

Dan Vaché of United Fresh provides updates on the PTI Initiative

On June 23, RedLine Solutions hosted a webinar where guest speaker Dan Vaché, Vice President of Supply Chain from United Fresh, provided his first public discussion of PTI since the recent announcement of changes in the PTI Schedule. Todd Baggett, CEO of RedLine Solutions stated “We are pleased to be able to provide a forum to Dan as part of our summer educational webinar series on PTI. Our purpose with these ongoing presentations is to provide timely and relevant information to the produce industry regarding the Produce Traceability Initiative. We have made the full recording of this webinar available for replay at <http://www.redlineforproduce.com/traceability/webcasts>.”

During the Webinar, Dan provided updates on what the revisions in PTI Milestones 4 & 5 mean for trading partners, on United Fresh’s role in upcoming PTI pilots, and on the congressional legislation regarding food safety and traceability.

Dan started by sharing that the industry associations are committed to move the initiative forward and spoke about some recent actions that will contribute to its ongoing progress. A Leadership Council is being established with outreach to 6 of the top 10 retailers at the CEO level. Dan said that the group was being formed because “We want to make sure the industry understands and the trading partners understand the urgency to do this and the fact that we need to be cohesive in developing whole chain traceability.”

A second recent action was that GS1 US is now a full partner with the associations in the PTI Initiative. The reason for increasing GS1’s involvement is their experience setting international standards with the retail industry. Dan shared “We really need to have GS1 at the table because they do have the standards; they do understand all the intricacies and can work with the industry to make sure we minimize the impact on individual companies.”

When discussing the schedule change for the PTI Milestones 4 & 5, Dan said that the associations had received significant feedback that some in the industry did not see value in placing information on cases prior to the point that retailers could make use of the information. He emphasized that the purpose of the change in timing was to bring these milestones and the costs to grower \ shipper \ packers of compliance, into alignment with the buying community’s milestone to read PTI Information.

Dan discussed the Association’s goals and issues for pilots. United Fresh and other PTI partners will facilitate, coordinate, observe, learn and validate pilots so that they can document and educate the rest of the industry on what is learned during pilots. One of the PTI’s key goals for pilots is that they encompass a broad set of commodities, harvest and packing operations, and business models. This is in order to provide the broadest possible guidance to the industry as they move forward with their deployments.

Finally, Dan shared that on the legislative front, the timing for legislation is still unknown. Food safety legislation which includes traceability requirements has passed in the House, the Senate is working on their version of this legislation. It is unclear when the Senate will be voting on this bill.

Responding to a question on the FDA’s view of the PTI, Dan shared “They have embraced using a standard that is a common language ... they do embrace the case level traceability. Even though its not the item level, they understand whole chain traceability means that we can record and report each link in the chain, Each touch point will now be identified so when they do a trace back, it will be very simple to say ‘let’s just go right back to the brand owner’”.

Dan wrapped up the discussion spending several minutes responding to audience questions on timing for pilots, some of the issues involved with voice codes technology, and the PTI spreadsheet used to communicate GTIN information to trading partners.