

SUNRISE 2027

GS1 Digital Link & the 2D Barcode Transition

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1974

UPC introduced

2027

POS must read 2D

70%+

EU spirits with energy QR by end 2024

100s

Data fields vs 12 UPC digits

WHAT IS SUNRISE 2027?

GS1's Sunrise 2027 initiative requires all retail point-of-sale scanners to be capable of reading and processing the GTIN from both existing linear (UPC/EAN) and 2D barcodes by the end of 2027. The UPC is not being eliminated — linear and 2D barcodes will coexist for as long as there are uses for both.

10 THINGS EVERY RUM PRODUCER NEEDS TO KNOW

- ✓ **POS Capability, Not UPC Death** – 2027 means scanners must read 2D — not that UPC disappears. GS1 explicitly states linear barcodes will coexist with 2D for as long as there are uses for them. No single 2D format is mandated across all industries.
 - ✓ **Dual Marking Is the Transition Model** – During transition, a pack may carry both UPC/EAN and a 2D code. After widespread adoption, a brand owner may choose 2D only, keep both, or remain linear — depending on market and customer requirements.
 - ✓ **Mode 1 at POS: GTIN Only at First** – Initial scanner compliance (Mode 1) finds the GTIN, sends it to POS, beeps once, moves on. Even if your QR encodes batch and expiry, the retailer's POS may not use that extra data immediately. Backend system upgrades are required.
 - ✓ **Same GTIN — 14-Digit Format** – No new product number is needed. Your existing UPC/GTIN is used, encoded in 14-digit GTIN format inside the 2D code. Transition is a format and encoding change, not a product renumbering exercise.
 - ✓ **Existing Marketing QR Codes Need Upgrading** – GS1 recommends that brands with existing QR codes on packaging update them to GS1 Digital Link standards and include the GTIN. A cocktail recipe QR or brand story QR is not a compliant barcode.
 - ⚠ **Advanced Use Cases Need System Upgrades — Not Just a New Barcode** – To use expiry dates, batch/lot, recalls, markdowns, or traceability from the 2D code, retailers need POS software and backend systems capable of processing that extra data. The barcode alone is not enough.
 - ⚠ **Variable Data Moves Printing Closer to Production** – If a brand wants lot, batch, best-before, or serial number encoded in the 2D code, the label may need inline or near-line variable printing rather than pre-printed static packaging. This is an operational change for producers and label converters.
 - ⚠ **Physical Label Laws Do Not Disappear** – A QR code does not allow removal of mandatory regulatory information from the physical bottle label. ABV, volume, allergens, producer address, and legal mandatory copy must remain on-label regardless of what the QR code contains.
 - ⚠ **Verification Is Now a Business Requirement** – GS1 specifically recommends a barcode verification programme. Symbol size, data volume, substrate, shape, print quality, varnishes, foils, metallic inks, and curved bottles all affect scan performance. This is not optional for premium spirits export labels.
- Export Markets Set Your Timeline – Do not wait for Caribbean retailers to require 2D. If your product goes to North America, Europe, travel retail, or global distributors, your timeline is being set by those markets. Walmart, Tesco, and Carrefour are not waiting.

"Sunrise 2027 is not just about adding a QR code. It is about making the product, the retailer, and the consumer-facing data systems speak the same GS1 language."

SUNRISE 2027 · WHAT TO DO NOW — CARIBBEAN PRODUCER URGENCY GUIDE

MARKET FOCUS	URGENCY	KEY DRIVER	RECOMMENDED ACTION
Local only (Barbados, Jamaica, DR etc)	LOW but don't ignore	No immediate retail mandate	Add QR for brand value & traceability. Budget for 3–5 year transition.
Regional / CARICOM (Massy, Hi-Lo, Courts)	MEDIUM Start planning	Regional chains watching export market standards	Get GS1 prefix if not registered. Begin label redesign planning.
Export — North America, Europe, travel retail	HIGH Act now	Walmart, Tesco, Carrefour deadlines approaching	GS1 Digital Link required. Label redesign lead time: 12–18 months.

YOUR SIX-STEP ACTION PLAN

- 1 Audit Your Labels**
 Identify which SKUs go to export markets. Prioritise 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, nutritional info, anti-counterfeit verification — or all of these through a GS1 Digital Link resolver.
- 4 Brief Your Label Converter**
 Share target markets, label specs, variable data requirements, and timeline. Quiet zone and minimum size requirements must be built into the artwork from the start.
- 5 Test Before You Print**
 Scan test on actual substrate. Verify the GS1 Digital Link URI structure. Use GS1's barcode verification tools. Never assume a printed QR will scan without testing.
- 6 Plan the Rollout**
 Phase by market: export first, regional second, local third. Factor in print lead times of 12–18 months for major label redesigns.

EU SPIRITS NUTRITIONAL LABELLING — THE ACCURATE POSITION

WINE

(Mandatory since Dec 2023) Full nutritional declaration and ingredients list required under Regulation (EU) 2021/2117. Already in force.

SPIRITS

(Voluntary commitment) Voluntary MoU between spirits industry and EU Commission. Over 70% of EU spirits market already provides energy QR.

STATUS (April 2026)

EC has stated intent to propose mandatory law for all alcohol. Not yet passed. Monitor closely.

Strategic implication: Spirits brands selling into the EU that are not yet providing nutritional QR information are behind 70% of their own market's voluntary commitment — not behind a legal deadline. The commercial and reputational case for acting is strong regardless of when mandatory law arrives.

GS1 DIGITAL LINK — QUICK REFERENCE

GS1 Digital Link	A structured web URI standard encoding a product's GTIN plus application identifiers (batch, expiry, serial) in a format every retailer, supply chain system, and consumer app can understand.
GS1 Application Identifiers	Standardised numeric codes that prefix data fields inside a barcode. AI (01) = GTIN, AI (10) = Batch/Lot, AI (17) = Best Before, AI (21) = Serial Number.
Resolver	Infrastructure that reads the context of a scan and routes it to the appropriate destination: retail POS gets product ID data; consumer phone gets brand story; logistics gets traceability.
Mode 1 vs Mode 2	Mode 1: scanner reads GTIN only, sends to POS (existing workflow unchanged). Mode 2: scanner reads full 2D data and sends additional AIs to capable backend systems.
Quiet Zone	The mandatory clear area surrounding a barcode with no text, graphics, or decoration. Minimum 4× module width on all four sides. Non-negotiable for reliable scanning.
GTIN-14	The 14-digit format used inside 2D barcodes. Your existing 12-digit UPC is zero-padded to 14 digits. No new product number is required.

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

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