



The Global Language of Business



GS1 South Africa trading as the Consumer Goods Council of South Africa (CGCSA) Setting the Record Straight on Barcodes

Recently, some messages have been circulating, claiming that any product without a barcode starting with "600" is fake or illegal. This is completely false and can confuse shoppers. Here's the truth:

- Products made or packaged in South Africa have barcodes starting with "600," thanks to GS1 South Africa. However, products from other countries will have different barcode numbers. Just because a barcode doesn't start with "600" doesn't mean the product is fake or illegal.
- GS1 South Africa is a member organisation of GS1 Global, whose responsibility is to issue country code for barcode. These prefixes start from 1 to 9. GS1 Global has 118 member organisations around the world whose responsibility is to issue barcodes for their respective country. South Africa in particular, has 600-601.
- Companies in South Africa using the GS1 barcodes – which are issued by GS1 South Africa - are assigned a prefix based on the country code. For example, South African member companies have prefixes of 600 while for example companies in the UK have prefixes that start with 500 - 509 to confirm which country codes belong to which country visit this link <https://www.gs1.org/standards/id-keys/company-prefix>
- While locally produced products are assigned the 600 prefix barcodes by GS1 South Africa a member organisation of GS1, there are nevertheless other imported products manufactured elsewhere with different barcode prefixes. The fact that a product barcode prefix does not start with 600 doesn't make it counterfeit or illicit. It is important to note that GS1 is a neutral, global collaboration platform that brings industry leaders, government, regulators, academia, and associations together to develop standards-based solutions to address the challenges of data exchange and consumer safety.

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- Our scale and reach - local Member Organisations in 118 countries, over two million user companies and 10 billion transactions every day—helps ensure that there is a common language of business across the globe.
- While we are deeply concerned about the issue of counterfeit and illicit products, especially in the food and beverage sector, it is incorrect to assume that products without the 600 prefixes are not legitimate.

GS1, a global organisation, works to make sure companies around the world use common barcode standards. This helps businesses everywhere speak the same "barcode language," ensuring safety and trust for consumers.

How Do Barcodes Work?

Each company is given a special number (called a GS1 Prefix) that appears in their barcodes. This number can show where the company is registered, but **it doesn't tell where the product was actually made**. For example, a company could be based in China, but their products may be made in South Africa or another country.

Tips for Safe Shopping

To make sure you're buying genuine products, keep these tips in mind:

- Look for complete labels showing the product name, ingredients, manufacturer details, including physical address, and expiration date.
- Buy from reliable shops, especially for food items.
- Make sure the product has proper trademarks and branding if it's claiming to be from a specific brand.

If you suspect a product might be fake, avoid buying it and report it to the authorities.

New Tool for Consumers

GS1 South Africa t/a CGCSA are working on an app that will help you verify products you buy, whether from big stores, online, or informal markets. This app will help you confirm if a product is genuine. Right now, any consumer can be sure where the barcode was issued by referencing this link <https://gs1za.org/solutions/verified/>

Furthermore, work with companies to make sure they use GS1-approved barcodes is underway. Through the **Consumer Goods Crime Risk Initiative**, CGCSA is also helping protect the food supply chain, so products get from the manufacturer to your local shops safely. **Report illicit or counterfeit product on 0800 014 856.**

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The image displays two promotional banners for the Consumer Goods Council of South Africa (CGCSA). The left banner features a hand holding a smartphone displaying the 'Let's be sure' app interface. The app screen shows a 'Verify a Barcode' section with a verified status and a 'Report Illicit Products' section. Below the phone, there are QR codes and a call to action: 'DOWNLOAD MY CGCSA APP.' The right banner features a blue rotary telephone handset with the word 'RING!' repeated around it. A dark blue box contains the text 'ILLCIT CRIME HOTLINE 0800 014 856'. Below this, it says 'MAKE THE CALL. REPORT ILLICIT MANUFACTURING AND TRADING OF GOODS. #STOPILLICITTRADE'. Both banners include the CGCSA logo in the top right corner.