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GBBC  USA

Supply Chain Leadership in the USA

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Harmonization of Standards

Reflecting on the state of supply chains during the COVID-19 pandemic - and in light of current geopolitical uncertainties – the importance of resilience, efficiency, traceability, and provenance in global supply chains has become apparent. Key to realizing improvements in these areas is the harmonization of supply chain standards, an area which currently has over 60,000 standards globally and is driven primarily by a few dozen standards bodies. Companies often end up creating bespoke solutions for specific jurisdictions, use cases, or standards, which leads to siloes and hinders data sharing. While every company has their own proprietary materials, data, and processes, if industry participants can agree on common areas of standardization, benefits can be realized for all participants in a supply chain, as data can be shared more easily and with more granularity between disparate systems and across jurisdictions.

Collaboratively developed, shared data standards for supply chains are a pro-competitive way to achieve the efficiencies offered by new technologies while harmonizing with existing global standards. They allow for more seamless sharing of data across borders and organizations to facilitate more efficient movement of goods and data, saving time and resources traditionally dedicated to processing and translating data. For the public sector, harmonized standards offer benefits for governments and NGOs when processing the vast amounts of data coming from various supply chains, making things like customs processes more efficient and getting goods across borders and to consumers in shorter timeframes. GBBC's [Global Standards Mapping Initiative \(GSMI\) 5.0 Supply Chain report](#) focuses on the harmonization of standards with a global view of supply chains, laying out a vision for the future of global supply chains leveraging harmonized data standards.

Protecting Proprietary Information

Concerns around the protection of proprietary data can be a barrier for companies to engage in open platforms and standards around supply chains. They need assurances that



their proprietary information is secure and there needs to be clear value for their engagement. There are ways to share data amongst supply chain participants that do not expose proprietary information to unwanted parties, whether through selective disclosures or other mechanisms. Additionally, private layers can exist within a shared system, but those layers need to be connected to other systems to allow for the efficient sharing of data. It should also be recognized that corporate data is already shared en masse, often via email or other traditional communication channels; by digitizing and sharing information in a standardized way, there can be a net benefit for all participants in a supply chain through better analytics, better provenance of goods, and gains in efficiency from more modern data exchange methods.

Importance of Traceability and Provenance

The use of blockchain technology in supply chains offers the ability to better track and trace goods, providing more accurate provenance. Logistics companies are already exploring blockchain for traceability and non-logistics companies have a vested interest in accurate and efficient data sharing because their reputations and businesses can be at stake. For example, tariffs on aluminum and steel have affected products made of those materials and therefore require more stringent tracing to understand what percentage of a product is made up of those materials and where those parts are sourced. In areas like conflict materials tracing, harmonizing standards is crucial for sharing data and ensuring that materials are truly conflict-free when they claim to be; this is applicable to other areas such as verification of sustainable practices.

Governmental Efforts and How the U.S. Can Lead

There are already efforts across the world that are seeking to digitize and standardize supply chain data sharing, but they are often jurisdiction-specific. Things like digital product passports are an inevitability, and the E.U. has already begun exploring their implementation. Meanwhile, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has created the



Automated Commercial Environment (ACE) to streamline data processing for the cross-border movement of goods and is expecting to release ACE 2.0 in the next 24-36 months. ACE is built on open standards, uses verifiable credentials, and is open to exploring the use of blockchain technology.

The U.S. has the opportunity to provide leadership in the supply chain and logistics space by encouraging and promoting the harmonization of global data standards. We do not necessarily need new legislation; instead, we need to remove the barriers for the sharing of the necessary data. As an example, a large concern among U.S. suppliers is the cost of capital. Many supplier operations are small-scale and payments are often slow, meaning that payments and invoices are often dragging. Difficulties in settlement are a systemic problem which lead to an increased burden on carriers, creating a separate side industry of organizations who front money for carriers between the time of delivery and the time of payment. This creates costs for transport companies that are passed on to consumers. These types of inefficiencies and disconnects create an increased burden on suppliers and transport companies, ultimately impacting their profitability and leading to increased costs for consumers. It is very much a chicken-and-egg situation between the public and private sectors, but the U.S. can show leadership by pushing for harmonization of standards and endorsement of digitization of supply chain data, which will lead to other jurisdictions following suit to capitalize on the increased efficiencies offered.

Next Steps

GBBC's [BITA Standards Council](#) is working to create a shared data schema that can help to harmonize existing supply chain standards which will allow for increased digitization and unlock the potential of new technologies, like blockchain, in supply chains. In order to ensure that these shared data schemas are broadly applicable and usable for jurisdictions across the world, input is needed from a variety of stakeholders. To this end, GBBC is exploring hosting an event with the intention of gathering relevant stakeholders to discuss the harmonization of existing standards and how we can move from the current landscape



of supply chains (fragmented and siloed) to a more efficient, digitized system of information sharing based on harmonized global standards in a more actionable and deliberate manner. The event, envisioned for mid-2026, would look to bring together International Standards Development Organizations (ISDOs), key global industry leaders, regulators, government agencies, academia, and other relevant stakeholders. The goal of the event will be to come to an understanding on a future vision for global supply chains and how data will connect across systems and jurisdictions. Additionally, the event will seek to lay out complimentary public/proprietary lanes and a pro-competitive approach for stakeholders to engage in discussions around standards harmonization, using learnings from similar non-supply chain scenarios while connecting and aligning current ISDO efforts towards the envisioned future model of supply chains. Through this, we aim to set out actionable plans and next steps for various stakeholders to drive towards the vision of digitized global supply chains using harmonized standards.