



About the Produce Traceability Initiative

The Produce Traceability Initiative (PTI) is an industrywide effort aimed at creating a traceability process that will enable the quick and efficient electronic tracking and tracing of produce cases between supply chain members. The initiative was created by Produce Marketing Association, Canadian Produce Marketing Association and United Fresh Produce Association. The PTI's Action Plan for achieving chainwide, electronic traceability was created by a Steering Committee of 50+ produce companies representing every facet of the produce supply chain and through the support of additional trade associations in both the United States and Canada.

Chainwide, electronic traceability offers business efficiency benefits to industry members, in addition to potentially speeding or otherwise aiding governmental food safety investigations and tracebacks when needed. In order to track and trace product across a supply chain that has multiple systems, processes and hand-offs, the PTI Action Plan advocates the use of minimum standards to serve as a linkage between each member of the supply chain, and use of barcodes to allow this vital information to be automatically captured across the chain. The PTI Steering Committee acknowledges that companies will inevitably have different internal traceability systems, as their specific needs will vary by segment and by company. The PTI's Action Plan will allow industry members to maintain their existing internal traceability systems with slight modifications while providing a traceability path among handlers of the product as it moves across the supply chain. While a company's ability to track product within their operation is important and necessary, this ability is not sufficient to track the product as it moves across the supply chain, both before it comes into the operation or when it leaves the operation.

The goals of the PTI were to create an Action Plan that would identify key milestones needed to achieve chainwide, electronic traceability, corresponding timelines to achieve those milestones, and a process that would enable accountability by supply chain members. In addition, the resulting Action Plan incorporated careful consideration to minimizing the impact on businesses by:

- using existing technologies (e.g. barcodes);
- using existing information (e.g. case ID #, Lot/Batch #);
- using existing standards (e.g. GS1 standards);
- using existing legislation (e.g. Bioterrorism Act – one step up, one step down); and
- using existing systems (e.g. internal traceability systems).

The following milestones were identified during an eight-month planning process by the 50+ companies of the PTI Steering Committee who are practitioners in the produce industry, as well as different trade associations that represent members of this industry. When the milestones are implemented, companies will not only have the ability to efficiently track product within their own operation, but will also give governmental agencies the needed process to track product up and down the produce supply chain in an efficient and expeditious manner, thereby helping to reduce the impact of future product recalls.