
Preamble to GS1 Traceability Standard

The GS1 traceability standard was developed to provide a traceability framework for all industry sectors, for example, pharmaceutical, automotive, hardware as well as food and therefore contains references that are not necessarily relevant to food product traceability. The document provides technical guidance on product identification, information gathering and record keeping requirements for the purposes of traceability. It does not address implementation issues such as cost/benefit, complexity or risk nor does it address policy, regulatory, or consumer issues, which would be pertinent to a broader discussion of traceability.

The standard is descriptive rather than prescriptive with its intent. It is designed to enable industry sectors, trading partners or even countries to determine the level of traceability that is appropriate or necessary for a given situation. The standard also provides for traceability by shipment level, by logistics unit level or by some level of trade item hierarchy but it does not imply that trade partners must be able to implement or should implement to all levels. For example, the standard addresses consumer item level traceability, describes the role of transporters and examines traceability within the retail environment. These are beyond the scope of the traceability approach that has been adopted in Canada and exceed the current ability of the mainstream food industry to accommodate using presently available or implemented technology.

The Can-Trace standard recognizes these technological limitations by providing for food product traceability by lot from primary producer to delivery at a retail location, and is the industry accepted and government supported standard in Canada. Those seeking more information on food traceability in Canada should review the Canadian Food Traceability Data Standard published by Can-Trace, which is available at www.cantrace.org.

February 2006