

## Mahoney Helps Florida Tomato Growers, Provides Compensation for Losses Due to Salmonella Scare

(Washington, D.C.)

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Calls  
for Hearings to Reform Food Safety System

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Congressman Mahoney, who is Florida's only representative on the House Agriculture Committee, also called on the Committee to hold field hearings in his district to examine what reforms are needed to ensure food safety. The Agriculture Committee plans to schedule a hearing in mid-September.

"The FDA's warnings about tomatoes devastated the \$1.3 billion tomato industry. Due to the timing of the salmonella outbreak, Florida was hit hard. We need to ensure that all impacted tomato growers and packers are compensated for their losses to protect domestic food production," said Congressman Mahoney. "With unfortunate events like this, Americans are becoming aware that food safety and national security are synonymous. We clearly need to examine and overhaul our food safety system to ensure that the food we grow and import is safe."

In April, the FDA issued a nationwide warning that tomatoes were a possible source of a salmonella outbreak that made 1,220 people ill in 42 states, the District of Columbia and Canada. After a

long investigation, the FDA recently determined that fresh tomatoes now available in the domestic market are not associated with the current outbreak and the agency has rescinded its warning against eating certain types of red raw tomatoes.

The Mahoney Bill, which is also cosponsored by U.S. Representatives Allen Boyd, Adam Putnam, Debbie Wasserman Schultz, and Vern Buchanan, directs the Secretary of Agriculture to make payments to tomato growers and first handlers that were unable to market tomato crops as a result of the Food and Drug Administration's Public Health Advisory issued in June 2008 due to the salmonella outbreak. The U.S. Department of Agriculture will be responsible for issuing regulations and determining eligibility for compensation, as they have in other disaster programs.

"The tomato industry in our state has unfairly suffered enough," Rep. Wasserman Schultz (FL-20) said. "The FDA must reform their trace-back programs so that growers and consumers do not have to go through the same nightmare during future outbreaks."

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