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United Fresh Commends FDA and USDA for Alignment on Produce Safety Standards

United Fresh supports and appreciates today's announcement by USDA and FDA to align the USDA Harmonized GAP audit with the Produce Safety Rule. The alignment provides growers with confidence that the market access audit is consistent with federal produce safety requirements.

"It's important that federal regulations and private audits don't require growers to adhere to inconsistent or conflicting requirements," said Dr. Jennifer McEntire, United Fresh's Vice President of Food Safety and Technology. "This alignment between FDA and USDA is also evidence of the commitment the agencies have made to work together in support of fresh produce safety."

The technical requirements of the Harmonized Standard were developed nearly a decade ago by an industry-driven process, facilitated by United Fresh, to reduce audit fatigue. There are several licensees of the Harmonized Standard, each of which combines the freely-downloadable technical standard with their unique audit process and auditor qualifications to encourage and evaluate food safety practices in the growing and post-harvest environments. USDA has been the largest issuer of certificates, using their HGAP, and now HGAP+ audits. The HGAP+ audit adds elements required to achieve technical equivalency with the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI), which, if successful, would make HGAP+ the second audit based on the Harmonized Standard to achieve recognition from GFSI. Last summer, GLOBALG.A.P.'s HPSS, also based on the Harmonized Standard, was successfully benchmarked.

"As Secretariat for the Harmonized Standard, United Fresh is pleased that the updates to the technical standards that were made two years ago incorporated aspects of the new FSMA Produce Safety Rule," said Tom Stenzel, President & CEO. "Recognizing that food safety is of utmost importance to promote consumer health and confidence in fresh fruits and vegetables, our Board of Directors has reaffirmed United Fresh's commitment to support the Harmonized Standard, and we continue to work closely with USDA and other stakeholders to promote accessibility of the standard. FDA's recognition of the USDA program is an important step forward," he said.

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About United Fresh Produce Association

Founded in 1904, the United Fresh Produce Association brings together companies across every segment of the fresh produce supply chain, including growers, shippers, fresh cut processors, wholesalers, distributors, retailers, foodservice operators, industry suppliers and allied associations. We empower industry leaders to shape sound government policy. We deliver the resources and expertise companies need to succeed in managing complex business and technical issues. We provide the training and development individuals need to advance their careers in produce. Through these endeavors, we unite our industry with a common purpose – to build long-term value for our members and grow produce consumption. For more information, visit www.unitedfresh.org