/New Codes **for Retail**

Major supermarkets are upgrading their checkout systems. Retail and producers are joining forces in focus groups to work on pilot projects. Their common objective: implementing 2D-codes on packaging by 2027. For most producers, this means a change in the packaging process. While they currently have a 1D-barcode pre-printed in the packaging design, they will need an additional 2D-code in the future. Since this code contains batch-specific information, it is applied in-line. In this process step, we today usually find printing systems that will not be able to provide the required resolution.

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Advantages and requirements
This development is not based on a legal requirement, although this assumption is comprehensible. Forward-thinking producers are now planning ahead to be prepared when their customers request the new marking.

Benefits for all market participants

Producer	Retail	Consumer
Counterfeit protection	Inventory accuracy	Access to information
Smaller code	Visible availability	Product authentication
Improved recall management	Ensure shelf life	Interaction with producers
Consumer trust	Reduce waste	Traceability
Promotional campaigns	Promotional campaigns	Promotional campaigns
Transparent supply chain	Transparent supply chain	Transparent supply chain

New code – new technology?
The additional 2D-code contains batch-specific information, so it cannot be printed with the packaging design. This task can therefore only be performed at the point in the production process where the batch number and best-before date are printed up to now. Since the codes are significantly more complex and require a higher resolution, the challenge for the printing technology increases. Manufacturers should therefore now assess whether their existing equipment is suitable for this application.

Print quality requirements
The standard of the retail industry for markings already is very high. It even increases when it comes to codes that are relevant for checkout and stock management. Therefore, producers need to verify the print result to ensure readability in stores and for consumers. This task is performed by a high-resolution camera.

Systems over components
Operators are usually controlling printers independently from the line. This principle is no longer appropriate, when a camera is added for print verification. Coordinating the individual components with each other takes an enormous amount of time during implementation and in ongoing production.

For this reason, modular systems are employed in which marking, verification, labeling, weighing and even inspection tasks such as metal detection are fully integrated, according to the specific requirements. They coordinate all functions and allow the operator to control them via one central user interface. Product changeovers, article setup and layout edits thus become minimally error-prone and maximally user-friendly. ▲

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