

NHC NEWS

A Monthly Bulletin of the Northwest Horticultural Council

Produce Industry Food Safety Initiative

On May 19, the United Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Association (United) and the Produce Marketing Association (PMA) jointly announced a new produce industry food safety initiative at the urging of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Dr. Donna Garren of United and Kathy Means of PMA are the staff people for the two associations responsible for this initiative.

The two-pronged effort will first focus on work at developing commodity-specific guidance for good agricultural practices, good manufacturing practices and good handling practices across the entire distribution chain for a group of six vegetables and herbs. Tree fruits are not included in the initial program. The second prong of the initiative will be the development of a more formal produce safety communication and crisis management plan for the U.S. produce industry.

United and PMA have called a meeting of interested parties on June 9-10 in Dallas, Texas to start work on their Produce Industry Food Safety Initiative. Chris Schlect of the NHC plans to attend in order to develop a better understanding of how the proposed initiative might ultimately impact the tree fruit industry in terms of both its food safety aspect, as well as its crisis management plan. As for the former, avoiding any duplication with current private food safety plans already in effect for many commercial shippers; the potential coverage of such efforts to those in foreign lands producing product intended for export to the United States; and, simply assuring that unnecessary red tape is not added to the present food chain all would be important points to monitor. Focusing on the latter, the NHC is

concerned about the general issue of crisis communications. It makes good sense to give thought to how the private sector, trade associations and government might best coordinate when a negative event involving fresh produce occurs and captures the public's attention.



Marketing Orders

The United States Supreme Court granted certiorari in the case of *Veneman, Sec. Of Agric., et al. v. Livestock Marketing, et al.* This action sets the stage for a one hour hearing sometime after the Supreme Court convenes for its new term on October 4.

The nine justices will determine if the beef check-off program, set up pursuant to the Beef Promotion and Research Act of 1985, is constitutional. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit had ruled this mandatory promotion program as unconstitutional.

The key question is whether the advertising program funded by the beef check-off program is government speech or private speech. If it is viewed as government speech, then it will be constitutional under the First Amendment. Otherwise, it is likely that the Beef Promotion and Research Act will be struck down as unconstitutional with ripple effects, if not tidal wave impacts, on other federal and state mandatory promotion programs for agricultural products.



Travel

Chris Schlect

June 1 – Washington Apple Education Foundation's charity golf tournament, Desert Canyon, Orondo, Washington.

June 3-4 – Annual and regulatory meetings of the Pear Bureau Northwest, Portland, Oregon.

June 8-10 – Meeting of the United/PMA Produce Industry Food Safety Initiative, Dallas, Texas.

June 18 – Washington State China Relations Council 25th Anniversary Gala, Seattle, Washington.

June 29-July 2 – Meeting of USDA/USTR's Agricultural Policy Advisory Committee, Washington, D.C.

Mark Powers

June 2-4 – Visit by Bill Hawks, USDA Undersecretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, Yakima, Washington and The Dalles, Hood River and Portland, Oregon.

June 4 – Annual meeting of the Pear Bureau Northwest, Portland, Oregon.

Mike Willett

June 4 – Annual and regulatory meetings of the Pear Bureau Northwest, Portland, Oregon.

June 16-17 – Site visit by Dominican Republic Plant Quarantine Officials, Yakima, Washington.

In memoriam

Richard F. Duckwall, 84, twice chairman of the Northwest Horticultural Council, 1959-1961 and 1978-1980.

...with the cherry blossom as their symbol—because just as that flower suddenly might be blown away, scattered by the wind while still in majestic full bloom, so too might a warrior lose his life at the peak of his glory—the codes expressed the ideals against which most samurai measured themselves.

James L. McClain
Japan
A Modern History

The Northwest Horticultural Council represents the deciduous tree fruit industry of Idaho, Oregon and Washington on national and international policy matters of interest to growers and shippers. Its members are:

- *Fruit Growers League*
- *Hood River Grower-Shipper Assn.*
- *Idaho Apple Commission*
- *Oregon Bartlett Pear Commission*
- *Oregon Sweet Cherry Commission*
- *Washington Apple Commission*
- *Washington State Fruit Commission*
- *Wenatchee Valley Traffic Assn.*
- *Yakima Valley Growers-Shippers Assn.*

The NHC also advises the Winter Pear Control Committee (Portland) on certain issues related to food safety, crises control and international trade.



- **Christian Schlect**, President
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- **Michael J. Willett, Ph.D.**, Vice President for Scientific Affairs

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