



Oct. 7, 2009

Caroline Smith DeWaal
Director, Food Safety
Center for Science in the Public Interest
1875 Connecticut AV NW
Suite 300
Washington, D.C. 20009

Dear Caroline:

We are writing to you today on behalf of the men and women who grow our country's fresh fruits and vegetables to request that your recent release regarding the top ten riskiest foods be revised to more accurately reflect the cause of the outbreaks associated with many of the food products on the list.

As you know, Caroline, the produce industry is committed to ensuring the fresh fruits and vegetables we produce provide consumers with a safe and healthy eating experience, every bite, every time. Your service as a member of the Center for Produce Safety's Board of Directors provides you with an understanding of the steps we are taking to continually enhance our food safety practices. The existence of the Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement is yet another example of the industry's commitment to food safety.

And, as you well know, we have also called for mandatory regulation to help protect the food supply. In addition, our industry supports the work of the Partnership for Food Safety, particularly its Be Food Safe program which helps educate consumers on safe handling practices.

By focusing your "top ten" release solely on the food products listed, you are presenting a misleading picture to the American public. As you well know, food handling is often the cause of such outbreaks. And while you do provide some clarification in the full report, the reality is that most consumers and reporters will not go to the website for more complete information. Even in the report that distinction could be clearer.

Sarah Klein, CSPI's staff attorney, was quoted in one news article that "consumers can only do so much to make sure they are not getting sick." That's simply not accurate. Consumers and other food handlers play a huge role in preventing illnesses, and they do need more information on safe handling. It is unfortunate that your release or report does not focus on that fact.

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It is disappointing that the information in the release was positioned to make it newsworthy, and not provide a service to the American public. The lack of clarity and misleading way the information was presented could very well discourage consumers from eating healthy fruits and vegetables. That is unfortunate considering that obesity is at epidemic proportions and so few Americans consume the recommended amounts already.

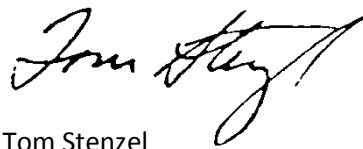
Our industry is committed to providing safe produce, as evidenced by our individual and collective tremendous investment in food safety programs and research. But real food safety solutions won't happen alone, it requires a collaborative, team approach. That's why we have also been reaching out for some time now to Congress and federal agencies including the Food and Drug Administration and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to help them create real world, produce-specific food safety solutions to help safeguard public health.

We would welcome further dialogue on how your release and report could be revised to ensure you are meeting the CSPI mission of protecting the food supply.

Sincerely yours,



Bryan Silberman
President & CEO
Produce Marketing Association



Tom Stenzel
President & CEO
United Fresh Produce Association