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PMA takes lead on updating industry on current state of produce safety

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Produce Marketing Association has announced a pair of virtual meetings to discuss the current state of produce safety in the industry which includes discussion of outbreaks in leafy greens and proposed FDA regulation. The meetings are planned specifically to engage experts to speak candidly about what is working, what is not working, and what the industry and regulatory partners can do to proactively enhance produce safety.

“This is a critical time for the industry to become more engaged in the developments around produce safety and traceability right now,” said Dr. Max Teplitski, PMA chief science officer. “We are seeing the convergence of the impact of seasonal outbreaks, the development of new traceability tools and

protocols, and the introduction of regulatory changes in the FDA's Leafy Greens Action Plan, The New Era of Smarter Food Safety, and the proposed Traceability Rule. It's essential that we are positioned not only to react to these changes but can take an active role in the leadership and innovation that will make produce safer for all consumers."

The first event will be the Virtual Town Hall on Wednesday, Nov. 18 at 12:00pm eastern. PMA has been convening the industry each week through the Virtual Town Halls since March of this year to discuss the most important and relevant issues affecting the industry. The November 18 meeting, "Cracking the Code of Seasonality in Leafy Green Outbreaks" will feature a panel of food safety experts who will answer the question, "Is it safe to eat leafy greens?" Utilizing the results of collaborative research, best practice implementations and expanded traceability efforts, the session will help industry members understand the current challenges and identify important steps being taken to enhance produce safety.

The session will be moderated by PMA's Vice President of Produce Safety, Dr. Trevor Suslow, and will feature Dr. Michele Jay-Russell, of University of California, Davis; Neva Cochran, a registered dietician and nutrition communications consultant; Dr. Kristen Pogreba-Brown of University of Arizona; and Jim Brenan of SmartWash Solutions, LLC. Registration is free and open to all but is required in advance to access the meeting.

The second event, "FSMA 204 Record Keeping Rule: What FDA got right and what needs improvement!", will take place on Thursday, Nov. 19 at 2pm eastern. The session, sponsored by iTradeNetwork, will focus on the proposed FDA regulation on Requirements for Additional Traceability Records for Certain Foods. PMA has convened a Comments Taskforce made up of industry volunteers and members of that group will be present to share their thoughts and ideas on the proposed rule from FDA. The session will be interactive and an opportunity for attendees to join and share their thoughts and comments. All interested in attending can register now.

"There has been extensive collaboration across the supply chain in the past year to address produce safety, traceability and the recurring outbreaks associated with certain products like leafy greens," said Suslow. "While we all look to work with our regulatory partners to collectively progress towards solutions and improvement, there is much that can be done to improve communication, application of best practices, and focus on facts and not fault to better position our industry to enhance produce safety. We look forward to the opportunities ahead of us to bring together the industry to hear from the experts leading the conversations that will help move us all forward."

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