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CTF Statement On Today's FDA Announcement on Commodity Specific Guidance

(Fresno, California. July 31, 2009) Today's announcement by the Federal Food and Drug Administration about the development of commodity specific guidance for tomatoes verifies and confirms the recent efforts by the California Tomato Farmers to promote food safety and protect public health.

"This announcement underscores the goals and mission of our cooperative, which is to identify science-based food safety standards for all farmers to follow and adopt in their fields," says Ed Beckman, CTF president. "However, in addition to the development of food safety standards, the California Tomato Farmers requirements also include verification through mandatory government audits to ensure all cooperative members are in full compliance with those standards."

The California Tomato Farmers worked to develop new, science based food safety standards in 2007 and implemented mandatory government audits to verify compliance the same year. The CTF has also been involved in efforts to develop new standards to promote food safety among all tomato farmers in the United States and internationally through industry-led initiatives in 2006 and 2008 as referenced by FDA in today's announcement and in their newly release guidance.

"We are pleased that much of our work to develop national food safety standards has been adopted in the FDA's guidance for tomatoes announced today. The industry and its scientists have worked diligently on these standards and it is gratifying to see that FDA recognizes those efforts through its announcement today," Beckman says.

In addition to the development of standards, the California Tomato Farmers has also been involved in a pilot program to improve the traceability of fresh tomatoes back to the field. This pilot project is being conducted in conjunction with FDA and Harvard University. "So far we've been pleased with the results and hope this pilot project improves and streamlines the traceability of our products," Beckman says. "We are hopeful that through all of the efforts by industry and FDA, that consumers can continue to enjoy fresh and nutritious tomatoes with confidence knowing that our farmers are doing everything that they can to promote and improve food safety systems," Beckman adds.

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The FDA Guidance for the Fresh Tomato Supply Chain can be found at:

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceComplianceRegulatoryInformation/GuidanceDocuments/ProduceandPlanProducts/ucm173902.htm>

California Tomato Farmers is a grower-owned cooperative formed by farmers committed to enhanced quality, food safety and solutions to the social and environmental issues facing farmers today. As a condition of membership, our growers are mandated to adhere to standards governing a number of areas including quality, food safety, worker safety and environmental stewardship. Adherence to food safety standards is verified through mandatory government audits. California Tomato Farmers operates under what it calls “The Fresh Standard.” Simply put, this means that when consumers reach for a tomato grown by a California Tomato Farmers member, they are selecting a tomato grown of the highest quality, under the strictest food safety standards and harvested by workers who enjoy a safe and positive work environment.