

## Promoting the Introduction of GTIN for Professional-use Products: Packaging Materials for Precooked Foods and Fresh Foods

Packaging materials for food including containers for boxed lunches and take-out food, or trays for raw fish and meat are professional-use products, which consumers hardly buy at markets. In February 2015, GS1 Japan published GTIN source marking guidelines for those packaging materials of precooked foods and fresh foods. Since then, GS1 Japan has devoted to public relations activity and promotion of this guidebook to expand the use of GTIN in this business field.

TOMO JAPAN SYSTEM PLANNING (TOMO JSP), a label printing company, which designs, produces, and sells labels, has introduced the product management system using EAN/UPC symbols since April 2015, on the occasion of updating its system.

TOMO JSP introduced GS1 standards in the wake of its participation to the GTIN committee for creating the source marking guideline. Before that, the company source marked on their products only when requested by its clients. Therefore, merely 1.5% of their products displayed GTIN. However, through participation to the

committee, TOMO JSP recognized the expansion of the use of source marking on food packaging materials including food trays and high expectation for use of GS1 standard barcode system from wholesalers, who are major clients of the company. In addition, the company realized the high expectation for use of GS1 standard barcode from wholesalers who are its major clients, so TOMO JSP soon started source marking. As the timing of the introduction coincided with the time of its system replacing, the firm extensively introduced GS1 standards not only to respond to the clients' demand but also to use for inspection and stock control of its products. Currently, approximately 98% of its new products have GTIN, while more than 90% of its in-stock items have barcode labels with EAN/UPC symbols. As TOMO JSP is dealing with more than 200 thousands items, some products the company has stored from before the introduction of GTIN are still unmarked. However, those unmarked items are gradually being replaced with those with barcode labels. With this product picking system, which was established aiming to be an easy-to-

Fig. 1 Left: Mr. Kohei Osada, Director  
Right: Ms. Maiko Takahashi, Manager  
(As of the date of the interviews)



Fig. 2 Left: An EAN/UPC symbol is attached on their product.  
Right: A woman is scanning a product for shipping.



use and error-free system for everyone, the company is checking its products by scanning EAN/UPC symbols on loading to the storage, shipping to customers, and inventorying. “It was more challenging than we expected to prepare GS1 barcodes for quite a few items and source-marking on them, and change the visual inspection process to the bar code reading process,” Mr. Kohei Osada, Director of TOMO JSP recalled. “Although we understood the necessity of source marking system and the advantage of using barcodes, many employees in charge of logistics disagreed with us in the beginning, because the staff in the delivery center should have got used to the new procedures. However, Ms. Maiko Takahashi, a manager of the logistic department, tenaciously persuaded them by explaining the necessity of the inventory control system and the advantage of use of barcodes. As a result, on-site workers eventually accepted the

use of barcode management system.” “During the early phase, skilled workers tended to express less understanding for the benefit of using barcodes. However, once they realized the system contributed to decrease in the number of the delivery errors caused by miss-picking of similar but different items, they can rest assured that the system detects the errors that human missed. Now, all on-site employees feel that they cannot do their jobs without barcodes.” Ms. Takahashi said. Thus TOMO JSP effectively decreased the number of delivery errors and improved accuracy of its inventory because inspection process of products became easier even for workers with limited experience than before the introduction of the picking system. The company also successfully achieved high product management efficiency by controlling locations of in-stock items.

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