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## Supply Chain Leaders Endorse Produce Traceability Plan

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Thirty-four companies from across the produce supply chain have endorsed a new plan developed by the Produce Traceability Initiative (PTI) to move the supply chain to a common standard for electronic produce traceability by the end of 2012.

The plan, which calls for the adoption of a standardized system of case bar-coding for all produce sold in the United States, will allow product to be tracked throughout the distribution chain. In addition to maximizing the effectiveness of the industry's current traceability procedures, the plan will vastly improve internal efficiencies and assist public officials when they need to quickly trace back a product.

Administered by Produce Marketing Association (PMA), United Fresh Produce Association (United Fresh), and the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA), the 34 companies endorsing the plan are members of the PTI's chainwide steering committee that was established in late 2007 to develop industry traceability best practices and corresponding goals for adoption and accountability.

"We've seen the need for supply chain-wide, electronic traceability across the industry so that we're able to trace product more quickly and efficiently than we can now," said Cathy Green, PTI steering committee chair, and c.o.o. of Food Lion, LLC.

"The new plan is achievable by companies large and small across the entire supply chain, works with companies' existing information management systems, and supports public health goals as well as provides industry benefits," Green continued, adding that while the initiative's industrywide implementation will require a multi-year transition effort, "[it] is achievable."

Steering committee member Tom Casas, v.p. of information technology and mechanization at Salinas, Calif.-based Tanimura & Antle, said electronic traceability will offer new-found benefits to the produce supply chain. Instead of viewing the plan's increased costs as burdensome, Casas said the industry should view its implementation as an investment and another step toward enhancing industry practices.

"This will help our industry and food safety regulators to narrow the impact of recalls, protecting both consumers and industry members who aren't directly involved," said Casas.

Fellow steering committee member Steve Grinstead, president/c.e.o. of Dallas-based Pro\*Act, concurred. "This is a huge, but necessary, undertaking for our industry," Grinstead noted. "The good thing about this solution is companies don't need to scrap their current tracking systems, just augment them."

In addition to endorsement by the boards of both PMA and United Fresh, the following companies have endorsed the plan to date:  
Amerifresh, Scottsdale, Ariz.

Ballantine Produce Co., Inc., Reedley, Calif.  
C.H. Robinson Company Worldwide, Eden Prairie, Minn.  
Consumers Produce Co., Inc., Pittsburgh, Pa.  
Domex Superfresh Growers, Yakima, Wash.  
Driscoll's, Watsonville, Calif.  
Duda Farm Fresh Foods, Inc., Oviedo, Fla.  
Food Services of America, Woodburn, Ore.  
Food Lion, Salisbury, N.C.  
Fresh Express, Salinas, Calif.  
Fresh Innovations, LLC, Yuma, Ariz.  
Friedman's Freshmarkets, Butler, Pa.  
Frontera Produce, Ltd., Edinburg, Texas  
H-E-B, San Antonio, Texas  
International Foodservice Distributors Association, McLean, Va.  
L&M Companies, Inc., Raleigh, N.C.  
Mann Packing Company, Inc., Salinas, Calif.  
National Grocers Association, Arlington, Va.  
Naturipe Farms, LLC, Salinas, Calif.  
Pandol Brothers, Inc., Delano, Calif.  
Pro\*Act, Dallas, Texas  
Procacci Brothers Sales Group, Philadelphia, Pa.  
Safeway, Inc., Pleasanton, Calif.  
Schnuck Markets, Inc., St. Louis, Mo.  
Supervalu/W. Newell Co., Urbana, Ill.  
Sysco Corp., Houston, Texas  
Tanimura & Antle, Salinas, Calif.  
The Kroger Co., Cincinnati, Ohio  
The Oppenheimer Group, Coquitlam, B.C., Canada  
Tom Lange Co., Inc., Springfield, Ill.  
U.S. Foodservice, Inc., Rosemont, Ill.  
UniPro Foodservice, Inc., Roswell, Ga.  
Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., Bentonville, Ark.  
Wegmans Food & Pharmacy, Inc., Rochester, N.Y.

CPMA also supports the enhanced implementation of traceability in the United States via the initiative, and will continue to support those members who move to implement the action plan to meet U.S. market needs.

"I invite every member of the supply chain to join with these industry leaders who have already agreed to take the necessary steps to help fulfill this important initiative," said Green.

In addition to industry outreach, communications, education, and public advocacy to facilitate the plan's implementation, the three associations are planning a broad range of education activities to help the industry to move to enhanced traceability, including establishing a single Web site for information and tools; and education, workshops at association conferences, speeches at industry gatherings, Webinars, audio and/or video recordings and online courses.

PMA and United Fresh are also planning outreach to U.S. regulators, legislators, and consumer groups, to address pressure the U.S. industry is receiving to improve its traceability capability. The PTI's plan also calls for working with national regulatory agencies to ensure they will be ready to make the transition as well.

"We already have a great story to tell about how we saw a need and moved to address it ourselves, voluntarily, without government involvement," said Green. "And there will be plenty of help, so that we can all get to our goal together, to finish that story with a great ending."

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