



Apple carton labelling

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New Zealand's export-dominated industries have often lead the way when it comes to adopting standards.

The standard for labelling apple cartons was developed originally by ENZA with input from EAN New Zealand. Since deregulation most exporters and packhouses have designed their labels based on the ENZA specification.

The specification for any carton label can be broken up into two main areas - the readable text, and the barcode.

Text

The text is the most open to change. It depends on.

- what the market wants to know to recognize the produce.
- what is necessary to identify the carton for inventory purposes
- what the regulations require in New Zealand and overseas.
- what is already pre-printed on the box.

The information that must appear in text is set by OECD, UN, and New Zealand regulations. It includes:

- Commodity e.g. Apples
- Size or Count
- Country of Origin
- Class/Grade — these are internationally recognized as either "Extra", "Class I" or "Class II"
- Variety Name e.g. Royal Gala
- Name or code identifying the Supplier or Packer, eg, 'Apple Exports Ltd'
- The registered mark of the grower

Barcode

Standards for barcoding produce have evolved - a common standard is now promoted by produce organisations in Europe and North America. Thanks to good foresight the ENZA carton label was designed to

this standard. The standard uses a GTIN or Global Identification Number -the barcoded number you see on cartons of grocery items at the supermarket. It provides information on a company and product using a format called EAN1 28.

A barcode is not a must-have item for all buyers. However traceability is required more and more in the marketplace and the barcode can provide this information. To achieve traceability it is recommended the barcode contain a lot or batch number as well as the GTIN. The definition of the batch number can vary between users but it should provide whatever information the packer will need to identify the product later (if implicated in product service notifications, recalls, or other supplier related issues).

Other information can also be encoded in the barcode. The main limitation is the width of the label used. Many packers add a carton serial number while some overseas buyers may also request the pack date.

The Produce Industry Information Technology Standards Association (PIITSA) is a New Zealand organisation with aims to promote standards for information transfer within the produce industry. Its members are exporters, coolstores, packers and others involved in the industry. It is currently working through some technical issues with the current GTIN specification as it relates to New Zealand. For further information or questions, please contact

PIITSA: Website : www.piitsa.co.nz

E-mail : info@piitsa.co.nz

References:

- EAN / Fresh Produce Traceability Guidelines
http://www.ean-int.org/agro_food_fruit_vege.html
- Produce Marketing Association : Pallet and Case Coding PMA Best Practices.
<http://www.tascsoft.com/PiitsaFiles/PMACaseCodingBestPractices.pdf>
- UNECE Standard for Apples
http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/standard/fresh/fresh_e/5Oapples.pdf