1-128 code set has an encoding procedure that ensures the capture of the encoded data in the recommended sequence, with fixed field lengths preceding the variable length fields, if used (E.g. Best Before Date, Weight or GTIN, Product Variant, etc.). Migration to the GS1-128 bar code also opens the door to include additional information, such as batch number, which can help with traceability.

11. **Is there a standard for the sequence of the Application Identifier (AI) data?**

No, there is no standard sequence order because the information encoded will populate the fields relative to the AI. A best practice has been to use the fixed length AIs preceding the variable length fields, if they are used. For instance, each variable length AI in the code needs to end with the FNC1 unless it is the last one used in the string.



### Function Control Information from the GS1 General Specifications

(FNC1): All GS1 Application Identifiers indicated with (FNC1) are defined as variable length and must be limited by a Function 1 Symbol Character unless this Element String is the last one to be encoded in the symbol.

#### 5.4.3.4.2. Function Characters

Function Characters (FNC) provide special operations and application instructions to the bar code reading device. The Function 1 Symbol Character (FNC1) shall be subject to the special considerations defined in Section 5.4.8.9. An FNC1 in the first position following the Start Character of a Code-128 Symbol is at all times a reserved use, which identifies the GS1 System.

#### 5.4.8.4. The Separator Character (FNC1)

The Separator Character appears in the decoded data string as <GS> (ASCII character 29, 7-bit character set ISO 646). All Element Strings not of pre-defined length must be followed by a Function 1 Symbol Character (FNC1) separator when followed by another Element String in a single bar code symbol. An FNC1 is not required at the end of the last Element String represented in a GS1-128 Bar Code Symbol. The processing routine allows for a FNC1 entered by error after an Element String contained in Figure 5.4.8.3.2 - 1. Refer to Section 5.4.7 for additional information on encoding/decoding FNC1.

### 12. How do I prevent poor bar code quality that results from inkjet printing or print-and-apply GTIN bar codes?

Minimum print quality requirements for the GS1-128 symbology recommend printing the GS1-128 directly to labels only – not inkjet to corrugate. The bar code quality printed on the case must meet the industry standards for scanability.

### 13. To reduce confusion, erroneous returns and disposals, can industry use letters rather than numbers for the month portion of the case date, as defined in the Food and Drug Agency (FDA) regulation? (E.g. Best before / Meilleur avant 2008 JN 18)

It depends on whether a product is governed by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). If so, CFIA requirements take precedence on the consumer selling unit, including when the consumer unit is also the case. Otherwise, the GS1 Global Standard for Case Date Coding applies.

### 14. Since we are asked to print an increasing amount of information on the case (facility ID number, nutritional information, client logo, etc.), can we use short form terms to take up less space on the label? (i.e.: Best Before / Meilleur Avant = BB/MA )

No. The industry standard will be used as per the industry protocol Section 3C

Full Example:

Best Before/Meilleur Avant YYYY-MM-DD 2008-04-14

Expiration/Expiration YYYY-MM-DD 2008-04-30

Production/Production YYYY-MM-DD 2008-04-02

### 15. For machine readable formats, is there an additional cost to apply stickers to all the cases (vs. inkjet printing)?

This industry protocol addresses how to reduce costs by consolidating the retailer/trading partner requests to standardize the human and machine readable date sensitive product information using a global standard. Cost savings will result from superior inventory management using a standard date format on cases.



- 16. Would an electronic Advance Ship Notice (ASN) sent by a manufacturer to automatically identify code dates on products and identified with a Serial Shipping Container Code (SSCC) satisfy any bar code date requirements?**

[This question is out of scope for this initiative.](#)