



**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (CDFA)  
CALIFORNIA STANDARDIZATION ADVISORY SUBCOMMITTEE (SAS)  
Meeting Minutes  
November 14, 2008**

**ATTENDEES**

Rick Jensen  
Amadou Ba  
Steve Patton  
Jim Simonion  
Kerry Whitson  
Dennis Johnston  
Mark Perez Jr.

The conference was called to order at 10:05 a.m.

**Limitation of Multiple Food Safety Audits**

Mr. Jim Simonion opened the meeting by asking for unification among auditing agencies. Mr. Simonion wants to know why the audit that was completed by CDFA with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) approval isn't good enough.

Mr. Dennis Johnston stated that they wanted to have a minimum set of standards that all retailers would accept. Currently, retailers may request an audit from various private entities. Mr. Johnston stated that farmers and packers are going broke. An audit was recently conducted on his packing shed. Most audits cost between \$750 and \$1000 dollars. Now Mr. Johnston's retailer is demanding a field audit as well. Mr. Johnston feels the audits are for consumer protection, but by having multiple third party inspections, the money is causing significant hardship to small and middle-sized operations.

Mr. Rick Jensen talked about meetings with the grape and tree fruit league in the late 1990's and industry recognizing then the need for additional food safety measures.

Mr. Jim Simonion mentioned that the USDA audit was fair and relatively inexpensive, but not all retail chains would accept it.

Mr. Mark Perez, Jr. stated that the USDA is not selling their self to the retail industry as is Primus and other private entities. Mr. Perez said his audit with USDA was thorough and took about six hours. Mr. Perez had Primus perform an audit for his broccoli production and they took about 10 minutes. He said it has taken the tomato industry about five years to come up with their own set of commodity specific standards.

Mr. Kerry Whitson stated that the additional personnel that are now required to keep track of all the different auditors and their requirements create a financial hardship. Mr.

Whitson asked if the Standardization Advisory Committee (SAC) was the proper organization to try and address this issue. Mr. Whitson stated that there are often negative feelings between government agencies and industry and this would be a positive step if we could help. Mr. Whitson stated he would like to see a coordinated effort without upsetting the retailers.

### **Consolidation of Audits**

Mr. Dennis Johnston stated that the SAC is a good place to begin the process because of the variety of commodities involved.

Mr. Jim Simonion asked if the group would request a formal meeting with USDA or any other recommended organization to address the problems mentioned earlier in discussion. Mr. Mark Perez, Jr. stated that the California Tomato Growers are already setting their own standards.

Mr. Rick Jensen stated that this is a hot topic for many industries and he will be attending a California Tomato Farmers meeting in December on behalf of CDFAs.

Meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

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Steve Patton, Agricultural Program Supervisor  
California Standardization Program  
Inspection and Compliance Branch

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