



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
on specifications
on packaging, palletization, and labelling

February 2024 revision

Any exception to the Packing Specifications must first be agreed with UNICEF Procurement Center and then flagged in the Purchase Order document.

GENERAL INFORMATION, PACKING & PACKAGING

Q1: When do the updated Packing Specifications come into effect?

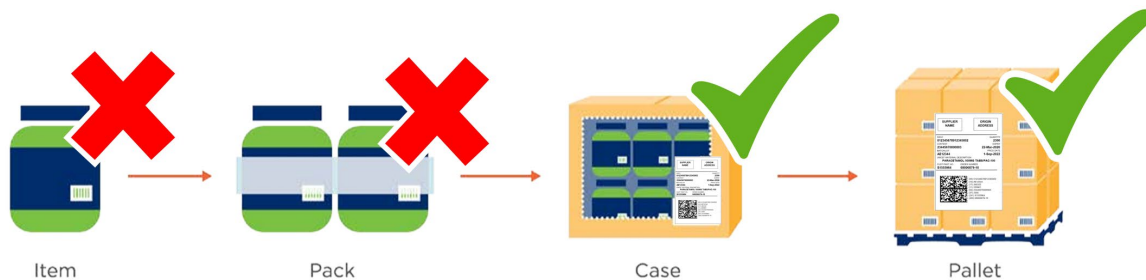
A1: Compliance with the [updated packing specifications](#) is required for any new Purchase Order signed on or after October 2, 2023. Any orders received by Suppliers before October 2, 2023 are subject to old UNICEF requirements.

Q2: Our company signed a Long-Term Agreement (LTA) with UNICEF based on the previous Packing Specifications. Do we need to comply with the updated requirements?

A2: Yes. Agreed text in the [Contractual Provisions for Goods](#) section of the UNICEF LTA states that: "The Supplier will comply with the requirements (as updated from time to time) for packing, packaging, packing list and labeling goods set out at http://www.unicef.org/supply/index_41950.html ... ". This web page has now been updated with the new Specifications.

Q3: What levels of packaging are covered by the updated Specifications?

A3: Packaging levels affected by the updated UNICEF warehouse Packing Specifications (2023):



NOTE: For any guidance on the item or pack level packaging or labeling, please contact the relevant UNICEF procurement staff

Original image source: <https://tinyurl.com/yrzk5h94> (www.gs1us.org)

Q4: Do the packaging and labeling specifications apply to my materials?

A4: All Suppliers should comply with the updated packing specifications. Any exception to the Packing Specifications must first be agreed with the UNICEF Procurement Center and then flagged in the Purchase Order document.

Q5: Does the requirement for non-recycled material in packaging components apply to all cartons and cases?

A5: Where possible, supplier must comply with this requirement. This requirement is due to a concerning trend of sub-standard cartons being delivered to our warehouses. UNICEF often reuses supplier export cartons for subsequent outbound deliveries. Suppliers may be issued an exemption if they can prove that their carton is sufficiently robust to handle re-export. Any exception to the Packing Specifications must first be agreed with UNICEF Procurement Center and then flagged in the Purchase Order document.

Q6: Will you accept larger pallets / crates than those mentioned in the Specifications?

A6: No. The allowable pallet dimensions are non-negotiable. Our main warehouse in Copenhagen is automated and will reject any pallets which are not standard US or EUR pallets and exceed a height of 1100mm. The rest of our global warehouses have selective racking which is pre-configured for this specific pallet height.

Any materials not conforming to the standard pallet size (e.g., large tents, refrigerators, generators) must be stored in the bulk areas of our warehouses. However, a supplier may request an exemption if they can demonstrate that their materials cannot fit within the pre-defined maximum allowable palletization dimensions of 1000mm x 1200mm x 1100mm. Any exception to the Packing Specifications must be agreed upon with the Procurement Center and documented in the Purchase Order accordingly.

Q7: Can we use corner boards, edge protectors, and top caps made of solid board instead of corrugated fiberboard?

A7: Yes. This is acceptable if the solid board is made of recyclable material.

Q8: Can we use transparent Stretch Wrap that is 500mm wide instead of 450mm wide?

A8: Yes. Using stretch wrap that is 500mm wide is acceptable.

Q9: Is stretch wrapping mandatory if polypropylene straps are used?

A9: Stretch wrapping is mandatory. In addition to stretch wrapping, or when the pallets do not contain stacked cases, goods may be fixed with straps of polypropylene. Steel straps are not acceptable.

Any exception to the Packing Specifications must first be agreed with UNICEF Procurement Center and then flagged in the Purchase Order document.

Q10: Can we use a pallet size of 1150x800mm instead of the requested 1200x800x1100mm?

A10: Any deviation from the packing specification must first be approved. Please provide additional information, including photos and proof of compatibility with standard selective racking systems.

Q11: Can we continue using PET strapping instead of polypropylene strapping for pallets?

A11: No. This is not compliant with our Packing Specifications. Any rework will incur fees.

Q12: Is the 3-pallet stack only for storage, or is it also used during transportation?

A12: The pallet stack example would only be used for storage purposes in our Bulk Areas.

Q13: Can we use plastic pallets?

A13: No. Only wooden pallets are acceptable.

Q14: My POs are FCA INCOTERMS what should we mention in the incoterms field on the Packing List for payment terms for freight charges?

A14: Please include the phrase "FCA" for the freight and the name of the nominated Freight Forwarder on the Packing List. If this information is not available at the time of booking, please include this information on the printed packing list attached to the goods.

Q15: If a shipment is split between multiple containers can I use one single Packing List?

A15: No. When an inbound delivery is split across multiple containers a detailed loading list per container is mandatory including Container number, PO number, PO item number, UNICEF Material number and Quantities per container.

Q16: Could you please share a printout sample label for the CARTONS? This is not described in the updated packing specifications, apart from CASE & PALLET?

A16: No. In the updated Packing Specifications, the term "Case", also encompasses the terms, "Cartons", "Bales", "Bundles" or any other term typically used for the tertiary level of packaging which may be used as a separate export shipping unit. Samples of the Case level labels can be found in the [UNICEF GS1 Label Template](#).

Q17: Is the use of slip sheets acceptable for filling containers instead of pallets?

A17: No. Slip sheets are not acceptable. All UNICEF goods must be palletized.

Q18: Do the palletization requirements apply only when strictly requested in the UNICEF Purchase order?

A18: No. The requirement for palletization applies to shipments arranged by suppliers to ALL UNICEF WAREHOUSES (field, hubs, and Copenhagen). Exceptions can be made for supplies shipped to external partners like government ministries, but they

must be agreed upon between the Supplier and the relevant UNICEF procurement focal person. Any exception to the Packing Specifications must first be agreed with the consignee and then flagged in the Purchase Order document.

LABELING

Q19: Can you please provide additional support to comply with the new GS1 labels?

A19: Supplementary to the updated Packing Specifications additional guidance for the logistics labels can be found here:

UNICEF's updated labels are based on this design:

<https://www.gs1.org/standards/gs1-logistic-label-guideline/1-3>

Guidance on the GS1 2D DataMatrix can be found here:

<https://www.gs1.org/standards/gs1-datamatrix-guideline/25>

To assist Suppliers with label compliance we are pleased to provide:

[UNICEF GS1 Label Template.](#)

However, please be aware that the template serves solely as a visual aid for label design and should not be used for actual label generation. For the creation of actual labels, please utilize software that has been validated and approved for this purpose.

Q20: Is it acceptable to only provide/encode just the eight-digit PO number on the label?

A20: No. All ORDER NUMBER (400) should be encoded with both PO number and PO item number. The PO number should be followed by a dash and the last three digits of the PO item number:

First Preference (Example only): 68006879-010

Second Preference (Example only): 68006879-10

The full PO number including the eight-digit PO, the dash and the PO item number should appear the same on both the middle section and bottom section of the label.

Q21: Can I use the same date format in both the middle and bottom sections of the label?

A21: No. For the middle section (with non-HRI text and data titles) of the label all dates should be written as:

DD-MMM (3 letter month abbreviation in English)-YYYY

For example: 02-Oct-2023

For the bottom section (with the 2D DataMatrix and HRI text) of the label all dates should be written in the GS1 barcode format together with Application Identifiers (11) and (17): YYMMDD

For example (Same date as written above): 231002

The differing formatting of the dates detailed above serves two purposes; first for the middle section, the intent is to reduce confusion to a reader who is not familiar with GS1 standards. Secondly, for the bottom section, the date is written in GS1 barcode format which the warehouse assistant will need to manually encode if for one reason or another the barcode is damaged or not scanning properly.

Q22: Our materials are not medicines, medical devices, or IT equipment. Do I still need to include an SSCC and GTIN on my labels?

A22: No. However, please note that the UNICEF warehouse is working on expanding to full GS1 compatibility soon. Earlier adoption to this standard would be greatly appreciated.

Q23: Regarding SSCC identifiers, should each carton be labeled and identified by a unique SSCC number?

A23: Each carton/case should be labeled with a unique SSCC number, only if the carton/case represents a separate logistic unit. If the cases or cartons are stacked on a pallet, the SSCC should be assigned only to the pallet level. It is recommended by UNICEF to use '1' as the Extension Digit for pallets and '2' for cases to distinguish the packaging levels.

Q24: Is barcode labeling on cases now required for all FCA shipments to UNICEF Country Offices?

A24: Yes. UNICEF Country Office warehouses have an app to assist them with inventory management processes such as Goods Receipt. This app is programmed to read the 2D DataMatrix barcode encoded on the GS1 logistics labels.

In accordance with the updated Packing Specifications, barcode labeling requirements apply to shipments arranged by suppliers to ALL UNICEF WAREHOUSES (field, hubs, and Copenhagen). Exceptions could be made for supplies shipped to external partners like government ministries, but they must be first agreed upon between the Supplier and the relevant UNICEF procurement focal person. Any exception to the Packing Specifications must first be agreed with the consignee and then flagged in the Purchase Order document.

Q25: Is Arial the only font we can use on our labels?

A25: Yes. Arial is the only allowable font as per GS1 logistic label guidance.

Q26: We currently hold white stock for UNICEF, as the stock is pre-produced and already packed do I need to relabel the cases with the Purchase Order information when I release the goods?

A26: It depends. If the release of white stock is for an emergency PO, then no. It is only required to include the PO and item number on the Pallet labels.

However, for the tertiary cases please ensure compliance with all other labeling requirements (minus the PO and item number) as mentioned in the Packing Specifications.

If the release of white stock is for a routine/regular PO, full compliance with the Packing Specifications is required.

Any exception to the Packing Specifications must first be agreed with the consignee and then flagged in the Purchase Order document.

Q27: How should consecutive numbering labeling of cases be done?

A27: Preferably, mark the label of each case as 1/96, 2/96, and so on.

Q28: Can we continue using our current label sizes for cases and pallets instead of the updated sizes?

A28: It depends. The label size is a part of the Specifications. This is a minimum requirement. If your labels are larger than A6/A7 this is permissible. Pallet labels should not be any larger than A5.

Q29: Is barcode labeling required for primary or secondary packs (sale packs)?

A29: Please check with your relevant UNICEF procurement focal person. The updated requirements are concerned with barcode labeling for tertiary packs (shipper cartons) and pallets only. Labeling requirements for sales unit/primary/secondary packs should be agreed with the relevant UNICEF procurement focal person.

Q30: Are my materials considered batch managed?

A30: The relevant UNICEF procurement focal person can provide this information.

Q31: Is Serialization labeling needed for on my material?

A31: It depends. At this stage, serialization labeling on logistics units is only **recommended** for medicines, medical devices, and IT equipment. Kindly note a Serialized label would only be necessary if the Sales Unit/Item packaging is the same as the export (tertiary) Case level packing (ie; for a laptop, refrigerator or printer, etc).

Q32: Is there any connection between our serialization system and UNICEF's Hub/portal?

A32: Not at this stage. UNICEF is yet to establish an interface for sharing serialization data.

Q33: I am having an issue encoding my SSCC and GTIN with an appropriate check digit. Can you please help with this?

A33: Yes. We recommend using the following tool to help calculate the correct check digit: <https://www.gs1.org/services/check-digit-calculator>

Q34: What is the cost for non-compliance on the labels?

A34: As per UNICEF's publicly available [re-work fee schedule](#), if the UNICEF warehouse receives non-compliant labels and as a result it is deemed necessary to print new labels, the minimum charge to the Supplier would be \$20 USD / pallet.

Q35: Can my company be issued a blanket extension until we are prepared to comply with the new Packing Specifications?

A35: Please note that the warehouse is not in the position to issue blanket extensions or exceptions for the updated Packing Specifications.

Kindly discuss with your relevant UNICEF Procurement focal person so that any exception may be agreed upon with both them and with the consignee of each order. Any agreed exception text must then be included in the wording of the purchase order you receive after 02 October. If the text is not included, then you will need to comply with the updated Packing Specifications.

Q36: Can you please provide additional guidance as to why, when left undefined- UNICEF requests the last day of the month is used for the expiry date and the first day of the month is used for the production date when only the year and the month are provided by suppliers?

A36: As per the Packing Specification document please note the below:

Expiry Date: DD provides the number of the day of the relevant month (e.g., second day = 02); For Best Before or Expiry Dates it may not be necessary to specify the day. In that case the field must be filled with two zeroes and will be interpreted as the last day of the noted month.

Source: <https://www.gs1.org/standards/gs1-logistic-label-guideline/1-3#4-How-to-include-trade-item-information+4-6-Trade-item-dates>

Production Date: The actual production day should be straightforward for a company to define, but if only MMM/YYYY is available, then the first day of the month should be used to avoid the accidental creation of labels with a production date in the future.

Q37: We have additional SSCC questions:

The received documentation indicates a number sequence of 18 digits. The example we received from UNICEF indicates 17 digits. Can you please confirm what is correct? Can you please send us an overview of the interpretation/meaning of the different numbers (N2, N3 etc.)? It is not entirely

clear for us how to use the required information in the correct sequence in creating the SSCC.

A37: Please note that the SSCC is a unique 18-digit number which is used to track and trace logistics handling units.

Figure 5-1 SSCC Structure

Application Identifier	Extension Digit	GS1 Company Prefix																Serial Reference																Check Digit
(00)	N ₁	N ₂	N ₃	N ₄	N ₅	N ₆	N ₇	N ₈	N ₉	N ₁₀	N ₁₁	N ₁₂	N ₁₃	N ₁₄	N ₁₅	N ₁₆	N ₁₇	N ₁₈																

Source: <https://www.gs1us.org/content/dam/g1us/documents/industries-insights/standards/An-Introduction-to-the-Serial-Shipping-Container-Code-SSCC.pdf>

The first digit “**N₁**” is called an “extension digit”. The Supplier can choose any number from 0 to 9 here. UNICEF requests '1' is used for pallets, '2' for cases.

The first set of eight digits “**N₂ to N₉**” are the GS1 company prefix. This unique company number is assigned to your company when you register with GS1. No two GS1 company prefixes are alike.

The second set of eight digits “**N₁₀ to N₁₇**” are the serial reference for the pallet or case. You can number this however you like. Ideally the pallets and cases would be numbered sequentially: ie; “00000001”, “00000002”, “00000003” etc.

The last digit “**N₁₈**” is called the “check digit”. This number is calculated using an mathematical formula specified by GS1 to “check” that the previous 17 digits have been inserted correctly. Normally label making software will help to automatically calculate this number.

If your company doesn’t have label making software you can calculate your check digit by using the following tool: <https://www.gs1us.org/tools/check-digit-calculator> (the same concept is applicable to the 14 digit GTIN, the 14th digit is always a “check digit”).

Q38: Should we use different GTINs for different levels of packaging?

A38: No. In accordance with UNICEF specifications, both case and pallet labels must display the GTIN that corresponds to the trade item packaging level being supplied to UNICEF. For instance, if the UNICEF contract (LTA/PO) specifies a purchasing unit in primary packaging, the carton and pallet labels should include the GTIN assigned to this particular unit. The use of GTINs for other packaging levels is not permissible.

Q39: Should the quantity displayed on the pallet label represent the number of cases contained within the pallet or the quantity of individual trade items?

A39: Quantity of individual trade items

Q40: UNICEF has previously approved our labels, should we submit labels for new orders for verification and approval?

A40: Yes, the labels for all new orders are to be approved via PackingSpecs@unicef.org.

Q41: Can UNICEF assist with creating a barcode for our label?

A41: UNICEF does not create barcodes or labels for suppliers, as it expects that this aspect is handled by the suppliers themselves. However, UNICEF assists suppliers by addressing their specific queries, answering their questions about compliance, and providing advice on labels that do not conform to requirements. Regarding barcode generation, there are various software products on the market capable of generating labels and GS-1 DataMatrix barcodes. The choice of software is up to the supplier, and it may be helpful to consult your IT department or contact your local GS-1 office to address the challenges you are facing with generating the barcodes.

From time to time, additional questions and answers will be added to this document. The most up to date version will be available on UNICEF's website. For any additional queries or requests please email: PackingSpecs@unicef.org