

Mahoney Responds to Florida Tomato Scare

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Calls on FDA to Improve Food Safety Alerts

(June 11, 2008)

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"The FDA's action to clear Florida's tomato growers needs to be followed up with fast action to get the word out to consumers that Florida tomatoes can be eaten safely. With skyrocketing food costs, American families simply cannot afford to lose another domestic food source," said Congressman Mahoney. "Food safety is essential and we need to work harder to help the FDA to address these crises more quickly and to better publicize the safety announcements, so that consumers will immediately know which foods are safe in the future."

Congressman Mahoney is working with the Florida delegation to urge the FDA to work expeditiously to identify food safety issues more quickly and to publicize accurate information to the public.

Last Tuesday, the FDA issued an initial warning to several states about a rare strain of bacteria known as Salmonella Saintpaul and expanded the warning nationwide Saturday. The source of the contaminated tomatoes or geographical area has yet to be determined and the FDA is working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and state health officials to identify the cause.

"It's narrowing down rapidly. We hope that in the next few days we'll be in a position to identify the exact source," U.S. Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Andrew von Eschenbach told the Associated Press while speaking at the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco.

The FDA's "safe to eat" ruling was welcome news to Florida's \$500 million industry, which provides over 15,700 jobs to the state. Customers can expect to see Florida tomatoes back in stores as early as today.

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