



PRESS RELEASE

CPMA and PMA announce plan to end issuing of generic UPCs

November 14, 2019 (Ottawa, ON) – As of December 31st, 2019, Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA) and Produce Marketing Association (PMA) will no longer issue new generic UPCs. Instead, both organizations will support the industry in adopting brand owner (company-specific) UPCs for North American produce. The decision to end the issuing of generic UPCs is at the direction and influence of the industry, including the PMA Produce ID committee and the Romaine Task Force, who identified the elimination of generic UPCs as a best practice in their recommendations released this year.

The use of brand owner-specific UPCs or Global Trade Item Numbers (GTINs) captures the brand owner and product identification while also providing a number of benefits including the globally unique identification of fresh produce. The use of brand owner-specific GTINs improves category management, increases inventory accuracy, enhances traceability efforts which support the food safety system, and facilitates a more effective produce recall approach. It is important to note that this change does not impact floral products.

“There are a variety of benefits for retailers when our suppliers convert from generic UPCs to company-specific UPCs,” said Produce Commodity Coordinator at The Kroger Co., Harlan Ewert. “Company-specific UPCs provide us with better data to make meaningful decisions in our business. For example, they enable retailers to differentiate between brands of products in the same category and determine sell-through and shrink data by brand.”

While CPMA and PMA will no longer issue generic UPCs, this will not impact the current use of existing generic UPCs. The transition away from the use of generic UPCs to brand owner-specific GTINs only will be more long-term and will be determined with industry partnership.

“After consultation with the industry a number of years ago, the industry consensus was to allow this transition to company-specific GTINs to happen naturally,” said CPMA Vice President of Policy and Issue Management, Jane Proctor. “We have been seeing the industry move in this direction organically, with fewer generic UPCs being requested and we believe now is the appropriate time to begin the next steps in this change. Once we no longer issue new generic UPCs, we will work at the direction of industry to develop a plan to sunset the use of the existing generic UPCs across the industry.”

After December 31st, industry members looking for a brand owner-specific UPC must first [obtain a GS1 company prefix through GS1](#). For more information on how to obtain a company prefix or to build a GTIN for their product, [companies can find information here](#). You may also contact:

- Canada: Shannon Sommerauer, ssommerauer@cpma.ca (+1) 613-226-4187 x235

- U.S. and Mexico: Wendy Logan, wlogan@pma.com 302-607-2143

When making decisions on packaging printing, companies are urged to consider this move away from a generic system and take the opportunity to move to globally standardized item identification.

“The generic UPCs were originally created by the Produce Electronic Identification Board (PEIB) in 1990 to address the challenge with capturing and storing data across multiple categories and companies and to give accuracy to the front end of price charge,” explained PMA Vice President of Supply Chain and Sustainability, Ed Treacy. “Over time, the costs and capabilities of data tracking and storage have changed. Sunsetting the issuance of generic UPCs is one more way to empower our industry to do more with data.”

CPMA and PMA have collected resources for all industry members as they approach the end of the year and encourage members to reach out with any questions or concerns. It is also recommended that companies consider this change when reordering packaging and that retailers consider these changes when making decisions around the implementation of category management and ordering product.

For more information:

- [Produce Identification, Barcoding and Traceability Webinar](#)
- [From Generic UPC to Brand Owner-Specific UPC](#)

For media inquiries, please contact:

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- **PMA Contact:** Cassidy Taylor, ctaylor@pma.com +1 (302) 781-5852

About the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA)

Based in Ottawa, Ontario, CPMA is a not-for-profit organization that represents a diverse membership made up of every segment of the produce industry supply chain who are responsible for 90% of the fresh fruit and vegetable sales in Canada. CPMA is fortunate to represent a sector that is both a significant economic driver for communities and that also improves the health and productivity of Canadians.

About Produce Marketing Association

Produce Marketing Association (PMA) is the leading trade association representing companies from every segment of the global produce and floral supply chain. PMA helps members grow by providing connections that expand business opportunities and increase sales and consumption. For more information, visit www.pma.com.