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Coalition Recommends Solution to Inefficiencies

A coalition of fresh food associations has announced its creation of "Industry Roadmap: Building the Fresh Foods Supply Chain of the Future," a white paper that suggests a solution to the industry's current inability to identify, mark, manage and track fresh food products across the food supply chain and at point-of-sale.

The coalition includes the American Lamb Board, the Food Marketing Institute, the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association, the National Turkey Federation, the National Cattlemen's Beef Association on behalf of The Beef Checkoff, the National Chicken Council, the National Fisheries Institute, the National Pork Board and the Produce Marketing Association, with support from GS1 US. GS1 is a global organization dedicated to the design and implementation of global standards and solutions to improve efficiency and visibility in supply and demand chains globally and across sectors.

The proposed solution to meeting emerging fresh foods supplier and retailer needs calls for using one global communications language for the entire supply chain--from suppliers to retailers to consumers--utilizing existing GS1 standards and technologies including the Global Trade Identification Number and GS1 DataBar (formerly known as Reduced Symbology System or RSS).

Adopting this plan will require each participant in the fresh food supply chain that produces a product or adds value to an existing product to evaluate and potentially upgrade systems in order to effectively utilize the GS1 product identification standards and technologies. It is expected that, while relatively expensive, adopting this proposal across the entire fresh foods industry will yield significant benefits including increased information capture, faster POS throughput, effective category management, effective traceability, fresher product and shrink reduction.

The Universal Product Code (UPC) random weight number system currently used is not sufficient to accommodate the information needed at the point-of-sale register. The coalition believes a single, integrated solution that accommodates fixed measure and variable measure for packaged and fresh foods can be applied across the food industry.

A free copy of "Industry Roadmap: Building the Fresh Foods Supply Chain of the Future," can be obtained at www.pma.com/cig/tech/documents.cfm or by contacting any of the participating associations.

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