

## Pallet pooler incorporates global RFID standard

By George Reynolds

19/01/2007- **A plastic pallet provider has coupled an international product coding standard with radio frequency identification (RFID) technology, allowing processors to better track their products throughout the global supply chain.**

Intelligent Global Pooling Systems (iGPS) said it has incorporated EPCglobal's electronic product code (EPC) into its RFID tracking system, enabling its pallets to be identified worldwide.

The royalty-free standards are the foundations in the continuing construction of a global supply chain information network that combines RFID technology, existing communications network infrastructure and EPC, a number for uniquely identifying an item.

EPC allows companies and regulators to share information, regardless of RFID technology used, thus speeding up the supply chain and reducing errors.

The EPC system is being built to help companies save money throughout the supply chain by using the Global Data Synchronization Network (GDSN). Nestle, Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, Hormel Foods, Kraft, Unilever, Wegmans Food Markets and Sara Lee are among the food companies that have signed up to implement the system.

iGPS said it will use EPC with global reusable asset identifier (GRAI) codes, which provide unique identification for each plastic pallet when read by RFID readers, allowing real-time tracking, claims the manufacturer.

With multiple imbedded RFID tags and visible barcodes in each unit, the pallets are 100 percent readable, even when stored near concrete or carrying liquids, which can disrupt some RFID readers, claims iGPS.

The GRAI codes provide unique identification for each re-usable plastic pallet when read by RFID readers, allowing transparent, real-time tracking of every pallet through the supply chain, claims the manufacturer.

Bob Moore, chief executive officer of iGPS said use of the standards would streamline processes.

"User information for each transaction is stored automatically in the system for easy recall based on the GRAI number, eliminating disputes and misunderstandings over when product is shipped and received," he said.

By using iGPS's intelligent stock use and movements (iSUM) software as a transaction management system, customers can coordinate information from RFID tags directly with their own supply chain systems, making iGPS the first pallet-pooling

company to provide combined tracking and reporting in a single operation, the company claims.

"In other pallet rental pools, the pool operator makes the renter responsible for keeping track of each pallet and can even bill for lost inventory based only on their own records. Our pool is self-reconciling," said Moore.

US-based Xterprise, is supplying iGPS with the (EPC) RFID tags, using the new EPC Reusable Transport Item (RTI) standard tag data format, a 24-digit, 96-bit hexadecimal code.

Dean Frew, Xterprise's president and CEO said iSUM enables manufacturers and shippers to visualize RFID read information and convert directly into pallet pool stock management and invoicing

"The largest global retailers require that each case of product carry an RFID tag. This software allows shippers to automatically generate notification of shipment and invoicing on arrival at the distribution center."

iGPS offers the ability to rent plastic pallets and avoid the ongoing expense of owning and maintaining traditional wood pallets.

Unlike wooden pallets, plastic is impervious to contamination and also less susceptible to damage, claims iGPS.

The plastic pallets are produced in uniform dimension 122cm x 102cm (48" x 40"), weigh a maximum of 23kg (50 pounds), can handle loads up to 1270kg (2800 pounds) and are fully edge rackable.

Re-usable plastic pallets are weigh typically 30 per cent less than their wooden counterparts, thereby reducing fuel costs and the risk of human injury. Although the type of wood use alters the weight, humid conditions can add as much as 5 to 10 per cent in water weight to a wood pallet, which cannot happen with plastic.

iGPS claims its plastic pallets are superior to wood alternatives because they are more durable with a longer life cycle.

