



June 25, 2020

Dear Papaya Growers, Harvesters, Packers, Distributors, Exporters, Importers, and Retailers:

In an August 2019 letter, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) called on all sectors of the papaya industry to take action to break the cycle of recurring outbreaks of *Salmonella* infections associated with imported papayas. This pattern of eight outbreaks since 2011 tied to consumption of imported fresh papayas has accounted for almost 500 reported cases of illness, including more than 100 hospitalizations and two deaths.

Since issuing that 2019 letter, the world has been changed by the COVID-19 pandemic. We would first like to acknowledge the challenges you face as an industry in the current environment of social distancing and constrained resources. During this pandemic it is more important than ever that we all work together to provide consumers with a safe and abundant food supply. We are committed to continuing our work with the papaya industry and our regulatory partners in Mexico, which is the largest supplier of papayas to U.S. consumers.

Those partners -- the National Service of Agro-Alimentary Health, Safety and Quality (SENASICA), and the Federal Commission for the Protection from Sanitary Risks (COFEPRIS) -- and the produce industry have done important work over the past year to develop food safety best practices for the papaya industry to follow. FDA's Latin America Office has also been instrumental in working with the Mexican government and the papaya industry.

New, Improved Production Practices for Papaya

FDA, SENASICA and COFEPRIS have been working to strengthen our partnership focusing on key areas of collaboration including produce safety. Importantly, SENASICA recently published an Action Plan for Papaya -- "Plan de Acción para papaya (*Carica papaya* L.)" -- as an addendum to Mexico's Voluntary Systems for the Reduction of Contamination Risks (SRRC) Certification Program.

Additionally, the Texas International Produce Association and United Fresh Produce Association have published the "Food Safety Best Practices Guide for the Growing & Handling of Mexican Papaya, First Edition" in collaboration with FDA, USDA, SENASICA, and the papaya industry in the U.S. and Mexico.

These plans contain important new measures that industry can take to minimize the risk of contamination. With the 2020 growing season upon us, we are reaching out again to stress the

importance of following the latest best practices and proactively working to keep papayas free of contamination.

Call to Action

We are asking all segments of the papaya industry to:

- Identify and implement improved production and prevention practices for growing, harvesting, and packing whole, fresh papayas.
- Disseminate best practices throughout the supply chain and for buyers to incorporate them into their purchasing specifications and audit programs.
- Examine the use and monitoring of water used to grow, spray (e.g., pesticides, fungicides), move, wash, rinse or wax crops to identify and minimize risks from potential hazards.
- Assess the factors that make crops vulnerable to contamination.
- Perform a root cause analysis to determine the likely source of contamination if a foodborne pathogen is identified in the crop or growing environment and assess whether additional measures are needed to prevent a reoccurrence. Implement procedures and practices to minimize the risks that led to the contamination as deemed appropriate.
- Adopt traceability best practices and technologies to help ensure quick and easy access to key data elements from farm to fork. Since papayas are a perishable commodity, traceability information should facilitate the rapid tracking of involved product to expedite its removal from commerce, prevent additional consumer exposures, and focus any recall actions.
- Fund and actively engage in further food safety research to identify the potential sources and routes of contamination and develop data-driven and risk-based preventive measures.
- Comply with all relevant regulations – such as the [Produce Safety](#) and [Foreign Supplier Verification](#) rules established by the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act – including considering the recommendations made in guidance documents and educational materials.

FDA's Mission

We are committed to protecting consumers from unsafe foods, no matter where in the world they are produced. The FDA has an active country-wide Import Alert in place that allows the agency to detain, without physical examination, whole, fresh papayas grown in Mexico. Companies excluded from this alert are those that have provided sufficient evidence of the safety of future shipments.

FDA is continuing to monitor the safety of imported papayas using all available tools and resources, as well as evaluating ways to verify the implementation and impact of the new best practices.

Our hope is that 2020 will be the year when our collective efforts to prevent outbreaks are successful, and American consumers can enjoy papayas, confident in their safety.

Thank you.



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and Response



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CC:
SENASICA
COFEPRIS
ProPapaya, the National Papaya Board of Mexico
Proexport
Fresh Produce Association of the Americas
Texas International Produce Association
Produce Marketing Association
United Fresh Produce Association
Food Marketing Institute
Associated Wholesale Grocers
International Foodservice Distributors Association
National Grocers Association
National Restaurant Association
Consumer Brands Association
Florida Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association
California Fresh Fruit Association
Western Growers
American Association of Exporters and Importers
Express Association of America
National Customs Brokers and Forwarders Association
National Council of Agriculture and Livestock (CNA)
National Association of Produce Market Managers