

# The retail and consumer goods industries support the transition to QR Codes with GS1 standards



Placing QR Codes with GS1 standards on product packages worldwide will enable manufacturers and retailers to provide new powerful digital experiences, engaging consumers and shoppers as they interact with products—whether in store, at home or out in the world.

## From GS1 barcodes to QR Codes with GS1 standards

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the first product barcode to be scanned in a grocery store. In the early 1970s, retailers and manufacturers worked together with GS1—the global organization for data standards—to adopt the barcode as the universal way to identify products. The GS1 barcode is used today on billions of products worldwide and is great for enabling many processes like scanning at checkout, category management, fulfillment in distribution centers, and much more.

Today, more than ever, consumers and regulatory bodies are demanding more product information, such as usage instructions, safety, ingredients, nutrition, certifications, recycling, etc.—and there is an ongoing need for enhanced product traceability through the supply chain to mitigate risks and improve customer service. However, the traditional barcode that has served us so well doesn't have the capacity to support these future needs.

To meet these new demands, the consumer goods industry will be best served by transitioning to QR Codes with GS1 standards, as they can store extensive amounts of product information and are easily accessible via smartphones. This would open a range of new possibilities, providing all the information consumers need and desire, improving traceability and driving efficiencies through the supply chain, while still enabling scanning at check out.

## Sunrise 2027 initiative

The signatories of this letter join the members of the GS1 Management Board in declaring their support for the transition to QR Codes with GS1 standards.

The companies of the GS1 Management Board aligned it would be essential for the overall success of the industry to transition to QR Codes with GS1 standards as an innovative and forward-looking response to today's business and consumer needs. The aim of this initiative is that, by the end of 2027, QR Codes with GS1 standards should be widely adopted: used by manufacturers on their product packaging and retailers around the world having the ability to scan these barcodes at Point of Sale (POS).

For Sunrise 2027 to succeed, industry must once again come together to adopt a unified approach, requiring changes from both retailers and manufacturers. We expect that this transition would happen gradually and believe that those that lead this transformation will be best positioned to unlock valuable new capabilities and provide more benefits to their customers, shoppers, and consumers.

## Together, let's start the transition to QR Codes with GS1 standards now!

This major industry shift has already begun, with pilots in 48 countries across all regions and representing 88% of the world's GDP. This is a strong foundation, and a collective effort is now needed from the entire industry to make Sunrise 2027 happen:

- **Manufacturers** should start implementing QR Codes on product packages with GS1 data standards inside.
- **Retailers** should ensure POS scanners are equipped to read QR Codes with GS1 standards.



To learn more about QR Codes with GS1 standards and get involved, go to:  
[www.gs1.org/2D-barcodes](http://www.gs1.org/2D-barcodes)



**Gang Yu (Ruohai)**  
Chief Technology Officer,  
Taobao & Tmall Group (Alibaba Group)



**Malina Ngai**  
Group CEO, AS Watson Group



**Francesco Del Porto**  
Global Chief Customer Officer &  
President Region Italy, Barilla Group



**Alexandre Bompard**  
Chairman and CEO, Carrefour



**Prasit Mongkolkulsat**  
Vice President, Purchasing,  
CP ALL Thailand



**Dr. Simon Papies**  
Head of Logistics Division, Dr. Oetker



**John Ross**, President & CEO, IGA  
**Mark Batenic**, Chairman, IGA



**Simon Han**  
Vice President, JD.com; President,  
Department of Ecosystem Service, JD Retail



**Peter Fischer**  
Member of the Board,  
Lidl International



**Nicolas Hieronimus**  
CEO, L'Oréal



**Flint Cheng**  
CIO, Tingyi (Cayman Islands)  
Holding Corp. (Master Kong)



**Pengcheng Li**  
Executive President, Mengniu Group



**Bertrand Mothe**  
CPO, Metro



**O. Ozgur Tort**  
CEO, Migros Ticaret A.S.



**Silvia Bagliani**  
Vice President & Managing Director Italy,  
Mondelēz International



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**Béatrice Guillaume-Grabisch**  
Executive Vice President, Group Human  
Resources & Business Services, Nestlé



**Jon R. Moeller**  
Chairman of the Board, President & CEO,  
The Procter & Gamble Company



**Olivier Delaméa**  
CEO, Savencia Fromage & Dairy



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**Mark Smucker**  
President, CEO & Chair of the Board,  
The J.M. Smucker Co.



**Shuiyuan Yun**  
Vice President, Tsingtao Beer Group;  
President, Supply Chain, Tsingtao Beer



**Shaohua Meng**  
Vice President, Henan Shuanghui  
Development Co. (WH Group)



**Zhanyou Yun**  
Vice President, Yili Group

## Appendix—How to Get Started: additional information on QR Codes with GS1 standards

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For the Sunrise 2027 initiative to succeed, retailers and manufacturers would need to take the following key action:

- **Retailers** would need to ensure their POS systems are equipped with scanners capable of reading both traditional (one-dimensional/1D) barcodes and two-dimensional/2D barcodes (e.g., QR Codes and GS1 DataMatrix). This includes ensuring optical scanner hardware is in place—as well as the appropriate software and the process design to read 2D barcodes. Current trends indicate a promising trajectory towards achieving critical mass in this area by 2027 (>85%), with a significant majority of global retail POS systems already capable of reading 2D barcodes. The right technology, together with the right supply chain processes, will deliver traceability benefits for both retailers and manufacturers.
- **Manufacturers** would need to choose the most appropriate data carriers for their needs, either QR Codes (the most widely used and that can be read natively with smartphones) or GS1 DataMatrix (commonly used in healthcare), and determine what additional data to embed in the barcode—e.g., product expiry date, lot number, serial number, etc. Assessing the necessary technological and process changes is essential. For example, fresh foods using real-time labelling can soon incorporate expiration dates in their barcodes. In contrast, products with pre-printed packaging will need advanced manufacturing technology to do the same. Finally, adoption of the GS1 Digital Link standard is also needed to direct consumers to an online product experience through a simple smartphone scan.

Further resources: the [GS1 website](#) is a comprehensive source of information and guidance on adopting 2D barcode technology. Manufacturers and retailers will find detailed implementation guidelines, best practices and support for navigating the transition. **GS1 is a neutral, not-for-profit organization that provides global standards** that supports systems and processes around the world—participation and adoption of any standards is voluntary<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Read GS1 Competition Law Caution [here](#)