



July 23, 2004

Division of Dockets Management
HFA-305
U.S. Food and Drug Administration
5630 Fishers Lane
Room 1061
Rockville, MD 20852

RE: Docket No. 2004N-0258, Produce Safety from Production to Consumption: An Action Plan to Minimize Foodborne Illness Associated with Fresh Produce, *Federal Register* Vol. 69, No. 114, June 15, 2004

To Whom It May Concern:

The U.S. Apple Association (USApple) is the national trade association representing all segments of the apple industry. Members include 40 state apple associations representing 7,500 apple growers throughout the country, as well as over 400 individual firms involved in the apple business. USApple appreciates this opportunity to comment on the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) produce safety action plan.

Protecting the public from foodborne illness is a critically important FDA responsibility, which USApple supports. By developing an action plan to minimize foodborne illness associated with fresh produce, FDA may make progress towards this important goal. However, USApple strongly believes the agency should focus its efforts on known microbiological food safety problems, which contribute to foodborne illness. Additionally, the fresh produce action plan should be science and risk based.

FDA's proposed action plan is directed at the produce industry. However, the produce industry is a vast and diverse industry. In developing its action plan FDA should focus on the highest risk issues, and restrict the scope of the action plan to the specific commodities, circumstances or parts of the food distribution system that are known to contribute to foodborne illness.

Fresh apples are not known to be a high microbiological food safety risk. Therefore, USApple strongly believes FDA's action plan should not require the apple industry to adopt expensive food safety measures, which would not likely result in any improvement in public food safety. Already, the apple industry is making significant food safety efforts, which have been driven by market forces. FDA should not require additional food safety measures, especially if it has not identified a specific food safety problem to address.

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USApple appreciates this opportunity to comment on these important issues. Please contact me by telephone at (703) 442-8850 if you have questions or require additional information.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JRCranney Jr". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

James R. Cranney, Jr.
Vice President

cc: USApple Board of Trustees