

Government Relations and Advocacy Report

2015-2016

Once again it has been a busy year for the Government Relations and Advocacy Committee, holding two face-to-face meetings and several conference calls over the past twelve months.

The primary focus for the committee was once again implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), although our efforts shifted from trying to shape the rules to analysis and education as the final rules were issued. ASTA signed on to a food industry coalition letter opposing FDA user fees and fees associated with the Voluntary Qualified Importers Program (VQIP). ASTA held three webinars on FSMA rules to provide details on the final rules relating to the Foreign Supplier Verification Program and the Preventive Controls for Human Foods as well as FSMA inspections.

ASTA's advocacy efforts from years past also paid off. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015-2020 included a mention of spices as a tool that can be used for healthier eating. Published every five years, the Guidelines serve as the basis for federal nutrition policy and encourage Americans to shift food choices to healthier options. When discussing the Guideline recommendation to reduce sodium intake, the published Guidelines included "cooking foods from scratch to control the sodium content of dishes; limiting sauces, mixes, and "instant" products, including flavored rice, instant noodles, and ready-made pasta; and flavoring foods with herbs and spices instead of salt."

The publication of the final FSMA rules sparked attendance at the 2015 ASTA Regulatory Workshop held on October 14th in Crystal City, VA, with 90 attendees at the 10th annual workshop. Representatives from FDA provided insight on FSMA implementation and the just-released rules. There was also discussion on enforcement tools at FDA's disposal and the directive from the U.S. Department of Justice to pursue criminal enforcement. Other speakers provided information on tools available to assist in FSMA implementation such as guidance on food fraud mitigation, economically motivated adulteration (EMA), and FSMA readiness self-assessment.

The committee also focused on adding regulatory resources to the ASTA website. Several tools were added this year, including links to FDA subject matter experts for FSMA compliance related questions, import volume and spice consumption data and global trade statistics, links to USDA treatment information on spices, an international maximum residue level database and information on California Proposition 65.

I would like to thank my fellow committee members for volunteering over the past year to increase our voice on behalf of ASTA and the spice industry and for providing their industry expertise.

Government Relations & Advocacy Committee:

Bev Tschirhart, McCormick & Co., Inc., Board Liaison
Karen Burns, ETO Sterilization-Cosmed Group
Ron Elton, John H. Elton, Inc.
Joanne Ferrara, ConAgra Foods
Darrell Portz, Griffith Laboratories
JennieAnn Reitemeyer, Van de Vries Spice Corporation
Janis Rich-Gutierrez, Kalustyan Corporation
Manoj Ruparelia, Mincing Overseas Spice Company
Sara Sanders, Kalsec, Inc.



Whitney Sayia, A.A. Sayia & Co., Inc.
Tim Sonntag, Wixon, Inc.
Vinay Sreekumar, Olam Spices and Vegetables, Inc.

Carol Kitchen, ACH Foods
Government Relations and Advocacy, Chair
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