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## Cracking down on illegal cannabis with edible barcodes and blockchains



**Edible tags could help distinguish illegal cannabis from the real deal**

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By **David Hambling**

The software behind the cryptocurrency bitcoin has found an unlikely use – stopping counterfeit drugs. Using edible barcodes and a blockchain, TruTag Technologies, based in Hawaii, believes it can track cannabis sold legally in the US.

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and can be scanned to reveal that a particular product is legitimate.

Similar tags have been used for medication since 2016, and TruTag will carry out small-scale pilot projects with cannabis later this year once engineering development is complete. The company is discussing partnerships with several local and state legislators.

### **Read more: An exclusive look inside the UK's legal medical cannabis farm**

The tags are created by etching a thin silicon wafer with a coded pattern of tiny holes. The wafer is ground into microscopic particles that retain the optical code of the original wafer, which are attached to the surface of the cannabis. Anyone can then read the codes with a special handheld optical scanner and check them online.

The online portion of the system is a blockchain-based database developed by Tag-It Tec, based in Seattle. Blockchain is a form of digital ledger originally developed for cryptocurrencies that can publicly record information in a way that is difficult to tamper with.

Once someone scans a cannabis edible, the Tag-It database shows the producer, place and date of origin of a cannabis product, confirming it is safe and legal. This makes the supply chain transparent say Lucas Scholl at TruTag Technologies.

Legal cannabis is a multibillion dollar industry, but it sits uneasily alongside a vast illegal trade. Criminals can exploit the legal network by introducing cannabis from illegal sources, exposing consumers to unknown and potentially dangerous products. They may also divert legal product into the black market, costing millions in lost tax revenue and giving regulators a financial motive to track supplies.

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