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EFI highlights farmworker safety

Equitable Food Initiative looks to remind consumers that food safety starts at the farm



Equitable Food Initiative (EFI) is celebrating National Food Safety Education Month by encouraging growers and agricultural associations to share their commitment to food safety, and remind consumers that farmers and farmworkers are on the frontlines of providing safe, nutritious food.

EFI, the workforce development and certification organisation that partners with growers, farmworkers, retailers and consumer advocacy groups, hopes to expand the food safety message beyond in-home education.

In doing so it is aiming to raise awareness about the 2.4m farmworkers around the US who work to grow, harvest and pack safe fruits and vegetables, following strict protocols to reduce the prevalence and severity of food safety incidents.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has estimated that each year foodborne illness sickens roughly 1 in 6 Americans (or 48 million people),

hospitalizes 128,000, and causes 3,000 deaths.

The CDC is looking to change that and has designated September as National Food Safety Education Month, with a focus on educating consumers about proper food handling and safety.

In a recent consumer survey, EFI polled respondents about a variety of social responsibility and sustainability issues and about their concerns when purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables.

Food recalls, foodborne outbreaks and illness were their second highest concern at 68 per cent, right behind pesticide use and residues at 69 per cent.

During the month of September, EFI will share stories on social media about food safety in the produce industry and encourage other industry members to do the same.

EFI's goal is to highlight food safety messages that further help consumers

understand the value of a well-trained, skilled workforce that is equipped to not only recognise food safety issues but also assist in mitigating them before they become health issues for consumers.

"As consumers, we take for granted that we have access to some of the safest, most abundant and affordable food supplies in the world," said LeAnne Ruzzamenti, director of marketing communications for EFI. "But as industry members, we also need to share our story with consumers so they better understand the role we play in creating this level of safety and abundance.

"Farmworkers play a vital role in the food system and, in fact, are the foundation of our supply chain, ensuring the availability, quality and safety of our food."

<http://www.fruitnet.com/americafruit/article/1474/parts-of-san-diego-quarantined-as-psyllid-count-mounts>

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