

# Innovative Technology of the Year

## 2DBarcode - GS1 Australia

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The 2DBarcode will allow more information to be put on products.

Traceability has always been an issue in the food and beverage industry. No one knows for sure why the number of people with allergens is increasing – whether it is because there are just more people around, the way produce is now grown, or some other factor – but whatever the reason, consumers want more information. And while the amount of information needed has increased, the size of food and beverage products has almost remained the same. In some cases, companies are reducing packaging to individual sizes, so there is even less room.

Enter the 2DBarcode from not-for-profit organisation GS1. Apart from the amounts of data embedded in them, the smaller 2D barcodes present manufacturers with extra valuable on-pack real estate. This can be used to include greater branding, product and regulatory information.

“One of the major challenges to achieving increased food safety in retail is the sheer volume of data in the supply chain, received from

multiple sources and in disparate formats,” said Andrew Steele, account director retail at GS1 Australia. “To date, the retail sector at large has not had the necessary tools to address this challenge in the context of today’s market conditions and operational realities.

“The 2DBarcode is addressing this challenge for the retail environment as it enables multiple data elements to be available at point-of-sale. This includes product batch/lot number, serial number, best before date, use-by date, pack date, weight and price. Much more than the traditional 1D linear barcodes that are being used today.”

The barcode also changes the game when it comes to recalls. Before the introduction of the codes all associated products had to be removed from the supply chain and disposed of, even if they weren’t affected. The result was unaffected products were removed from sale, which is a high cost for manufacturers. The

ability to pinpoint specific batches within the supply chain also allows manufacturers to trace products back through the production line, making it easier to identify the source of contamination.

Product packaging often contains multiple barcodes and symbols that are intended to meet the need for more data and that serve varied purposes. Unfortunately, they cause consumer and supply chain confusion and don’t always communicate with each other.

“2DBarcodes can help solve many of today’s retail business problems in the areas of meat, seafood, deli, dairy and bakery as well as packaged fruit and vegetables because one small barcode can reveal a wealth of information that just can’t be squeezed onto a traditional linear barcode,” said Maria Palazzolo, CEO of GS1 Australia.

Some big names in retail are already getting onboard, including Woolworths who went live in mid August, with the national rollout of

GS1 DataMatrix 2DBarcodes on selected meat products.

“The (2DBarcode) trial was a complete success and demonstrates that 2DBarcodes have immense potential. We’re excited to see how they can improve food safety across the entire Woolworths network,” said Richard Plunkett, Woolworths’ general manager of business enablement said.

In the near future, consumers will access the information contained within 2DBarcodes on their smartphones. **F**

### Finalists:

- LinX tubular Linear Motor – ANCA Motion
- PolarDry – Spraying Systems Co.
- Special Vacuum Head – SMC Corporation
- VentX Stretch Film Slitter – Omni Group