

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary of Agriculture  
U. S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We write to you to bring your attention to the upcoming release of USDA's annual Pesticide Data Program (PDP) Summary report. We believe this report has, in previous years, been mischaracterized repeatedly by environmental activists and news media to the extent that it has discouraged people from consuming fresh produce. Consequently, the upcoming PDP report and its interpretation are of significant concern to the produce industry.

We certainly agree that it is a benefit to provide the public with information about pesticide residues present in foods. USDA's data repeatedly underscores the safety of consuming fresh fruits and vegetables. However, the PDP report has often been subject to misinterpretation by activists, which publicize their distorted findings through national media outlets in a way that is misleading for consumers and can be highly detrimental to the growers of these commodities. National produce industry research has shown this misleading news has negatively affected consumer purchasing of fruits and vegetables.

Since September of last year, we have reached out to work with key officials in your Department to consider updates to the report. We appreciate the dialogue and outreach from the USDA officials involved in the development of this report. However, we remain concerned that the PDP report and the important information it contains will continue to be misused. The findings in the report can be difficult to understand without the provision of proper context for the findings. The vast majority of residue detections are below five percent of the tolerances set by EPA. Yet, the report does not emphasize such key findings in the analysis. Publishing a report without context and explanation of findings allows for mischaracterizations by those who want to negatively influence public perception about the safety of fresh fruits and vegetables. While USDA is not responsible for intentional mischaracterization by others, we strongly encourage USDA to provide the American public with a report that clearly reflects the strength of the regulatory system and the safety of products used to bring fresh fruits and vegetables to consumers. We appreciate your assistance in this effort.

Thank you for your time and attention in this matter.

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