



AFTC Discusses Allergen Control with Food Manufacturers

April 14, 2009

The Agricultural and Food Transporters Conference (AFTC) today discussed allergen control issues with the Allergen Committee of the Grocery Manufacturers Association during their GMA Science Forum.

GMA is the association of food, beverage and consumer products companies -- companies that produce and market many well-known food brands. Some GMA members operate private fleets and are also members of ATA. Others are customers of ATA-member trucking companies.

Allergen control is important in all steps of food handling to protect food integrity and prevent allergen contact for people with food allergies. This has become an important issue because carriers have expressed concern over expectations from shippers about allergen control. While new technologies detect ever-smaller amounts of allergen residue, no credible body such as the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has published solid guidance on thresholds to scientifically define what constitutes "allergen-clean."

The two groups discussed coming together with more detailed discussions regarding industry best practices. The purpose of today's meeting was to start a dialogue between the two organizations to address allergen control issues. AFTC members and the National Tank Truck Carriers will be involved in follow-up discussions.

The transportation industry has an impeccable record protecting food products from contamination. The last incident of truck transportation being the source of food contamination occurred in 1994. Key AFTC members leading the food safety effort seek to maintain the industry's excellent record, which is critical in today's environment of increased public sensitivity regarding food safety.

Carrier report that food manufacturers are studying allergen control in all aspects of transport and handling, including bulk trailers, bulk trailer wash facilities, refrigerated van trailers, railcars and all personnel involved in the transportation process. While bulk food products in tankers are the main focus, there is also potential for contamination of bagged products hauled in reefer vans.

Today's discussion focused on the need for industry coordination to provide carriers with harmonization, consistency, predictability and practicality as opposed to a hodgepodge of requirements from customers involving various control procedures, testing requirements and various time intervals for testing.