

# Letters to the editor

## April Issue Brings Positive Industry Comments

I have a comment on two articles that appeared in the April 2005, Volume 21, issue of PRODUCE BUSINESS. The first was a great article starting on page 8, by Jennifer Tong of United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association. It concerned tips for dealing with an FDA inspection. Two other points worth mentioning are: If an Inspector requests samples, make sure you take samples of the exact same lot for your own comparison. You do have the right to charge the FDA for the cost of the samples if you so choose. The second point that should be added is how to deal with a sometimes "over zealous" inspector who requests various documents. An FDA Inspector does not have broad authority to ask for any documents, other than shipping documents to determine if interstate commerce has occurred, or documents pertaining to a perceived threat as established in the Bio-terrorism laws. Also, an Inspector must ask for any documents in writing. Consumer complaint documents are not within the authority of an Inspector to obtain unless it concerns an act of Bio-terrorism.

The second comment pertains to an article on page 12 by Ken Hodge about Fresh-Cut Fruit. Ken is on the mark in terms of growth and potential, but a key point was not addressed. Some of the biggest suppliers in the FCF arena are reporting substantial losses, some for the third consecutive year. In public earnings conference calls for 2004 results, Performance Food Group stated their Fresh Express division lost \$13 million attributed directly to FCF; Chiquita Brands International stated their Fresh-Cut Fruit division lost approximately \$13 million, and although not publicly reported, at Dole we lost over \$2 million. These are not first year start-up losses for any of these companies. It is a sensitive topic that suppliers don't necessarily like to talk about, but losses such as these cannot be sustained indefinitely. Either pricing will be effected or some suppliers will be forced to scale back their programs. There are technologies available that address concerns of assuring Brix levels and extending shelf life, but they also require substantial investments.

Keep up the good work. PRODUCE BUSINESS is a great publication that deals with the facts, and not the fiction like many other publications in our industry.

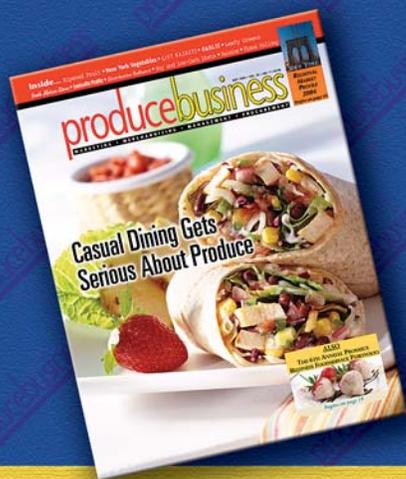


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— Eric Schwartz  
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