

November 15, 2010

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman - Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions (HELP)
Committee
731 Senate Hart Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Michael B. Enzi
Ranking Member - Health,
Education, Labor and Pensions
(HELP) Committee
379-A Senate Russell Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Enzi:

The safety of this nation's food supply is the highest priority for the food and agricultural organizations represented on this letter. As the Senate advances sound public policy to maximize public health and ensure consumer confidence in our food safety system, we understand the Senate may consider amendments to S. 510, the "Food Safety Modernization Act," that would exempt certain segments of the food industry from food safety requirements contained in this legislation. In particular, we understand that these amendments target exemptions based on the size of farms and type of marketing operation.

The undersigned organizations represent the vast majority of growers, producers, shippers, distributors, processors, packers, and wholesalers, and the vast majority of our members are small businesses. We believe an operation's size, the growing practices used, or its proximity to customers does not determine whether the food offered is safe. What matters is that the operation implements prudent product safety practices, whether the product is purchased at a roadside stand, a farmers' market, or a large supermarket. We support FDA food safety programs developed through a scientific, risk-based approach and that benefit public health.

For the public to have confidence in the food safety system, Congress and federal regulators must bring all segments of the food production and processing system into compliance with national safety standards. We believe technical assistance, training, extended transition timeframes for compliance, and financial support are more appropriate ways to assist small businesses throughout the food distribution chain to comply with important food safety standards. We urge the Senate to incorporate these types of provisions into the final bill rather than provide blanket exemptions.

We urge the Senate to reject the notion of providing blanket exemptions for segments of the food industry based solely upon size, location, or type of operation. Consumers should be able to rely on a federal food safety framework that sets appropriate standards for all products in the marketplace.

Sincerely,

American Feed Industry Association
American Frozen Food Institute
American Fruit and Vegetable Processors and Growers Coalition
American Meat Institute
American Mushroom Institute
California Grape and Tree Fruit League
Corn Refiners Association
Florida Tomato Exchange
Fresh Produce Association of the Americas
Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association
Idaho Potato Commission
International Dairy Foods Association
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Chicken Council
National Grain and Feed Association
National Meat Association
National Milk Producers Federation
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Pork Producers Council
National Potato Council
National Turkey Federation
National Watermelon Association
Pet Food Institute
Produce Marketing Association
Shelf-Stable Food Processors Association
Texas Produce Association
United Egg Producers
United Fresh Produce Association
U.S. Apple Association
Western Growers Association