Interoperable Food Traceability: Successes and Failures in the Produce Sector

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2006 USA Spinach Recall

► The length of time this trace-back and trace-forward took caused the entire Spinach category to be recalled and resulted in 5 deaths.
2006 USA Spinach Recall

- This recall had a huge **human, economic and consumer confidence** impact.

- The Produce Traceability Initiative (PTI) was created in response to this recall.


- Kyle died after drinking a spinach smoothie in 2006

- 5 weeks after the contaminated spinach entered the supply chain
Produce Traceability Initiative

- PTI is a voluntary initiative created by the U.S. Produce Industry; the growers, packers, shippers and buyers, to implement a more effective whole chain traceability process.

PTI Objectives

- To make trace back investigations and recalls quicker and more surgical
  - Speed - 24 to 48 hours
  - Accuracy - Identify which companies are not involved
    - Recall only the affected product
Produce Traceability Initiative

► First industry led traceability initiative

► Alignment with other fresh traceability initiatives
  – Case labeling
  – Key Data Elements
    • GTIN
    • Lot Number
    • GS1 Standards
  – Critical Tracking Events

Produce Traceability Initiative

► PTI requires labeling of your cases of fresh produce at time of packing with standardized case labels.
Produce Traceability Initiative

- Link the Case GTIN and Lot Number to your Receiving and Shipping records.
  - Who did I get it from?
  - Who did I ship it to?

Hybrid Pallet Label

- Eliminates need to scan each case on receipt
- Will facilitate EDI / ASN
- ASN is preferred by most major receivers and shippers
Success to date:

► 55% – 60% of all cases in produce supply chain are labeled

► PTI labeling is mandatory for Walmart, Whole Foods, Publix and some other regional retailers

► PTI Labeling is mandatory for over 10 national foodservice operators such as Dominos, IPC / Subway, ARCOP / Arby’s and Yum! Brands

Challenges overcome:

► Voice pick system in use at most retail distribution centers and foodservice distributors impeded scanning of barcode on PTI labels.
  – PTI Voice Pick Code was developed

► Scanning of each PTI label on inbound receiving was going to be too labor intensive.
  – Hybrid Pallet Label was developed.
Challenges to date:

► FSMA regulation on record keeping for high risk foods has still not been released. Some retailers are delaying their PTI implementation until regulation is released.

► No retailer has implemented PTI through their distribution centers to track cases to the store.

► Hybrid Pallet Label is not being used as ASN is preferred method.

Lessons learned: What worked well

► Governance and industry participation worked very well.
  – Leadership Council - +40 members
  – 5 Working Groups - +100 members, 26 best practice and guidance documents created

► Basing PTI on GS1 standards is a necessity

► Development of PTI Voice Pick Code and standard case label
  – Created a standard that did not exist
Lessons learned: What worked well

► 55% - 60% of all cases are PTI labeled.

► Leveraged PTI to replace RPC label with a more cost effective label.

► PTI built on existing traceability processes.

Lessons learned: What worked well

► Some growers and shippers of produce leveraged their PTI investment to improve their operations.
  – Quality claims management
  – Supply chain visibility
Real time tracking of production and paperless labor and payroll management

Improved “cut to cool time” management
Lessons learned: What could be improved upon

- Decision to make this a "Traceability Only" initiative and not a Supply Chain Efficiencies initiative impeded rapid adoption by Wholesalers, Distributors and Retailers.
  - Advance Shipment Notification adoption
  - Claims management at point of delivery
  - Facilitation of retail real time inventory
Key Takeaways

► Industry led initiatives work!

► Adoption of GS1 Standards is a must!

► Benefits beyond traceability can be achieved from standardized case labeling.

► [www.ProduceTraceability.org](http://www.ProduceTraceability.org)