

FDA Identifies Peppers as Culprit in Salmonella Outbreak

Mahoney Calls for Improved Food Safety

(July 25, 2008)

(Washington, D.C.)

- Today, David Acheson, Food & Drug Administration (FDA) Associate Commissioner for Food Protection, testified at a House Agriculture Committee meeting that inspectors have found samples of Salmonella bacteria at a farm in Mexico that produces serrano peppers. The strain matches the one linked to the recent outbreak. Responding to direct questioning from Congressman Mahoney, Dr. Acheson testified that there is no indication that tomatoes were involved in the recent outbreak.

"The testimony today makes it clear that our food safety system is broken and needs immediate overhaul to protect the health of our citizens and our growers," said Mahoney.

"It is clear that there are two standards for food safety one for American growers and one for foreign producers. Until we have an integrated system that traces food from 'field to fork,' we will continue to be at risk for disasters like this one."

In June, 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fresh tomatoes now available in the domestic market are not associated with the current outbreak and the agency has rescinded its warning against eating certain types of red raw tomatoes.

Last week, Congressman Mahoney, along with his colleagues Representatives Allen Boyd, Adam Putnam, Debbie Wasserman Schultz, and Vern Buchanan, introduced H.R. 6581, which 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 June Public Health Advisory. The U.S. Department of Agriculture will be responsible for issuing regulations and determining eligibility for compensation, as they have in other disaster programs.

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