



## **News Release**

**For Immediate Release, October 14, 2009**

Contact: Patrick Delaney  
pdelaney@unitedfresh.org  
202-303-3400 ext. 417

### **Industry Leaders Join Forces in GAP Audit Harmonization Effort**

#### *Initiative Unites Leaders from Across the Industry*

WASHINGTON, D.C. - A group of some 50 produce industry leaders from every stage of the supply chain have come together to begin work on a major initiative to drive harmonization of standards and audits for Good Agricultural Practices. The group was convened following widespread interest in harmonization voiced by industry leaders at the Global Conference on Produce Food Safety Standards held in conjunction with the United Fresh Produce Association convention in April.

The Produce GAP Harmonization Initiative is led by a steering committee chaired by Brian Kocher, president, Chiquita Brands North America. A number of industry leaders participated in a conference call web meeting on August 18 to discuss the concept of GAP harmonization and a draft process to launch the initiative. Since that time, a wide cross-section of produce grower-shippers, processors, distributors, foodservice operators, retailers and association representatives came together to express their support for the effort, and join the steering committee which held its first meeting September 22 in Atlanta.

"Produce business leaders clearly raised this need for harmonized GAP standards," Kocher said. "This effort addresses one of our most important challenges – the proliferation of audits and standards that do nothing to improve overall food safety yet contribute to duplication, inefficiency and add unnecessary costs to consumers. Tackling that challenge will require the participation of the industry as a whole, and I'm excited about the initial participation thus far."

At the meeting in Atlanta, steering committee members agreed on a vision and work plan for the effort, reinforcing its commitment to a totally open and transparent process that welcomes all industry players to participate.

"Our vision is to ensure the highest level of food safety protection for our consumers by ensuring that science-based GAP standards address the most critical prevention steps necessary, that the industry develop and embrace audits and

checklists that are consistent in measuring these practices, and that these tools allow for rigorous independent validation. Our goal is that one audit by any credible third party can be acceptable to all buyers," Kocher said.

As a next step, under direction established by the steering committee of business leaders, a broad technical working group will now be convened under the leadership of Suresh DeCosta, McDonald's Corporation, and Dr. David Gombas, senior vice president for food safety and technology of United Fresh Produce Association.

The technical working group will be open to all participants across the industry who are willing to join in the effort to develop harmonized GAP standards. This is intended to be a broadly inclusive group of technical, QA, and food safety experts across the industry, ensuring representation of all points of view in its deliberations. The technical working group will begin its efforts examining similarities and differences in all existing GAP standards in use, with a goal toward identifying specific areas of current alignment, and those areas requiring further work to get to a harmonized approach. Ultimately, the working group will develop a consensus-based harmonized GAP standard for proposal back to the steering committee for review.

In looking ahead, both buyers and suppliers of produce on the steering committee agreed that for the ultimate outcome to be successful, a GAP standard must be globally recognized through a credible third-party auditing process, but also must be non proprietary and available to all producers and others for use in self audits and improving practices throughout the entire industry. In addition, the standard must clearly be based on the best science available and a risk-based approach that reflects U.S. government public health regulation and guidance.

The first meeting of the technical working group will likely be scheduled in November.

A list of Steering Committee members providing leadership to this effort is attached. For more information about the Produce GAP Harmonization Initiative or to volunteer to serve on the technical working group, please contact Dr. David Gombas, [dgombas@unitedfresh.org](mailto:dgombas@unitedfresh.org), 202-303-3400.

### **Harmonization of Produce Food Safety Standards Steering Committee Members**

(As of October 9, 2009)

*Steering Committee Chairman:* Brian Kocher, Chiquita Fresh North America  
*Technical Working Group Chairman:* Suresh DeCosta, McDonalds Corporation  
*Project Coordinator:* Dr. David Gombas, United Fresh Produce Association

#### **Grower-Shipper-Processor**

Mark Bataska  
Tony DiMare  
Barry Eisenberg  
Bob Elliot  
J.D. Grubb  
Brian Kocher  
Jim Lemke  
Tom Lovelace

Sun World International  
DiMare Company  
River Ranch Fresh Foods  
Sunkist Growers  
C.H. Robinson Worldwide  
Chiquita Fresh North America  
C.H. Robinson Worldwide  
McEntire Produce

Tom Mack  
Bob Mills  
Gurmail Mudahar  
Walter Ram  
Steffanie Smith  
Brian Stepien  
Bill Schuler  
Kari Valdes  
Tom Young

Dole Food Company  
Tanimura & Antle  
Tanimura & Antle  
The Giumarra Companies  
River Point Farms  
Green Giant Fresh  
Castellini Company  
River Ranch Fresh Foods  
Del Monte Fresh Produce

**Foodservice**

Scott Brooks  
Suresh DeCosta  
Steve Grinstead  
Jorge Hernandez  
Ana Hooper  
Anne Marie McNamara  
Mark Mignogna  
Phil Penny  
Mitch Smith  
Mike Spinazzola  
Tim York

Yum Brands  
McDonald's Corporation  
Pro\*Act  
U.S. Foodservice  
Darden Restaurants  
Jack in the Box  
Sysco Corporation  
Pro\*Act  
McDonald's Corporation  
Subway  
Markon

**Retail**

Markon  
Bob Frappier  
Reggie Griffin  
Roger Harkrider  
Mahipal Kunduru  
Jerry Noland  
Mike O'Brien  
Michael Roberson  
Rodrigo Santibanez  
Randy Scott  
Dave Wiemer  
Craig Wilson  
Frank Yiannas

Wegmans  
Ahold  
Kroger  
H.E.B.  
Safeway  
Safeway  
Schnucks  
Publix  
Walmart  
Food Lion  
Supervalu  
Costco Wholesale  
Walmart

**Association Staff**

Bob Blakely  
Reggie Brown  
Nancy Foster  
Charles Hall  
  
John Keeling  
John McClung  
Matt McInerney  
Bob Morrissey  
Laura Phelps

California Citrus Mutual  
Florida Tomato  
US Apple Association  
Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers  
Association  
National Potato Council  
Texas Produce Association  
Western Growers  
National Watermelon Association  
American Mushroom Institute

Chris Schlect  
Bryan Silbermann  
Tom Stenzel  
Mike Stuart  
Chris Valadez

Northwest Horticultural Council  
Produce Marketing Association  
United Fresh Produce Association  
Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association  
California Grape and Tree Fruit League

###

**United Fresh Produce Association** is the pre-eminent trade association for the produce industry in managing critical public policy issues; shaping legislative and regulatory action; providing scientific and technical leadership in food safety, quality assurance, nutrition and health; and developing educational programs and business opportunities for members to better meet consumer needs for increased consumption of fresh produce. Founded in 1904, United Fresh represents the interests of member companies from small family businesses to the largest international corporations throughout the global fresh produce supply chain, including growers, shippers, fresh-cut processors, wholesalers, distributors, retailers, foodservice operators, industry suppliers and allied associations. For more information, visit [www.unitedfresh.org](http://www.unitedfresh.org)