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CALIFORNIA TOMATOES NOT INVOLVED IN SALMONELLA OUTBREAK

Fresno, CA – A group of California tomato producers today reiterated that California tomatoes have been cleared by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and that all tomatoes produced in the state, including round, red and Roma tomatoes, are not the cause of a recent outbreak of salmonella.

“We have outreached to FDA and they have assured us that California tomatoes are not linked to this outbreak,” said Ed Beckman, President of the California Tomato Farmers. Beckman noted that FDA officials have cleared California tomatoes not only because they were not in production during the onset of the outbreaks but also because the agency’s traceback efforts have ruled out any association between California tomatoes and people with illnesses.

Officials from the California Department of Public Health are also reaffirming this information and have stated in a release posted on their website that, “FDA has no indication that tomatoes grown in California are associated with this outbreak.”

“Information being communicated to consumers through the media and other channels has been confusing and often fails to mention that California and six other states throughout the U.S. have been cleared by the FDA as not being associated with this outbreak,” stated Ed Beckman, President of the California Tomato Farmers. “It is very important that consumers understand that all California tomatoes are safe to eat.”

Beckman noted that California production will begin to move into peak volume within the next week or so and that his organization will supply retail and foodservice operations with signage to help make it clear to consumers that tomatoes have been sourced from California.

“Ultimately, our hope is that the FDA will soon identify the source of the outbreak so that tomatoes from other production areas can be cleared as well,” said Beckman, who stressed that he and his organization have been cooperating fully with government agencies to help pinpoint the source of the outbreak.

“In the meantime, California Tomato Farmers members are working diligently to ensure our

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tomatoes remain safe. Our organization has implemented a comprehensive food safety program which includes regular government inspection of our fields and packinghouses to ensure food safety standards are being followed,” stressed Beckman, noting that California Tomato Farmers is a grower-owned cooperative representing approximately 80 percent of the fresh tomatoes produced in California.

“Members of California Tomato Farmers are committed to ensuring the field-grown tomatoes we produce are always safe to eat. Therefore, we have made food safety a top priority. Simply stated, our livelihoods depend upon it. More importantly, it’s the right thing to do.” concluded Beckman.

More information about California Tomato Farmers can be found on the organization’s website at www.californiatomatofarmers.com.

The statement of FDA that approves consumption of round and Roma tomatoes from California can be found at the FDA website <http://www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/hottopics/tomatoes.html>.

The statement of CDPH that reaffirms that California tomatoes are not the source of this outbreak can be found at <http://ww2.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/news/Pages/Update07-08TomatoesSalmonella.aspx>

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