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May 12, 2004

Division of Dockets Management Branch (HFA-305)  
Food and Drug Administration  
5630 Fishers Lane, Room 1061  
Rockville, MD 20852

RE: Prior Notice of Imported Food Under the Public Health Security  
and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002;  
Reopening of Comment Period **Docket No. 2002N-0278**

Dear Sir or Madam:

The Juice Products Association (JPA) is a trade association whose international membership consists of major packers and distributors of a wide variety of fruit and vegetable juices, juice beverages, and drinks. Our members represent a significant majority of the juice and juice beverage processors in the United States. JPA submits the following comments on the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) notice published in the April 14, 2004, *Federal Register* (69 *Federal Register* 19763) soliciting comments regarding the Agency's interim final rule covering prior notice of imported food.

JPA supports FDA's efforts to ensure a secure food supply. However, we would like to express our concern regarding the time it takes for the Agency to release food products that have been imported into the United States. Some of our members have commented that food products have been held at the port of entry for periods ranging from two weeks to two months, which has a serious economic impact on importers of perishable food products. There are already additional costs associated with the interim final regulation, such as fees charged by custom brokers to file the prior notice. These delays are adding more costs that importers must bear, including the cost to store the food during this period, additional freight charges and costs incurred due to spoilage of perishable products.

We are requesting that the FDA examine the Agency's inspection procedures in an effort to reduce the time to clear/release the food product and thus reduce associated costs. In addition to the prior notice being completed with all required information and submitted to the FDA according to the timeframes published in the prior notice interim final rule,

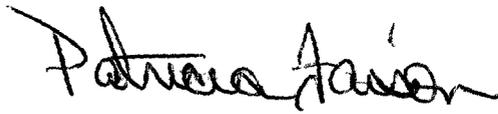
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we would be interested in being advised of any other measures that importers should undertake in order to avoid delays at the port of entry.

We appreciate your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patricia Faison". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and a long horizontal stroke.

Patricia Faison  
Technical Manager