

**United Fresh Produce Association**  
**Food Safety and Technology Council Meeting**  
3M Center, St. Paul MN  
Wednesday/Thursday, June 17-18, 2009

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**Council Members Present:**

Barry Eisenberg (Chair), River Ranch  
Walter Ram (Vice Chair), Giumarra  
Megan Arnold, C.H. Robinson  
DeAnn Benesh, 3M  
Jim Brennan, Alliance of Technical Professionals  
Deborah Carter, Northwest Horticultural Council  
Loreena Cook, Condi's Foods  
Suresh Decosta, McDonalds  
Bob Elliott, Sunkist Growers  
Phil Elliott, GMA  
Micah Fuson, Apio, Inc.  
John Gurrisi, Darden Restaurants  
Andy Kesler, Jack in the Box  
John Kolenski, Kroger  
Greg Komar (for Devon Zagory), NSF Davis  
Fresh  
Tom Mack, Dole Fresh Vegetables  
Bob Mills, Tanimura & Antle  
Gail Murray, Disney Consumer Products  
Sean Picquelle, Taco Bell  
Joshua Porbeni, Club Chef  
Gale Prince  
Katie Swanson, Ecolab  
Kari Valdes, River Ranch  
Bob Whitaker, PMA

**Guests:**

Scott Grow, G.O. Fresh  
Jim Lemke, C.H. Robinson

**United Fresh Staff:**

David Gombas  
Tom Stenzel (by web)

**Council Members Absent:**

Susan Ajeska, NewStar  
Bassam Annous, USDA ARS  
Walt Armijo, Lighthouse  
Glenn Austin, Monsanto Seminis

Larry Beasley, A. Duda & Sons  
John Beaulieu, USDA ARS  
Roger Becker, Gold Coast Packing  
Ed Beckman, California Tomato Farmers  
Beth Bland, Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Growers  
Daniel A Botts, Florida Fruit and Vegetable  
Jeffrey Brandenburg, The JSB Group  
Gary Campisi, Wal-Mart  
Hap Carr, Titan Farms  
Megan Chedwick, Church Brothers  
Chris Christian, CA Strawberry Commission  
Larry Cohen, Kraft Foods  
Jim Cranney, California Citrus Quality Council  
Will Daniels, Earthbound Farm  
Art Davis, The Sholl Group  
Paulette Ann Denault-Bryce, McEntire Produce  
Amy Duda Kinder, A. Duda & Sons  
Chris Dzuik, HEB  
Lisa Fuentes-Intveld, The Nunes Company  
Tom Gautreaux, Maxwell Chase Technologies  
Zizi Gibbs, Mann Packing  
Hank Giclas, Western Growers  
Jim Gorny, UC Davis PTRIC  
Bob Gravani, Cornell University  
Albert Green, Six L's Packing Company  
Valerie Hannig, The Oppenheimer Group  
Johnna Hepner, Markon  
Toni Hofer, Raley  
Bill Hurst, Univ. Georgia Food Science Dept  
Michael Jantschke, Pro\*Act  
Beverly Kempf, Club Chef  
Laure Kenyon, Kenyon Consulting, LLC  
Justin Kerr, Sanitation Specialists  
Karan Khurana, Pulse Instruments  
Jeanna Kilmer, Silliker  
Mahipal Kunduru, Safeway Inc.  
Scott Lawson, Syngenta Crop Protection  
Frank Lichtner, T-Systems International  
Glenn Long, Salyer American Fresh Foods  
Yaguang Luo, USDA ARS

Don Mayfield, Cabbage Inc.  
Drew McDonald, Taylor Fresh Foods  
Ted McKinney, Dow AgroSciences  
Bob Morrissey, National Watermelon  
David Mueller, Fresh From Texas  
Jerry Noland, Safeway Inc.  
Courtney Parker, Fresh Express  
Paulette Pierson, Monsanto Seminis  
Bill Pool, Wegmans Food Markets  
Keith Refsnider, Driscolls  
Rob Robbins, BSK Laboratories  
Victor Robelet, Carlson AirFlo Merchandising  
Systems  
Michael Roberson, Publix Super Markets  
Joan Rosen, Fresh Express

Mansour Samadpour, IEH Labs  
Nivia Santiago, Gills Onions  
Nancy Shimabukuro, Walter P. Rawls &  
Sons  
Amy B. Smith, DuPont Qualicon  
Gregg K Storey, Bayer CropScience  
Wilfred Sumner, Scientific Certification Systems  
Jeff Thomas, Target  
Steve Tripp, Pacific International Marketing  
Tony Valenzuela, Naturipe Farms  
Mary van Ryn, Van Ryn Associates  
Thomas Young, Del Monte Fresh Produce  
Devon Zagory, NSF Davis Fresh  
Brian Zomorodi, Ready Pac Foods

## **I. Welcome and Introductions**

Eisenberg called the meeting to order and thanked Ecolab and 3M for their hospitality in offering the morning's tour of Ecolab and for hosting the Council meeting at 3M. Benesh welcomed the Council to 3M, and noted that tours would be offered to Council members during the working groups session. Eisenberg asked for self introductions. Gombas reminded the Council of the United Fresh antitrust policies, and noted copies were available if desired. The day's agenda and minutes of the September 10, 2008 Council meeting were approved without change. The Council broke into individual working groups for the afternoon. When the Council reconvened the next morning, United Fresh Chairman of the Board Jim Lemke welcomed the Council to St. Paul, and expressed his appreciation and that of the Board for the work of the Council.

## **II. Legislative Update**

United Fresh President and CEO Tom Stenzel updated the Council on current food safety legislative activity, via webinar. Stenzel covered Rep. Waxman's Food Safety Enhancement Act and "what it means" to the fresh produce industry, both positive and negative. Stenzel's slides were forwarded to all Council members after the meeting.

## **III. Working Groups**

**Standards Harmonization.** Decosta reported that the working group had agreed to a draft Vision: A single, generic checklist for GAP audits:

- Focused on food safety practices of pre-farm gate produce operations;
- With clearly defined requirements that minimize opportunity for misunderstanding, misinterpretation and "standards creep" by operations and auditors;
- Globally recognized, but specifically applicable to North America operations;
- Requirements that are achievable, auditable and verifiable;
- Scalable to all size fresh produce operations;

- Considerate of regional- and commodity-specific food safety needs;
- Sufficiently non-prescriptive to be accepting of equivalent food safety practices;
- Acceptable to at least 80% of customers requiring produce food safety audits;
- Freely usable by any 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> party auditor;
- Capable of replacing at least 80% of produce food safety audit checklists, recognizing that customers may have additional, company-specific requirements that can be addressed in supplemental, non-redundant and non-conflicting checklists;
- Flexible to adapt as science reveals better practices and limits.

Decosta described that the working group had also developed a draft Process which, briefly, begins with a panel of supply chain leaders, identified with the help of the United Fresh Board, from a critical mass of fresh produce purchasers in the U.S., perhaps North America. This panel would be comprised of individuals with decision authority over which GAPs audits their company accepts. Their initial role would be to modify the Vision and Process until consensus is achieved, identifying remaining concerns. Actual harmonization would be the responsibility of a second panel, led by the Standards Harmonization working group and comprised of all interested parties. The draft process would be to compare all major fresh produce standards and collate the individual standards common to a majority, discussing whether differences should be incorporated into the harmonized standard, or relegated to customer specific standards. The second panel would also consider whether and how the harmonized standard would be applied to different commodities, growing practices, growing regions and sized operations. The harmonized standard would be brought to the first panel for concurrence. The working group asked that Gombas obtain a legal review of the plan.

**Audits Benchmarking.** Murray reported that the working group expected to complete the draft Audits Benchmarking Matrix by June 30. The final document is expected to include side-by-side comparisons, in table format, of all of the standard owners and certification body/audit companies that presented at the Global Conference on Produce Food Safety Standards in April. The Matrix will also include an executive summary and supporting documentation; Murray asked for legal review on what supporting documentation would be necessary. The full draft Matrix will be sent to all Matrix participants for final review and verification of accuracy, before publication. The intention is to post the Matrix on the United Fresh website in searchable format; Murray noted that IT support would be needed. Questions raised by the Council included: 1) would the Matrix be updated periodically, e.g., annually; and 2) could it be offered in a Spanish translation?

**Microbiology.** Mills reported that the working group had completed the last sections of the Microbiology White Paper, considerably shortening it from the original draft to about 17 pages. He reported that the draft will be forwarded to all working group members immediately after the meeting, with comments expected by July 10, and the final draft sent to the full Council for comment by early August, for full discussion at the Council's next meeting in September. Mills noted that the White Paper does not recommend testing; instead, it provides considerations in deciding whether and how to test. The White Paper is intended as a tool in developing a food safety plan; it is not intended as a replacement for a facility-specific plan.

**Education and Outreach.** The Education and Outreach working group did not meet, so there was no report.

**Research.** No Research working group members were present at the meeting, so there was no report.

#### **IV. Garment Guidance**

Kari Valdes reported that the *Best Practices for Garment Use in Fresh-cut Produce Plants* guidance document was near completion. The document, in development since 2005 by the IFPA Garment Best Practices Technical Committee, provides guidance to fresh-cut operations on employee garments such as gloves, body coverings, head and face coverings, footwear and employee hygiene training. The current draft includes extensive editing by Bill Hurst. Valdes asked for volunteers to finalize edits, ensuring that the guidance was in line with current industry practices. Mack and Cook volunteered.

#### **V. Tomato Metrics**

Ram reported that the Tomato Metrics initiative has completed drafts of all four modules in auditable formats: Open Field, Harvest and Field Packing; Greenhouse; Packinghouse; and Repacking operations. The initiative has included input from over 100 individuals from all points of the fresh tomato supply chain in U.S., Mexico and Canada. The goal of the initiative is to develop a consolidated, harmonized set of requirements and audit checklist to replace all others used for audits of fresh tomato production and handling operations.

Drafts have also been completed of audit items that are specific to tomato fresh-cut and foodservice/retail handling operations. Full audit checklists were not developed for these operations, recognizing that these operations are almost never tomato-specific, and tomato-specific checklists would not replace existing audit checklists.

#### **VI. Other Commodity and Association Initiatives**

Bob Elliott reported that the citrus industry is developing Commodity Specific Guidelines for citrus tree crops, building on the watermelon guidance, the AFDO draft model code and other citrus guidance documents. A first draft is expected by August, and will be made available for comment by all stakeholders, including citrus customers and FDA.

Debbie Carter reported that the deciduous tree crop industry (apples, cherries, peaches, etc.) are similarly working on developing food safety guidance that will encompass large and small operations as well as other geographic regions. The initiative, which has over 100 active participants, has expanded from the original objective of packinghouse operations to include orchard workers. The group has established a closed “Google group” to share information and resources, and meets annually. They have also initiated research efforts to support the perception of tree crops as “low risk”. Following the model of the California Department of Food and Agriculture, they have requested that 10% of the Washington State Block Grant funds be allocated to the Center for Produce Safety for tree-crop related food safety research. Carter reported that they are working with Washington

State University on a risk assessment study of apple production and handling. The Northwest apple industry has been a long-time participant in the SQF audit program, and Carter reported that revised SQF 2000 requirements for apple packinghouses have been developed and are now available for review.

Phil Elliott reported on the food industry traceability project which, like the Produce Traceability Initiative, has an objective of developing a harmonized approach to product coding and procedures to facilitate product traceability. The project, which includes GMA, the Food Marketing Institute, United Fresh, PMA, International Dairy Foods Association and others, began with the PTI model. Regarding GMA's long-time efforts on attaining FDA approval of irradiation for pathogen reduction in foods, Elliott reported that GMA's objectives have shifted focus from fresh produce to processed meats, at the request of their processed meats members. Elliott described for the Council GMA's committee structure, particularly their Fruit and Vegetable Committee, for which Elliott provides staff support. That GMA committee, which includes canned and frozen fruit and vegetable companies as well as fresh, is undertaking two research projects: 1) quantifying growth of *Listeria monocytogenes* in frozen corn, peas, crab and shrimp during thawing (e.g., for use on salads) to determine whether there is a reasonable risk that low numbers (less than detectable in 25 gm) might grow to greater than 100 cfu/gm, which is FDA's current demarcation on foods that do and do not pose a *L. monocytogenes* risk; and 2) a survey of temperatures experienced by bagged leafy greens during transportation, in order to determine the potential risk of pathogen growth during transportation. Elliott noted that, although GMA recognizes that industry routinely tracks produce temperatures during transport, those data are confidential and not accessible; therefore, GMA is investing \$20,000 and partnering with Sensitech to perform the survey. Elliott also noted that GMA is supporting the Center for Produce Safety with grants in 2008 and 2009, and Elliott serves on the CPS Technical Committee.

Bob Whitaker reported that PMA is making changes in their educational efforts, particularly with training courses targeting CEOs and business deciders, and exploring ways to distribute food safety information. Whitaker also reported on the return of the FDA mobile lab to the Salinas area this summer, as a continuation of FDA's training efforts in the use of the lab. Whitaker reported that Grower Shipper Association of Central California, various fresh produce companies in the area and he worked closely with FDA in developing testing protocols to avoid undue consequences to companies during the lab's testing in 2008. The lab actually found one pathogen positive (*Salmonella*) in 2008 during their testing of leafy greens sampled from a field. As frequently experienced by companies testing of field samples, FDA was not able to replicate the positive when they extensively resampled the same area of the field, nor were they able to identify risk factors that may have resulted in the positive. The FDA lab will continue with their training in microbiological testing this summer and will add training in chemical analyses. Reporting on progress at the Center for Produce Safety, Whitaker noted that CPS has developed a Partners in Research program, offering funding entities an opportunity to "double their money" in a 50/50 partnership with CPS funding. Thus far, CPS has successfully partnered with the California Leafy Greens Research Board and BARD (an Israeli-binational research program) to solicit proposals for mutually beneficial, solutions-focused, fresh produce food safety research. They are also negotiating partnerships for tomato and tree-crop food safety

research. CPS currently is offering \$3.5M in research funds; so, by Fall 2009 and just over one year of operation, CPS expects to have funded over \$5.5M in research proposals.

## **VII. Traceability Initiative**

Gale Prince provided an update of the FDA/IFT project on traceability of food and feed. The 1-year project, scheduled to conclude this September, was initiated to be wide ranging among commodities, but quickly focused on produce. The IFT team, which includes Council members Prince and Art Davis, has examined old and new traceability systems, software, and actual practices among the industry, importers, processors and distribution centers. They have also studied the economics of these traceability practices. Prince noted that the team's efforts have been influenced by the Inspector General's report, citing companies' inability to comply with, or ignorance of, current law and regulations regarding one-step back, one step-forward traceability recordkeeping. Prince noted that some groups have suggested a "supercomputer" database of traceability information, but the team has considered this model as impractical. He also noted that the project has revealed many issues that remain to be answered. In particular, he noted that the 2-day farm to fork traceability requirement, included in one of the draft legislations covered by Stenzel, would appear to be problematic.

Prince also noted FDA's recent announcement of mandatory compliance with the Reportable Food Registry in September 2009. The Registry, mandated by Congress' FDAA Act of 2007, requires companies to report microbiological testing results that indicate a food safety risk through an electronic portal. FDA's Guidelines for Compliance (in a Q&A format) had just been published and forwarded to Council members. Prince noted that there would be three briefing sessions for industry, the first in College Park, July 23, but that comments on the Guidelines and requirements would be due 40 days after notification, immediately after the July 23 briefing.

Prince also cautioned the Council members to be cautious and prepared for fall-out of the movie "Food Inc." Prince was invited to preview the movie and found it very slanted toward locally grown and in opposition to "factory farms".

## **VIII. Publicizing FS&T Activities**

Walter Ram addressed the publication project of the FS&T Council's work. He stressed that the Council is the "go-to" group of food safety experts in the industry and we constitute the strongest food safety resource in the industry. He also pointed out that members of the Council deserve recognition for their efforts. Lemke voiced support and said that the United Fresh Board of Directors might provide funding for the project, if needed, in the FY10 budget.

Ram suggested that the project could begin with the work that the existing working groups are doing. He asked that they keep publication in mind when they finish their projects. He also mentioned the possibility of expanding the project to include positive information about fresh produce and that we could possibly use a nutritionist or dietician. This

information should be found along with the technical work that the group is doing and published in a non-technical format as well. The next meeting of the working group will be at the Council meeting in September.

## **IX. Next Meeting**

Gombas noted that the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Council will be at the United Fresh Washington Public Policy Conference in Washington DC, Wednesday, September 9, 2009. A schedule of events is available from the United Fresh website at [www.unitedfresh.org/programs/wppc/event\\_schedule](http://www.unitedfresh.org/programs/wppc/event_schedule).

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.