

# SYSCO Takes Produce Safety Requirements To Higher Level

## JUMP: *SYSCO Produce Safety*

SYSCO Corporation recently unveiled an innovative program to extend real-time food safety data to the non-SYSCO brand produce the company offers. SYSCO's self-imposed requirement, which has always been in place for SYSCO and FreshPoint branded products, should reassure customers that they are purchasing products only from growers and shippers who have implemented stringent food safety and traceability processes.

Richard J. Schnieders, chairman and chief executive officer, said, "The safety of the products we distribute is paramount to SYSCO, our FreshPoint specialty produce company, our operating companies and our customers. Our organization has been recognized in the industry as a leader in developing food safety programs for products that are manufactured and processed for our corporation and sold under our brands. Our Quality Assurance team now has developed this program to further protect the safety of all ready-to-eat produce we distribute, whether it is sold under our own brands or any other."

SYSCO's Quality Assurance team of 180 food professionals has been developing the program for the past year. It will focus on two areas:

1) A Third Party Good Agricultural Practices Audit and Harvest Crew Audit will be extended to include not only SYSCO Brand suppliers but every grower of ready-to-eat produce that SYSCO distributes, whether processed or field-packed. This would include, but not be limited to, lettuce, broccoli, celery, tomatoes, grapes, herbs, green onions, bell peppers and berries. It would not include orchard fruit, root crops, nuts and other produce crops normally cooked prior to consumption, such as potatoes, eggplant, asparagus, almonds, apples and yellow onions.

2) The completed audits will be archived in a database managed by Primuslabs.com. Each supplier and grower will link their purchase and sale in the database, tracing it from the field to SYSCO. Starting in January 2008, the database then will provide an approved purchase list for SYSCO, by product, indicating that the supplier is in compliance with the requirement.

"We will continue to seek other opportunities to enhance and improve the quality of the food distribution network for our industry," Schnieders said.