



GS1 Global Traceability Assessment for Hong Kong Business Partners

The value of track-and-trace capabilities in the food & produce supply chain

Consumer demand for product safety presents an opportunity for change

More than ever before, food companies face consumer pressure to deliver food that is safe to eat. Consumers expect unsafe food to be removed from store shelves immediately. Companies know that brand integrity and consumer confidence are directly related to food safety and the ability to track products up and down the supply chain.

To address the changing industry landscape, three Hong Kong-based companies – AEON, General Mills and Lam Soon – set out to evaluate their existing traceability systems.

AEON Stores (Hong Kong) Co. Ltd. owns a variety of retail stores providing a wide assortment of essential products. AEON's chain of JUSCO stores sells both food and household items.

General Mills Hong Kong Ltd. is the Hong Kong branch of this global food company. Brands in this market include Häagen-Dazs premium ice cream and Wanchai Ferry dim sum.

Lam Soon Hong Kong Group has manufactured and distributed flour, edible oil and detergent for over half a century. It is a leading brand in China and Hong Kong.

The Global Traceability Assessment

These three companies partnered with GS1 Hong Kong to review their existing traceability systems using a checklist of control points and compliance criteria known as the Global Traceability Assessment. The assessment is carried out by trained and accredited auditors. It is a key component of the GS1 Global Traceability Solution, which provides companies with a single, interoperable traceability process based on GS1 Standards.

77% of Hong Kong residents believe unsafe food is the most important personal concern they have for their health and well-being, ranking well ahead of air pollution, water pollution and many other issues

Civic Exchange Survey, 2009

Performing a GS1 Global Traceability Assessment allows companies to obtain insight into their traceability system so they can satisfy growing customer expectations as well as meet trading partner requirements and comply with government regulations.

Examining current track-and-trace capabilities

Assessments were performed at an AEON Jusco store, a General Mills ice cream cake production plant and a Lam Soon flour, edible oil and detergent warehouse. At all three sites, 104 control points from 12 specific areas were reviewed and existing traceability capabilities were diagnosed using the following criteria:

Identification: How are traceable items identified and coded?

Information: What data are received, used and provided?

Systems & Technologies: What traceability systems and technologies are in place?

Operations: How does the internal traceability process work and how are crises managed?

Procedures: How is traceability information acknowledged and documented?

In 2012, approximately **2 official food alerts** were announced every month, including infant formula.

Hong Kong Centre for Food Safety, 2012

Recommendations

Although all three companies had internal systems in place to ensure product safety, this assessment – along with expert advice from GS1 Hong Kong – provided insight into how they could build better, globally recognised traceability systems based on standards to identify, capture and share information.

For example, to better ensure product freshness and protect consumers' safety, GS1 Hong Kong recommended to AEON that they use DataBar™ BarCodes on individual items of fresh produce, and Serial Shipping Container Codes (SSCC) where products are received.

General Mills learned that it can enhance its product traceability by implementing identification on its work-in-progress containers using automatic capturing tools. In the meantime, a trial using GS1 standard-based barcodes is allowing the company to capture production batch and/or expiry lot information to better control and ensure product freshness.

As for Lam Soon, GS1 Hong Kong recommended they improve their product traceability capabilities by identifying raw materials with Global Trade Item Numbers (GTIN) and logistics units such as cardboard boxes with Serial Shipping Container Codes (SSCC).



Next steps

AEON, General Mills, and Lam Soon were advised to extend their existing track-and-trace practices with trading partners to move beyond the basic "one step up, one step down" principle. The deployment of GS1 Standards will optimise the flow of goods, services, and data along the whole supply chain for all participants, enhancing supplier pre-selection and improving the speed and accuracy of production and product replenishment processes. These companies will be building a solid framework for future risk management through traceability.

Best-in-class food companies have traceability processes based on the use of industry standards and tools like those offered by GS1.

Aberdeen Report, 2011

GS1 Traceability

GS1 is a not-for-profit organisation that develops supply chain standards and actively works with industry actors to solve their business challenges. The GS1 Global Traceability Solution provides one single traceability process to meet multiple business and regulatory requirements. It helps remove unsafe products from the shelves, protect brand integrity, and empowers consumers to know more about the products they buy.

For more information :

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