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Top U.S. Food Safety Official to Address Consumer Concerns and Prevention Methods at Food System Summit

FDA's Acheson says rapid distribution systems and imported foods need more attention

Kansas City, Mo (Aug. 6, 2008) -- It's understandable that consumer confidence in the food system has taken a hit in recent years according to the Associate Commissioner of Foods at the United States Food and Drug Administration.

"Consumers have seen large outbreaks and they question what's going on," said Dr. David Acheson, a speaker at the upcoming Center for Food Integrity Food System Summit. "But if you look at the total number of cases of foodborne illness, we're not seeing a dramatic increase."

Still, Acheson says the food system needs to do a better job.

"We need to address the issues of the modern rapid distribution systems and we need to be addressing the fact that more of our food is being imported on an annual basis," Acheson said. "The challenges are increasing and there are a lot of changes to deal with."

Installing preventative systems, testing them to verify that they work, and having a rapid response system in place in case of an incident are key elements food producers and manufacturers must have in place in order to ease consumers' concerns according to Acheson.

Dr. Acheson will be joined by Lorna Christie, Senior Vice President of Industry Products and Services at the Produce Marketing Association and Darren Blass, Director of Quality Assurance and Product Safety with Jack in the Box restaurants during a breakout session on Food Safety at the Center for Food Integrity 2008 Food System Summit Oct. 8-9 in Indianapolis.

The event will also feature live consumer panels and results of a nationwide survey on the state of consumer confidence in the U.S. food system. Keynote speakers are Jack Sinclair of Wal-Mart's grocery division and Fedele Bauccio of Bon Appétit Management Company.

More information on the Summit, as well as registration information, is available at www.foodintegrity.org. Those interested may also call the Center for Food Integrity at 816-880-5360.

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The Center for Food Integrity is a not-for-profit corporation established to build consumer trust and confidence in the contemporary U.S. food system. Our members, who represent every segment of the food system, are committed to providing accurate information and addressing important issues among all food system stakeholders. The Center does not lobby or advocate individual food companies or brands. For more information, visit www.foodintegrity.org.