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WIRSPA TECHNICAL CONFERENCE
2026 · TRINIDAD

SUNRISE 2027

The 2D Barcode Transition and What It Means for Your Brand

Are you ready — or are you still waiting for the deadline?

Greg Coles | Manager, Sales & Customer Service

Caribbean Label Crafts Ltd.

WIRSPA | West Indies Rum & Spirits Producers' Association Inc.

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WHAT IS SUNRISE 2027

A Global Mandate. Not a Suggestion.

- GS1's global standard requiring all point-of-sale scanners to read 2D barcodes by 2027
- Backed by every major retailer: Walmart, Tesco, Carrefour, Target, Costco
- The UPC barcode — unchanged for 50 years — is beginning its transition
- 2027 is when POS systems must scan 2D codes. Not when you must use them.



50

YEARS of the UPC.
Time for what's next.

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WHY NOW

The UPC Was Built for a Different World.

THE UPC (1974)

- 12 digits only
- Static — never changes
- No digital connection
- Can't track batches or expiry
- No consumer engagement

VS

2D / GS1 QR (NOW)

- Holds 100s of data fields
- Links to live web content
- Dynamic — updates remotely
- Batch, expiry, origin embedded
- Consumer story built in

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TIMELINE

The Road to 2027 and Beyond



DUAL PHASE

UPC + QR together during transition. Both required.

2027 MANDATE

Every checkout in the world must read 2D codes.

OPPORTUNITY

Brands that move early own the narrative.

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DUAL BARCODE PHASE

During Transition:
Both Codes Live on the Label.



UPC BARCODE

Stays on the label

- → Retail checkout scanning
- → Works in all current POS
- → Required until 2D is universal
- → Do NOT remove prematurely

+



GS1 QR / 2D CODE

Added alongside UPC

- → Consumer engagement (scan to learn)
- → Supply chain & batch tracking
- → Export compliance data
- → Required for Walmart, Tesco by 2027

This is not a choice between UPC and QR. During transition, both codes must coexist on the label.

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Not All QR Codes Are Equal.

A plain QR code CAN hold:

- A website URL
- Batch number
- Expiry date
- Plain text / marketing message
- Social media links

But a plain QR CANNOT:

- Be read at retail POS checkout
- Identify product for supply chain
- Carry standardized GS1 data
- Trigger dynamic retailer behavior
- Satisfy Walmart / Tesco 2027 mandate

A branded QR code on your label is marketing. A GS1 Digital Link QR is infrastructure. You need both — in one code.

GS1 DIGITAL LINK

One Code. Infinite Uses.

GS1 Digital Link is a structured web URI standard that encodes a product's GTIN plus application identifiers — batch, expiry, serial number — in a format that every retailer, supply chain system, and consumer app can understand.



RETAIL POS

Scans at checkout exactly like a UPC. Triggers price lookup, inventory update.

CONSUMER

Smartphone scan opens brand story, cocktail recipes, origin, sustainability.

SUPPLY CHAIN

Batch, lot, expiry, and serialization for logistics, recalls, AEO compliance.

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GLOBAL ADOPTION

The World's Biggest Retailers Have Already Decided.

US WALMART

USA / Global

Mandating GS1 2D barcodes for all fresh and packaged goods. Major supplier compliance programs underway.

GB TESCO

UK / Europe

Piloting 2D barcodes across produce and spirits categories. Earliest adopter among European grocers.

FR CARREFOUR

France / Global

Multi-country rollout across EU markets. Key target for Caribbean rum export labelling compliance.

US PEPSICO

CPG Global

Full GS1 Digital Link rollout across beverage portfolio. Sets the standard CPG brands will follow.

If your rum is on a shelf in any of these retailers — or aspires to be — this is no longer optional.

CARIBBEAN STRATEGY

Not Every Bottle Has the Same Urgency. Know Your Market.

LOCAL ONLY

LOW — BUT DON'T IGNORE

- No immediate export mandate
- Consumer QR adds brand value
- Prepare for 3–5 year transition
- Use now for traceability & stock control

REGIONAL / CARICOM

MEDIUM — START PLANNING

- Regional standards forming now
- Retail chains (Massy, Hi-Lo) watching
- QR adds premium brand positioning
- Get your GS1 prefix if you don't have one

EXPORT — UK / US / EU

HIGH — ACT NOW

- Walmart, Tesco, Carrefour deadlines approaching
- Non-compliance risks delisting
- GS1 Digital Link required — not optional
- Label redesign lead time: 12–18 months minimum

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LABEL EXAMPLE

A Rum Back Label — Designed for 2027.



UPC

GS1 Digital Link
Scan for origin story

Brand Story Zone

Origin, age, distillation method. Consumer-facing copy above the codes.

Legal / Compliance

ABV, volume, allergen info. Meets all Caribbean & EU labelling requirements.

Barcode Zone

UPC (left) and GS1 QR (right) in dedicated quiet zone. Min 5mm clearance each side.

QR Prompt

'Scan for origin story' invites consumer engagement without feeling technical.

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DESIGN IMPLICATIONS

Your Label Designer Needs to Know These Rules.

Minimum QR Size

10mm × 10mm absolute minimum. 15mm recommended for reliable scanning across all devices.

Quiet Zone

Minimum 4× module width on all four sides. No text, graphics, or foil in this area.

Contrast

Dark modules on light background — or reverse with high contrast. No gold on cream, ever.

Substrate Testing

Embossed, textured, or foil substrates affect scan performance. Always run a scan test before print run.

Data Verification

Verify the encoded GTIN and AI data before going to press. Wrong data in 100,000 bottles is a very expensive mistake.

URL Resolver

Your GS1 Digital Link URL must resolve. Dead QR codes on printed labels cannot be recalled. Test. Then test again.

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THE OPPORTUNITY

Compliance Is the Floor. Premium Is the Ceiling.

Anti-Counterfeit

Serialized GS1 QR enables unique-per-bottle authentication. Consumer scans verify authenticity. Protects premium heritage brands from grey market diversion.

Brand Storytelling

One scan opens the distillery, the master blender, the cocktail menu, the awards. The back label becomes a portal. Premium rum sells on provenance — now you can prove it.

Premium Positioning

Early adopters in a category signal leadership. Your competitors haven't done this yet. Your QR code says: 'We are the kind of brand that is ready for the future.'

Consumer Data

Scan analytics reveal who is buying, where, and when. Cocktail enthusiasts in London. Collectors in New York. Data your sales team cannot get from a traditional barcode.

THE RISK

Waiting Until 2027 Is Already Too Late.

01 Label Lead Time

Redesign, prepress, press approval, and print production takes 12–18 months minimum. Start in 2026 to be compliant by 2027.

02 Retailer Delisting

Walmart and Tesco have issued non-compliance notices before. Missing a barcode requirement can pull your product from shelf — silently.

03 GS1 Registration

Getting your GS1 company prefix, registering your GTINs, and building your Digital Link resolver takes time. It is not a one-day task.

04 Brand Reputation

Being the producer whose label fails to scan at a London supermarket is not a good story. First impressions in new markets matter enormously.

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ACTION PLAN

Six Steps. Start This Quarter.

1 Audit Your Labels

Identify which SKUs go to export markets. Prioritize those first.

2 Register with GS1

Get your company GS1 prefix and assign GTINs to each product variant.

3 Choose Your Digital Strategy

Decide what your QR resolves to: brand story, cocktail guide, verification, or all three.

4 Brief Your Label Supplier

Share your target markets, label specs, and timeline. Start artwork now.

5 Test Before You Print

Scan test on actual substrate. Use GS1's verification tools. Never assume.

6 Plan the Full Rollout

Phase by market: export first, regional second, local third. Build the roadmap.

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WIRSPA 2026 · TRINIDAD

"Sunrise 2027 is not the deadline.

It is the starting line."

The brands that move first don't just comply.
They lead.

Caribbean Label Crafts Ltd.

Label & packaging specialists · Barbados · Jamaica · Dominican Republic

GS1 compliant label production · Digital Link ready · Premium spirits specialists

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From OUR beginning, we have worked closely with WIRSPA members to design and produce labels, as well as support their broader packaging needs.





Over the years, this collaboration has grown to include a wide network of WIRSPA members and associates.

CARIBBEAN LABEL CRAFTS

“Committed to responsible and sustainable business practices across environmental, social, and governance areas.”

Caribbean Label Crafts Ltd. is committed to responsible and sustainable business practices across environmental, social, and governance areas. As part of that commitment, CLC has recently completed a 4-pillar SMETA audit, reinforcing our focus on ethical operations, labour standards, health and safety, and environmental responsibility. We see ESG not as a standalone initiative, but as an important part of how we serve our customers, support our employees, and strengthen our role as a trusted regional packaging partner.

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Questions?

Greg Coles| Manager, Sales & Customer Service
Caribbean Label Crafts Group of Comapanies

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