

GPC and UNSPSC Standard Classification Codes: A Summary

Background

UNSPSC

The United Nations Standard Product and Service Code (UNSPSC) started in 1998 as a merger between the United Nations Common Coding System and the Dun and Bradstreet's Standard Product and Services Code System. The code is the intellectual property of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In 2003, UNDP contracted with GS1 US to be the code manager of the UNSPSC.

UNSPSC is based on a four-tier hierarchy of product groupings defined as:

1. Segment
2. Family
3. Class
4. Commodity

The UNSPSC provides a high-level categorisation of a broad range of products and services from a broad range of diverse industries.

GPC

Global Product Classification (GPC) was designed as a separate GS1 initiative to support global product classification in the Global Data Synchronisation Network (GDSN). GPC is built on a foundation of rules, balanced with reality (what is required by the industry).

The GS1 user community owns the GPC Schema. The GDSN data model for the trade item includes a subset of attributes known collectively as Global Data Dictionary (GDD).

Those attributes are describing the properties of the individual trade items identified by the Global Trade Item Number (GTIN).

The classification system used in GDSN is the GPC. GPC is a four-tier system (Segment, Family, Class and Brick). A GPC Brick is a group of like products that share the same Brick Attribute set. Brick is described further with Brick Attributes and Brick Attribute Values to support the granularity requirements of the trade. Typically there are 4-7 brick attributes assigned to each brick.

There is no overlap between GPC and GDD, they are maintained in two different databases separately. Every GTIN should be assigned to only one GPC Brick.

The Link between GPC & UNSPSC

There is an interest of GS1 and industry in aligning the UNSPSC codes with the high level GPC classification codes at the brick level and above (Refer diagram 1). For the meat industry it is proposed that these would include the UNECE SPECIES and MEAT/CUT descriptions. With the use of the UNECE SPECIES and MEAT/CUT attributes in place for the GPC brick attributes, they can be linked to each brick.

What is being asked of the Meat Industry?

Since UNECE standard are the only known systems that provide a single, globally endorsed, descriptive identification system for a broad range of meat products, it is proposed to utilise these standards to support the trading of meat products in global electronic commerce such as the GDSN.

How will this occur?

UNECE should compare their attributes and values used in the UNECE standards for packaging and any other generic industry attributes with those defined for similar Brick Attributes and Brick Attribute Values in the GPC. If the GPC components meet industry requirements, UNECE should adopt the GDSN Trade Item values for individual product description and attributes in lieu of UNECE values as well as the GPC components. If minor revisions are necessary to the GPC values to meet industry needs, UNECE should submit change requests to the GS1 that detail the required changes.

In relation to the UNSPSC classification, UNECE attributes and values that are useful at the highest levels of classification could be used to update existing UNSPSC codes (for meat) at the Class and Commodity levels as these codes have not recently been reviewed by the meat supply chain.

Summary

It is certainly not proposed to replace the UNECE standards with a new classification standard such as GPC or UNSPSC. Rather it is envisaged to incorporate the UNECE standards as the codes in the UNSPSC and GPC classification systems.

GPC and UNSPSC are not competing standards. Referring to Diagram 1 and 2, the UNSPSC codes are at the same level; the GPC codes come in at the Commodity level and are called a brick. From there GPC can go down into a lot more detail as it is illustrated in Diagram 3.

UNECE content can be integrated into the GPC brick attributes in two ways:

1. Through the creation of new GPC brick attributes based on content used in the UNECE product code or,
2. As new values for existing GPC brick attributes

Importantly as new UNECE standards are developed they can be incorporated into GPC by the creation of new GPC codes in alignment with the relevant GPC rules. Some UNECE components may reside at individual product level (GDD attributes) though.

Diagram 1. GPC and UNSPSC Classification Systems Alignment

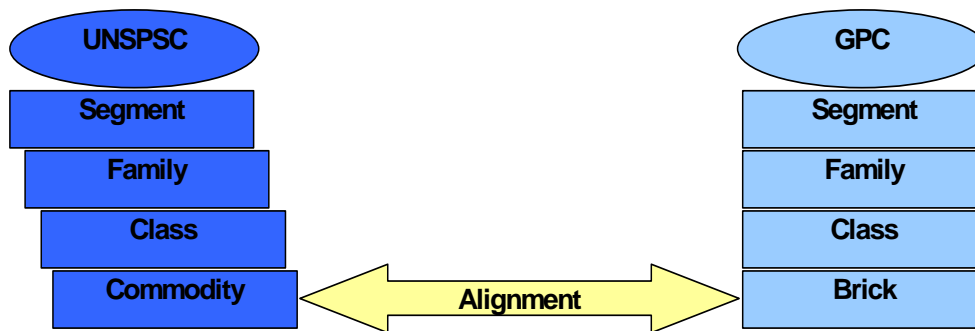


Diagram 2. Example of GPC Structure with Optional 4 – Tier Hierarchy

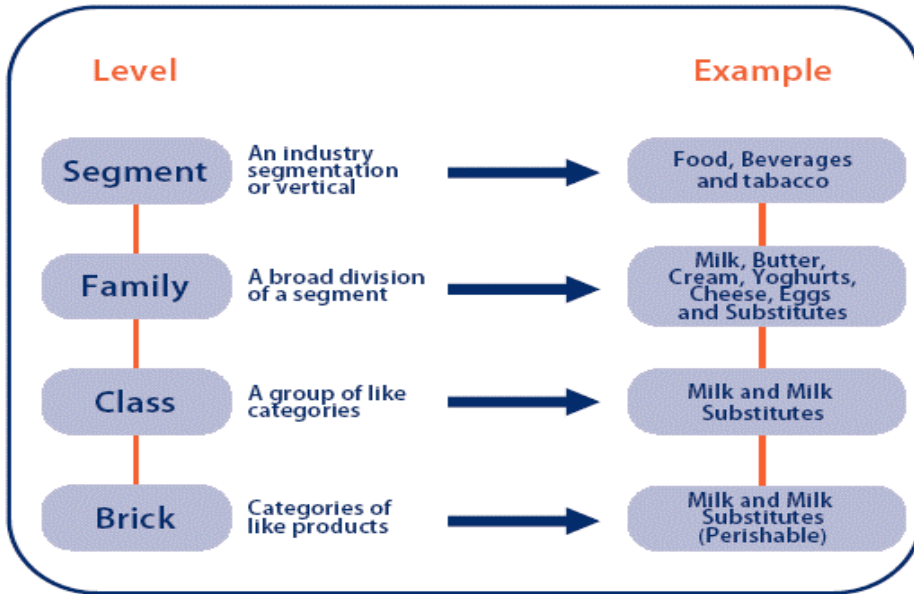


Diagram 3. Example of a GPC Brick and associated Brick Attributes and Brick Attribute Values

