

# Auto-ID Lab Gears Up in China

The lab at Shanghai's Fudan University will drive semiconductor development, which could help China become a major player in the RFID industry.

By Loretta Wu

Jan. 7, 2004—When the Auto-ID Center was launched in late 1999, its aim was to be a global organization driving the development of Electronic Product Code technology. As part of that effort, the center opened a lab in China in October 2002, and that lab is now gearing up research into RFID semiconductors and applications that could help China become a force in the burgeoning RFID industry.

"Auto-ID is embryonic in China but has great potential to grow," says Hao Min, head of research at China's Auto-ID Lab, which is based at Shanghai's Fudan University.

The lab gets less than \$200,000 in funding from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which founded the Auto-ID Center and is now coordinating the research of Auto-ID Labs established around the world. The [Fudan Auto-ID Lab](#) has also received 2 million yuan (US\$242,000) from China's Ministry of Science and Technology.

The lab currently has three full-time staff. Their main focus is on chip designs for RFID tags and promoting the adoption of auto-ID technology—specifically EPC—in China. Min is setting up a local group made up of international RFID vendors and systems integrators to promote the technology in China.

He also plans to work with local Chinese silicon fabricators to design and produce RFID chips for the domestic and regional markets. "I believe that local semiconductor companies have great opportunities [in RFID]," he says.

Min tells *RFID Journal* that the lab will build a small demonstration system within next few months, then a local manufacturer and a local retailer will be invited to conduct a field trial. He hopes these projects will win more attention to auto-ID technology, and specifically EPC technology, in China.

[Infineon](#), [Inside Contactless](#), [Philips Semiconductors](#), [Texas Instruments](#) and other companies are already providing China with millions of 13.56 MHz RFID tags for smart cards and ticketing applications. Recently, a local company successfully developed an RFID system used to identify and track the location of railcars nationwide. Semi-passive tags—those that communicate with the reader using passive RFID technology but have a battery to power the microchip—were attached to about 17,000 locomotives, and passive tags were attached to about half a million railcars to ensure cargo is routed to the proper destination.

Several local companies have started to develop an anti-counterfeit system based on RFID technology. "Counterfeiting is a big problem in China, especially for high-margin merchandise, such as liquor, cigarettes and medicine," says Min. "RFID has great potential for preventing counterfeiting."

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