

**United Fresh Produce Association**  
**Food Safety & Technology Council Meeting**  
Trump National Doral Resort, Miami FL  
January 22, 2014

**Draft Minutes**

**Council Members Present:**

Suresh Decosta, McDonald's (Vice Chair)  
Stan Bailey, bioMerieux Industry  
Tony Banegas, Ready Pac Foods  
DeAnn Benesh, 3M Food Safety  
Sam Bierschwale, Lipman  
Sally Blackman, Canadian PMA  
Mike Bledsoe, Village Farms  
Jim Brennan, SmartWash Solutions  
Donna Lynn Browne, Naturipe Farms  
Debbie Carter, Northwest Hort. Council  
Matt Demma, KFC Corporation  
Mario Estrada, Markon  
John Freed, Syngenta  
Lisa Fuentes, The Nunes Company  
Scott Grow, G.O. Fresh  
John Gurrisi, Fresh Express  
Heidi Hau, Ecolab  
Peter Hill, Alpine Fresh  
Scott Horsfall, California LGMA  
Lance Jungmeyer, FPAA  
Justin Kerr, Factor IV Solutions  
Karan Khurana, Pulse Instruments  
Jeanna Kilmer, Silliker  
Tom Lovelace, McEntire Produce  
Tom Mack, Dole Fresh Vegetables  
Donald Mayfield, Cabbage, Inc.  
Drew McDonald, Church Brothers  
Bob Mills, GlobalG.A.P North America  
Clarisa Molina, Ser-Ka Solutions  
Gurmail Mudahar, Tanimura & Antle  
Gail Murray, Disney Consumer Products  
Beth Oleson, GFVGA  
Obeta Osolu, Darden  
Sean Picquelle, Taco Bell  
Bill Pool, Wegmans Food Markets  
Joshua Porbeni, Club Chef  
Gale Prince, Your Food Safety Coach  
Jeanne Raede, Gills Onions  
Michael Roberson, Publix Super Markets  
Gurjit Shergill, Taylor Farms  
Kim Snyder, Monterey Mushrooms  
Stacy Stoltenberg, Dupont Qualicon  
Trevor Suslow, Univ. California, Davis  
Lori Tansey, Chiquita  
Angela Valadez, Publix Super Markets

Eric Vanderlook (for Joe Holt and Will Daniels), Earthbound Farm  
Jon Wall, North Bay Produce  
Tom Young, Del Monte Fresh Produce  
Bob Ziel, McEntire Produce

**United Fresh Staff:**

David Gombas  
Erin Grether  
David Durkin, OFW Law

**Guests:**

Mushafa Bilger, Dow Chemical  
Bob Brackett, IFSH/IIT  
Robert Bright, Delta Track, Inc.  
Jeff Dolan, The DiMare Company  
Rudi Groppe, HMI  
Erin Holliman, GFVGA  
Gillian Keller, Wegmans  
Karil Kochenderfer, GFSI  
Daniel McChesney, FDA\*  
Ann Marie McNamara, Jack in the Box  
John Motley, NAPAR  
Ryan Newkirk, FDA\*  
Katie Odrobina, GFVGA  
Dave Paulshock, SG Environment  
Laura Phelps, AMI  
Amy Philpott, Watson Green  
Ed Thompson, Avendra  
Richard Varley, Kivar  
\*by web conference

**Council Members Absent:**

Walt Armijo, Lighthouse FS&Q  
Megan Arnold, C.H. Robinson  
Geri Barone, Professional Food Safety  
Roger Becker, Gold Coast Packing  
Ed Beckman, Certified Greenhouse Farmers  
Ian Bessell, Birko  
Dan Botts, FFVA  
Abram Bowman, Deerpoint Group  
Barbara Braden, organicgirl  
Jeffrey Brandenburg, The JSB Group  
Hap Carr, Titan Farms  
Ed Casey, Ocean Spray Cranberries

Eileen Chase, NSF  
Megan Chedwick, Church Brothers  
Chris Christian, California Strawberry  
Commission  
Cliff Coles, California Microbiological  
Consulting  
Jim Cranney, California Citrus Quality  
Council  
Amy Duda-Kinder, A. Duda & Sons  
Chris Dzuik, H-E-B  
Bob Elliott, Sunkist Growers  
Thea Eubanks, organicgirl  
Harold Ewell, N2N Global  
Thomas Fenimore, GlobalG.A.P North  
America  
Ebrahim Firoozabady, Del Monte Fresh  
Daniel Flores, Fresh From Texas  
Steve Foster, Wholesale Produce Supply  
Micah Fuson, Apio, Inc.  
Tom Gautreaux, Maxwell Chase  
Technologies  
Hank Giclas, Western Growers  
Bob Gravani, Cornell University  
Mark Greever, Locus Traxx  
Valerie Hannig, The Oppenheimer Group  
Margaret Hardin, IEH Laboratories  
Johnna Hepner, PMA  
Bill Hurst, University of Georgia  
Christian Hutter, Junction Solutions  
Michael Jantschke, Pro\*Act  
Beverly Kempf, Club Chef  
Andy Kesler, Gray Dog Partners  
Ozgur Koc, Crunch Pak  
John Kolenski, The Kroger Company  
Greg Komar, NSF  
Mahipal Kunduru, Deloitte & Touche LLP  
Sharan Lanini, Chiquita

Jorge Leyva, MexBest  
Frank Lichtner, Earthtec Solutions, LLC  
Jim Llano, Castle Rock Vineyards  
Sunny Luo, USDA ARS  
Bridget Lyons, Taylor Farms  
April Mackie England, Monterey County  
Farm Bureau  
Rex Martin, Syngenta  
Michael Menes, True Organic Products  
Bob Morrissey, National Watermelon Assoc  
Ernesto Nardone, N2N Global  
Jerry Noland, Safeway  
Elis Owens, Birko  
Courtney Parker, Chiquita Brands  
Heena Patel, SCS Global Services  
Paulette Pierson, Monsanto  
John Purcell, Monsanto  
Walter Ram, The Giumarra Companies  
Keith Refsnider, Driscoll's  
Matt Rekeweg, Dow AgroSciences  
Eric Ritchie, McCain Foods USA  
Nikki Rodoni, Rio Farms  
Joan Rosen, JC Rosen Resources  
Mansour Samadpour, IEH Laboratories  
Sam Schlagetter, Freshway Foods  
Mark Seetin, U.S. Apple Association  
Brian Stepien, Growers Express  
Hilary Thesmar, Food Marketing Institute  
Steve Tripp, Pacific International  
Marketing  
Kari Valdes, Taylor Farms, Inc.  
Tony Valenzuela, Naturipe Berry Growers  
Matt Warren, Walter P. Rawl & Sons, Inc.  
Bob Whitaker, PMA  
Tim York, Markon  
Brian Zomorodi, Ready Pac Foods

## **I. Meeting Called to Order**

Vice Chair Suresh DeCosta chaired the meeting during the absence of Council Chair Bob Elliott. DeCosta welcomed the attendees and asked for self-introductions. The Council was reminded of the United Fresh antitrust guidelines. The Council approved the minutes of the September 2013 Council meeting without change. The agenda was approved without change.

## **II. Listeria Guidance**

David Gombas reported that the *Guidance on Environmental Monitoring and Control of Listeria for the Fresh Produce Industry* was officially published on the United Fresh website in December. It is a free download, accessible from the Education and Resources tab on the

website. There had already been over 500 downloads, making it already the 2<sup>nd</sup> most downloaded document ever published by United Fresh.

### **III. United-FMI Guidance for Produce Buyers and Retail Handlers**

Gombas reported on a joint project with the Food Marketing Institute (FMI) to develop a short, easy to use guidance document for retail operations. The *Produce Safety Best Practices Guide for Retailers* has two parts: Part 1 is for produce buyers, and includes sections like Working with Produce Suppliers, Roles and Responsibilities and Product Specifications.

The guidance includes a diagrammatic representation of the Produce Supplier Food Safety Continuum, which depicts a lower level of Undocumented Food Safety in which operations may or may not be in compliance with accepted food safety practices but there are no written procedures or records to demonstrate compliance, a medium level in which operations have and document self-audits to accepted food safety standards, and a highest level in which operations have compliance documented by competent third-party audit organizations. The intent of the diagram is to encourage produce buyers to encourage their suppliers to be at least at the middle level of documented self-audits, and to aspire to the top level, but that competent third-party audits to any of the top level standards should be considered adequate.

Gombas noted that there had been significant discussion regarding this diagram and how GFSI-benchmarked standards might be depicted compared with non-benchmarked standards. Ultimately it was agreed that non-benchmarked industry standards like the Harmonized Standards, Tomato Metrics and LGMA were equivalent to the GFSI-benchmarked standards for fresh produce operations, like CanadaGAP, SQF level 2 (food safety only) and GlobalGAP.

Part 2 of the guidance is for Retail In-Store Produce Handling, and covers topics like Employee Training and Receiving. The receiving guidance includes advice about temperature control and monitoring, and refers the reader to the [UC Davis website](#) for guidance on temperatures appropriate for different commodities. Gombas noted that United Fresh had intended to develop temperature charts for in store handling of commodities, but had not completed the project. Trevor Suslow noted that such temperature charts for retail are already available from UC Davis. Gale Prince thought that United had published such a chart years ago. Sally Blackman offered to send a hard copy version used in Canada. Suslow also suggested that, when the guidance is updated, to add guidance about proper handling and sanitation of produce misters.

The guidelines are freely available from the [FMI website](#).

### **IV. United-IFSH Project on Wash Water Validation**

Jim Brennan reported on a joint project with the Institute of Food Safety and Health (IFSH) to develop a validation protocol for wash water systems. In FDA's proposed Preventive Controls rule, operations must validate that preventive controls are adequate for their purpose and are effective in controlling the identified hazard. This project is intended to identify good/better/best protocols that fresh produce operations can use to validate that their wash water systems are effective in preventing cross-contamination under the conditions of their use. The project includes scientists from FDA, USDA, CDC, academia, fresh-cut processors, service providers and United Fresh. While the project is focused on wash systems for fresh-cut leafy vegetables, the considerations developed may serve as examples for other fresh produce commodities. Some of the information already compiled

include: why the wash system will be identified as a preventive control; factors that may affect performance of the washing process; considerations for process validation; considerations for monitoring; why the focus is on preventing cross-contamination; variables impacting the dynamic progression of the wash system; and considerations in selection of antimicrobials.

The guidance will define a “valid” wash process as one that prevents cross-contamination at all points throughout the wash system (e.g., primary, secondary, spray bars) and will consistently achieve that with defined Critical Limits appropriate for the antimicrobial system used. The guidance is also considering a good/better/best approach, with “good” being “safe harbor” Critical Limits established by literature or service providers independent of the actual wash water system or commodity being washed, “better” being Critical Limits established by a recognized process authority for the operation’s specific system, and “best” being commercial scale, on-site inoculated test packs with appropriate target organisms of public health significance or their surrogates that demonstrates effectiveness under “worst case” conditions, i.e., Critical Limits. The final document will not be prescriptive, as every wash line is somewhat different. Anne Marie McNamara suggested that Dr. Gary Acuff, Texas A&M University, already has an E. coli surrogate that can be used for in-plant trials.

Brennan asked for other processors to get involved. The project team plans to meet face-to-face in March, with a draft available for review anticipated in May.

#### **V. Taco Bell-CDC Project on Wash Water**

Sean Picquelle reported on a parallel project involving CDC recreational water experts, Taylor Farms, Ready Pac, Club Chef, Taco Bell, Smart Wash and United Fresh. The objective of the project is to quantitatively assess the impact of turbidity on free chlorine efficacy in preventing cross-contamination in wash water systems and to determine if and to what extent turbidity should be treated as a critical factor in HACCP plans.

Phase 1 of the protocol was to evaluate the stability of the water chemistry after the sample is collected. Results confirm a rapid increase in turbidity during the wash process, and a rapid decrease in free chlorine after the sample is collected. CDC is working with 24 hr water to determine if they can add chlorine, exceed the break point, and perform efficacy experiments with the turbid water. If they can, validation studies may be much less expensive to perform than if the tests must be performed on-site. Picquelle will keep the Council informed of further developments. Suslow and Karan Khurana suggested that the researchers examine chemical oxygen demand (COD) as a better indicator than turbidity, independent of the type of commodity being washed.

#### **VI. FDA Proposed Rules – United Fresh Comments**

Gombas noted that FDA had published six proposed rules so far for implementing the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), and that more are expected. He reviewed United Fresh comments submitted to FDA regarding the proposed Produce Safety and Preventive Controls for Human Food rules:

Key comments to the Produce Safety rule included:

- Don’t put testing requirements in the rule. Any numerical standards belong in Guidance, where they can be updated as science provides better numbers.
- A “safe harbor” standard is fine, but FDA should allow for science-supported alternatives to all aspects of the requirement (what is tested for, frequency of testing, and action

limits) and allow for science-supported variances for commodities when waterborne or soilborne contaminants are not likely to pose a public health risk.

- Allow variances to be submitted by any entity, not just state and foreign governments.
- Create an FDA-accepted process by which growers can “vet” alternatives in a timely manner, and not just wait for FDA to review them during an on-site inspection.
- All fresh produce operations should be covered by the rule, with no “all exempted” lists in the rule. FDA should include either modified requirements or guidance for how to account for lower risks of rarely consumed raw or commercially processed produce, and size appropriate requirements for operations currently exempted because of the Tester amendment or because they have less than \$25,000 in annual food sales.

For the Preventive Controls rule, the key comment was that any operation that handles and ships only raw, intact produce should be covered by Produce Safety rule, regardless of size or the source of the produce, domestic or imported. For operations covered by the Preventive Controls rule, comments recommended that mandating validation of preventive controls to the level expected in thermal or aseptic processes would be cost prohibitive, and that mandatory microbiological testing of raw materials and finished product, mandatory environmental monitoring for pathogens and mandatory supplier approval and verification programs must continue to be left out of the rule as they relate to fresh produce operations, because of the economic impact they would have on short shelf-life products.

Gombas reported that a working group had reviewed the Accredited Third-party rule, line by line, and did not identify enough issues to warrant comments from United Fresh. He noted that the rule, as proposed, is only intended to support Certification of High Risk Foods imported to the U.S. and the Voluntary Qualified Importer Program (VQIP), which the Council had been briefed on by FDA at a past meeting.

Another working group had reviewed every line of the Foreign Supplier Verification proposed rule, and United Fresh comments to be submitted to FDA by the end of January would recommend the following: 1) the importer should only be required to verify the actual supplier's compliance to FDA regulations, not the supplier's suppliers; 2) if hazards are controlled by the supplier's supplier, the importer should be advised to verify that the supplier has an adequate food safety plan that verifies their suppliers' control of hazards, but such a verification, and records of such verification, should not be mandatory; 3) reaffirm that exemptions to any rule should not be based on the size of the operation, reminding FDA that the 2008 Salmonella Saintpaul outbreak was linked to a jalapeno pepper operation that would have been exempt because of size; 4) that all importer operations should be held to the same standards, regardless of size; 5) reaffirm that operations, domestic or foreign, that handle/ship only intact, raw produce are adequately covered by the Produce Safety rule and should not be required to also comply with the Preventive Controls rule only because of size or the source of the produce handled; 6) FDA's Option 1 for foreign supplier verification (requires an on-site audit be performed before first import) is too restrictive, a review of food safety plans/records may suffice initially, and is not required of domestic suppliers so could lead to a WTO challenge; 7) importers should only be required to verify foreign suppliers are in compliance with the same rules that domestic operations are required to follow, so fresh produce suppliers should only be held to control of microbiological risks, and not be required to have a written food safety plan that also includes chemical and physical hazards.

Gombas noted that working groups were now being formed to review the two newly published proposed rules, Preventive Controls for Animal Feed and Intentional Adulteration, and that anyone interested in joining the working groups should contact Erin Grether.

## **VII. Food Safety Preventive Controls Alliance**

Dr. Bob Brackett, Illinois Institute of Technology Vice President and IFSH Director, gave an update on the Food Safety Preventive Controls Alliance (FSPCA). He reminded the Council that FDA looks to the Alliance to develop a standardized curriculum that provides the foundation for training education providers who will train individuals to meet the requirements of the Preventive Controls regulation. Besides the training curriculum, FSPCA is also expected to develop a Technical Assistance Network for the food industry, with emphasis on small- and medium-sized companies, and commodity/industry sector-specific Hazards Guides. FSPCA is currently in Phase II: Draft Curriculum and Lesson Plans. Brackett reviewed several of the sections expected to be included in the training curriculum, including Prerequisite Programs & Good Manufacturing Practices, Food Safety Hazards, Preliminary Steps in Developing a Food Safety Plan, Overview of a Food Safety Plan, Hazard Analysis and Preventive Control Determination, Process Controls, Sanitation Controls, Allergen Controls, Recall Plan, Implementation and Management of a Food Safety Plan, Regulation Overview and Resources for Preparing Food Safety Plans. He noted that the Preventive Controls curriculum is similar to HACCP trainings, however it focuses more broadly and beyond process control. The FSPCA curriculum will not be finished until after the final rule is published, but they anticipate having an initial draft complete by the end of March. He expects that model food safety plans for various commodities and processes will be developed to complement the Alliance program. Brackett offered that anyone wanting more information should visit the IFSH website at [www.iit.edu/ifsh](http://www.iit.edu/ifsh) and click on FSPCA.

## **VIII. Proposed Rule on Intentional Adulteration of Food**

Dr. Ryan Newkirk, FDA, was unable to attend in person but provided a web-based briefing on the proposed Intentional Adulteration rule.

FDA's proposed regulations for *Focused Mitigation Strategies to Protect Food Against Intentional Adulteration* only cover acts intended to cause massive public health harm. Other types of intentional adulteration, such as acts of disgruntled employees, consumers, or competitors, or economically motivated adulteration, are outside the scope of this rule, although FDA is requesting comments on whether they should be included.

The rule is based on HACCP principles and includes two new terms: actionable process steps (analogous to CCPs) and focused mitigation strategies (analogous to preventive controls). In general, the requirements for covered operations include a written food defense plan with identified actionable process steps, focused mitigation strategies, monitoring, corrective actions when monitoring indicates a failure to perform established focused mitigation strategies, verification and training. Actionable process steps can be determined by FDA's list of "key activity types" or by a facility-specific vulnerability assessment. The four key activity types identified by FDA include bulk liquid receiving and loading, liquid storage and handling, secondary ingredient handling, and mixing and similar activities. Operations that do not have any of these activity types would be exempt, as would farms; operations engaged only in the holding of food, except bulk liquid; operations engaged only in packing, repacking, labeling, or relabeling of food where the container that directly contacts the food remains intact; and operations with less than \$10,000,000 in total annual sales of food, adjusted for inflation (the last would be required to provide documentation of eligibility for the exemption). Newkirk noted that the comment period for the proposed rule closes on March 31, 2014.

Newkirk also referred to a draft qualitative risk assessment announced in a separate notice of availability, which addresses activities outside the farm definition conducted in a facility

co-located on a farm. Comments on the draft qualitative risk assessment are being accepted separate from the proposed rule.

Some of the comments raised by the Council included: why does the rule exempt companies at the \$10M/year total food sales level and other rules exempt at a much smaller level? Is the exemption intended to be \$10M per company or per facility? What determines a good/bad plan and how will operations “validate” a plan?

## **IX. Proposed Rule on Preventive Controls for Animal Feed**

Dr. Daniel McChesney, FDA, also provided a web-based briefing, on the proposed Preventive Controls for Animal Feed rule. The rule would establish, for the first time, Good Manufacturing Practices for animal food. Mirroring the Hazard Analysis and Risk-Based Preventive Controls approach used in the Preventive Controls for Human Food proposed rule, each facility would be required to implement a written food safety plan that focuses on preventing hazards in foods intended to be sold for animals. In general, facilities required to register with FDA would be covered by the rule, including both domestic and imported animal food. Like Preventive Controls for Human Food, the rule proposes to exempt “farms” and certain low-risk manufacturing/processing, packing and holding activities conducted by small/very small businesses on farms for specific foods. He noted that operations also required to comply with the Human Foods rule could choose to either follow this rule or just the Human Foods rule, as long as the operation’s written food safety plan also included a hazard analysis and preventive controls for any hazards identified for the animal feed.

McChesney noted that, while it was not included in the published rule, FDA is still considering requiring a supplier verification program, finished product testing and environmental testing, and they are looking for comments on whether and how to implement such requirements.

Some of the comments raised by the Council included: if a company has a recall, and part of the lot went to animal feed, would that become part of the recall? Animal hazards are different from human hazards, and it is difficult to understand what and why hazards need to be addressed in an animal feed food safety plan. Will allowing animals to graze on harvested fields be included under the rule? What if a covered operation sells or gives a cull for animal feed and the animal is harmed; will the operation be liable?

## **X. Food Safety Guidelines for the Fresh-cut Industry**

Gombas reported that the Guidelines are still “under construction”. Most of the Guidelines’ chapters have been submitted, but that more work is needed before the Guidelines are ready for publication. He noted that most of the remaining work is to review the manual’s organization/content for redundancies and inconsistencies, to work with chapter primary authors to identify any remaining content needs, and to have a final version ready to publish on-line by the Council’s June meeting.

## **XI. AOAC Project to Develop In-field Sampling Plans**

Donna Lynne Browne updated the Council on this project, which had been initially reported to the Council in September. Under the leadership of AOAC International, stakeholders have been brought together in two working groups to develop 1) recommendations for in-field sampling plans with standardized collection procedures for Romaine lettuce; and 2) standard minimum performance recommendations (SMPR) for methods used to detect Salmonella in Romaine lettuce. Salmonella and Romaine are being used as models to focus the project, with the intent that future efforts with other testing targets and commodities

would use the developed protocols as starting points. A sub-group will explore applying the procedures developed for Romaine sampling to spinach.

AOAC staff had collected eight pre-harvest sampling plans for leafy greens from six organizations. From this, they summarized the following:

- Most of the sampling plans use a randomized, 60 replicate sample testing model.
- The sampling plans described a variety of collection patterns such as: 1) z-pattern across a whole field; 2) multiple z-patterns within a field; 3) back-and-forth parallel pattern; 4) triangular pattern; and 5) site-specific, risked based pattern. The sampling plans provided a variety of procedures and instruction for obtaining the samples (e.g., "from the outer and inner-top leaves of the plant") and sample processing (labeling and handling).
- All of the sampling plans are generally compatible with United's Microbiological Testing of Fresh Produce white paper.

Browne also reported on the progress of the SMPR working group. She and Trevor Suslow, who also participates on both working groups, urged the Council members who are familiar with leafy greens production or field testing to become involved in the project, to help overcome some unrealistic expectations/assumptions of the SMPR working group members, most of whom are from test development companies and have no experience with fresh produce testing. Suslow gave some examples from his own experiences where testing of produce can yield unexpected results, such as enrichment times can have a dramatic impact on detection of Salmonella by molecular detection (i.e., PCR) or by colony confirmation, Salmonella grown in a laboratory will have a higher likelihood of recovery and detection than Salmonella stressed in the field, and that testing more small samples (e.g., fifteen 25 gm samples), tested individually, will have a greater sensitivity of detection than composited large samples (e.g., one 375 gm sample).

## **XII. Learning Center Priorities for United Fresh 2014**

Gombas reported that, like in recent years, United Fresh expects to host several educational sessions at the United Fresh 2014 show. He shared the list of educational sessions from 2012 and 2013 Market Sector Workshops and Fresh Tech Learning Centers, and asked the Council for topics of interest for 2014. He shared three suggestions already received: Produce Safety education and audits (building on the Produce Safety Alliance); Sprouts Food Safety (an update from the Sprouts Safety Alliance); and Safe Handling Practices for Produce at Retail (building on the produce retail guidance described earlier).

Some of the recommendations shared at the meeting included:

- If they are published, briefing on the FDA re-proposals of the rules
- The "100K Pathogen Genome Sequencing Project"
- Real life recall stories
- How to use the new Listeria guidance, including lessons learned and people and equipment design/installation issues with Listeria control
- Part 11 compliance and how it affects electronic records and signatures
- Cyclospora and produce
- Social responsibility and compliance in the produce industry
- How to use the new Sustainability guidelines
- Updates on the wash water validation projects
- GMOs and produce industry
- Update on cantaloupe safety



- Ways or the need to educate consumers about their role in produce safety, and perhaps discuss the idea that retail levels can actively play a role in educating consumers at the store level.

### **XIII. What Have You Heard?**

A regular agenda item, Council members shared information that may be of general interest:

- Some buyers are requiring produce suppliers to have social accountability audits and the audit burden continues to grow. **The Council reaffirmed a request to the Board to review what United can/should do about such audits.**
- Blackman reminded the Council that the comment period for new Canadian regulations is coming up, likely in early May. The content and scope of the regulations were reviewed with the Council in September. Anyone working in or with Canadian companies should be aware of what is being proposed and provide comments.
- Lisa Fuentes reported that Hartnell College is offering a training program on cleaning, sanitation and ATP verification procedures.
- Jim Brennan reported that NIMBioS is conducting a workshop at the University of Tennessee on April 24-25 on modeling pathogen propagation from field to retail. Council member Sunny Luo is one of the workshop leaders.
- Gombas reminded the Council of the March 11/12 auditor workshop on the Post-harvest Operations Harmonized Standards and the March 13 Produce GAPs Harmonization Initiative Technical Working Group meeting at Taco Bell headquarters in Irvine CA.
- Mike Bledsoe reported that some buyers are requesting GMO and allergen waivers from produce suppliers.
- Drew McDonald reported that one buyer is banning the use of biosolids as a soil amendment for produce, even when in compliance with EPA standards.
- McDonald noted an increase in requests from buyers for parasite testing, even though such testing is not readily available or, in most cases, not have a validated method. Tony Banegas reported that Canadian authorities are testing produce for detection of parasites and requesting corrective actions for positives; he suggested the Council may want to get more involved.
- McDonald also noted an increase in grower requests for drought resistant varieties in California, in response to the ongoing drought.
- Bill Pool reported that USDA is considering a \$350 processing fee for audits performed to the Harmonized Standards. Scott Horsfall commented that the increase may be because USDA is actively pursuing GFSI benchmarking as an audit scheme.
- Scott Grow reported that SQF now requires unannounced audits as part of their program.
- Gail Murray reported that the Natural vs. GMO argument is growing. With FDA's attention and California proposals to be voted on in the next election, GMOs may be "on the brink" of regulation.
- Suslow reported that this is the 100th year of cooperative extension, and University of California is opening 27 positions for applied research.

### **XIV. Next Meeting**

The next scheduled meeting of the Council will be Tuesday, June 10, 2014 during the [United Fresh Show 2014](#) at the McCormick Center in Chicago.

Having reached the end of the agenda, the meeting was adjourned.