



Sustainable Farming Fund Traceability Project – Milestone 6 Executive Summary

December 2019

This project aims to understand the challenges and barriers that compromise effective Traceability in the domestic fresh produce industry. The objective of this project is to assist growers, packers, marketers and retailers in the domestic fresh produce supply chain to understand how they can improve their internal Traceability systems while ensuring a more robust streamlined external Traceability framework at the same time.

Traceability and transparency are increasingly important in fresh produce value chains, both domestically and internationally. Traceability in the domestic fresh produce supply chain is currently not working to a common standard. Each supply chain partner follows variations of its own to establish internal Traceability. External Traceability works better in some supply chains than others and not at all in some extreme situations.

This report forms part of the Milestone requirements of the Sustainable Farming Fund Project 405482, Effective Produce Traceability Systems. This Milestone 6 Report is entitled Integrated Report on the Supply Chain Studies – Planning Ahead. The report brings together the learnings gained from the first five activities. The objective is to contribute to the produce industry Draft Traceability Guidance Document being appropriately targeted at each level of the supply chain, taking into account the variations in both crop and supply chain complexity.

We briefly summarise the two supply chain studies undertaken in Milestones 3 and 5, in order to gain an understanding of the key learnings and how these can contribute to a robust interoperable Traceability system.

The strawberry study (exemplar crop of packaged produce) successfully tracked berry punnets from grower to consumer using the same GS1 barcode and affordable scanning technology. The study's purpose was to gain an understanding of the supply chain, assessing ease of use of barcodes and scanning technology, and establishing realistic barcode scanning points for potential future commercial use.

The lettuce study (exemplar crop for loose packed produce) showed the volume and quality of data gathered by the grower that slowly 'washes out' as the produce moves along the supply chain, with additional labels affixed at each consolidation point leading to rear store staff using individual knowledge rather than labels to manage stock. The study's purpose was to gain an understanding of the data gathered by the grower and also how the retail outlet uses data on product to manage their stock.

All components of the strawberry and lettuce studies came together to highlight that the current Traceability labelling system can be improved to ensure complete and accurate records that can be easily shared between supply chain participants/regulators in the event of a recall or Food Safety incident. The key Traceability learnings identified in the Project to date are broken down into organisational and industry level learnings.

Utilising the learnings gained to date in conjunction with the continuing desk-based literature assessment and further enhanced by the consultation opportunities as part of industry presentations and discussions, the Project Team has been able to refine its plan for the coming milestones.

The learnings from the two Studies have highlighted the Traceability challenges faced in the fast-paced fresh produce industry, while also showing that solutions need not be expensive or complicated. Initiating a Paradigm Shift to assist organisations active in the fresh produce industry, and the industry itself at a consolidated level, to understand and commit to the principles and processes of effective interoperable Traceability, which will lead to a more robust and coherent system that will meet logistics and financial tracking needs as well as Food Safety compliance requirements.