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United Fresh Sees Critical Window for Action
US: Produce Industry Must Remain Engaged on Food Safety Legislation

United Fresh Produce Association urges its members to make their voices heard to ensure that Congress enacts effective and fair food safety standards. With its June 17 approval of the Food Safety Enhancement Act of 2009, the House Energy and Commerce Committee has cleared the way for a potential vote on the bill in early July before the House's August recess.



"More than ever before, it is critically important that members of the produce industry actively engage with lawmakers on legislation that would both maximize public health and rebuild consumer confidence in our food safety system," said United Fresh President and CEO Tom Stenzel. "Attending the Washington Public Policy Conference is one of the best ways for members of the produce industry to leave their mark on this groundbreaking legislation."

Since May, United Fresh has successfully advocated improvements to the House bill, including a strengthening of the bill's commodity-specific approach to produce, the elimination of its prescriptive dictates on traceability that could have blocked the ongoing Produce Traceability Initiative, an exemption for produce from any duplicative requirements for country of origin labeling, enhancements in the ability of fresh processors to develop individual HACCP programs, and a limitation on registration fees for both facilities and importers..

"As Senate leaders begin work on their own food safety bill later this year, we look forward to providing input that will result in passage of sound, scientific food safety legislation," added Stenzel.

The United Fresh Washington Public Policy Conference is the largest gathering of its kind and an ideal way for produce industry members to have a direct hand in shaping food safety legislation and many other policy priorities. This year's conference theme, "Unlock the Future of Produce," underscores how public policy impacts the potential success and prosperity of the produce industry. During the Association's fall gathering, more than 350 industry leaders will meet with key policy makers on a range of critical issues, including labor policy, child nutrition and food safety.

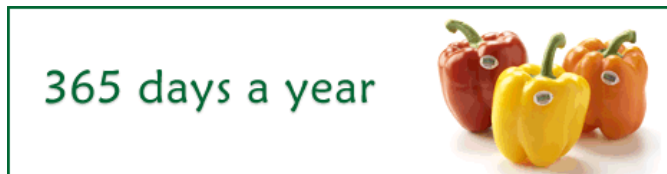
"There is no other issue that touches every aspect of our industry more than food safety," said Robert Guenther, senior vice president of public policy for United Fresh. "I cannot think of any better reason for our industry to come to Washington and let our elected leaders and administration officials know how their actions will affect not only the constituents in their own district, but the produce industry's ability to deliver healthy, safe and affordable produce to every Congressional district across the country."

The conference, which runs September 9-11 at Washington's Renaissance Mayflower Hotel, will give attendees the opportunity to interact with members of Congress and their staffs, as well as provide a venue for in-depth dialogue on food safety during a town hall meeting with officials from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The conference will also highlight upcoming changes in food safety regulations, produce traceability requirements and milestones under the Produce Traceability Initiative, as well as a meeting of United's Food Safety and Technology Council, made up of the leading United Fresh member minds in the field of food safety.

"There is no substitute for the face-to-face interaction between policymakers and representatives from the produce industry – that personal contact creates a real opportunity for change," said Guenther. "As Congress continues work on this critical food safety legislation, it is imperative that every member of our industry take advantage of opportunities to make their voices heard, and we feel the Washington Public Policy Conference is the perfect venue."

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