

CALIFORNIA TOMATO FARMERS ANNOUNCE “THE FRESH STANDARD”



Today we are announcing the formation of an innovative new organization called ***California Tomato Farmers***.

California Tomato Farmers is a cooperative owned by family farming businesses whose fresh tomatoes are grown by, or for, the companies listed below. These tomato farmers are committed to new standards for how we grow tomatoes. We call these new mandatory guidelines “The Fresh Standard.” This means when you buy a tomato from one of our members you can be assured our tomatoes are of the highest quality, grown under the strictest food safety standards by workers who enjoy a positive work environment.

For now, ***California Tomato Farmers*** is focusing on food safety because it is such an important issue for our industry. The members of ***California Tomato Farmers*** are leaders in this area. Our members were involved in the first Commodity Specific Guidance for the Fresh Tomato Supply Chain, which was written for and accepted by FDA. We are working to update and strengthen the second revision of this Guidance Document and to develop new food safety programs in California.

We are forming this organization now because there is a need to be more proactive. Market forces are demanding an immediate and aggressive response to this issue. Therefore, ***California Tomato Farmers*** has organized under a cooperative structure so that we can mandate standards for our members. Our members produce nearly 9 out of every 10 fresh tomatoes grown in California. This is more than enough to fill the needs of every retail and foodservice outlet in North America during our growing season.

During the 2007 tomato season, all tomatoes produced by the members of ***California Tomato Farmers*** will be required to meet or exceed a new set of standards for food safety. These standards have been developed by combining FDA-accepted good agricultural and handling practices with existing audits required by our customers. To verify compliance with these standards, all members must participate in mandatory, third-party audits of field and packing house practices provided by United States Department of Agriculture inspectors. USDA will inspect to our higher standards.

California Tomato Farmers is proactive in the food safety arena. We are setting the standard for food safety and making this mandatory for our members now. Our hope is that we can show this is economically feasible so that food safety standards will be adopted by all tomato farmers.

You will be hearing more about our organization as we work to develop programs and standards for pesticide use, fair treatment of workers and other social and environmental issues. For more information please contact any of our members or ***California Tomato Farmers*** President Ed Beckman at our offices in Fresno, CA.

Sincerely,

Ace Tomato Co. Inc.
The DiMare Company
Gargiulo, Inc.
HS Packing /JTL Produce
Live Oak Farms
San Joaquin Tomato Growers
Oceanside Produce/Harry Singh and Sons
Pacific Triple E/Triple E Produce

California Tomato Farmers
8455 N. Millbrook Avenue, Ste. 107
Fresno, California 93720
p: 559-261-2630
f: 559-261-9804
www.californiatomatofarmers.com