

Summary of Prepared Testimony
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The United Fresh Produce Association represents growers, packers, shippers, fresh-cut processors, distributors and marketers of fresh fruits and vegetables accounting for the vast majority of produce sold in the United States. These include family business and corporations, small and large producers, and both organic and conventional production.

Principles for Safe Fruit and Vegetable Production and Distribution

The produce industry is committed to a process of continuous improvement in food safety. While zero risk is not possible with products consumed in their fresh and natural state without cooking, the industry enjoys a tremendous safety record with over 1 billion servings of fruits and vegetables consumed by Americans every day.

Following the E coli outbreak associated with one brand of spinach in September 2006, the industry undertook a comprehensive reevaluation of leafy greens production, handling and processing to ensure compliance with best practices in assuring safety. Other commodity groups have done likewise, with the tomato industry implementing rigorous standards and metrics now incorporated in state law in Florida. The industry is well along in its Produce Traceability Initiative to drive a standardized system of case coding for total supply chain traceability. And, the industry is working to drive harmonization of global good agricultural practices for all growers. We believe produce is safer today than at anytime in history, with unprecedented commitment to food safety from field to table.

Policy Principles for Food Safety Legislation and Regulation

Yet, we agree that fundamental reform of food safety law is essential to building public confidence. In 2007, our Board of Directors adopted the following policy principles for food safety reform:

To protect public health and ensure consumer confidence, produce safety standards:

- *Must allow for a commodity-specific approach, based on the best available science*
- *Must be consistent and applicable to the identified commodity or commodity sector, no matter where grown or packaged in the United States, or imported into the country*
- *Must be federally mandated with sufficient federal oversight of compliance in order to be most credible to consumers*

Systemic Flaws That Must Be Addressed to Improve Outbreak Investigations

Recent outbreak investigations have also shown fundamental flaws in our food safety system:

- *Diffuse responsibility creates lack of accountability*
- *Current system doesn't use valuable industry expertise*
- *Today's risk communication is unacceptably broad and can be harmful to public health*

Congressional Food Safety Legislation

We support S. 510 as an aggressive and comprehensive approach to food safety reform. We support the bill's commodity-specific approach to produce, a requirement that FDA work with USDA and states in implementation and compliance measures, and a mandate for an expedited entry program for imports that can demonstrate compliance with U.S. food safety standards.

We urge the committee to reject calls to "water down" the food safety requirements in the bill for small farms, organic farms, or others. Size is not related to food safety. Every consumer's health is just as important whether shopping at a farmers market or grocery store. Our industry has learned the painful lesson that we are only as strong as our weakest link. If Congress wants public confidence in our food safety system, all fruits and vegetables must comply with basic safety rules no matter where or how grown. We believe technical assistance, training and financial support – including reduced fees for all small businesses – are more appropriate ways to assist small resource farmers and produce distributors to comply with important food safety and traceability standards.

We urge the committee to move swiftly in deliberations on S. 510 in order to allow Senate consideration this year.