



ABA News
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ABA FTRAC Meeting Covers Many Critical Issues, Focuses On Sustainability

Washington, DC - The American Bakers Association's Food Technical and Regulatory Affairs Committee (FTRAC) held a meeting in Washington DC on October 17th at the Offices of Covington & Burling. The committee discussed and debated a broad range of issues, but the highlight of the meeting was the committees' attention to sustainability.

Presenting on the topic of sustainability were Charlie Moon, Flowers Foods, and Jay Friedman, Covington and Burling. Mr. Moon discussed the initiatives that Flowers has taken to fulfill its corporate responsibility to become even more efficient, cleaner and a greener company while taking care of the environment. He described how Flowers has set measured goals for all phases of their operations from processing to distribution and has even persuaded their third party partners to review and alter the ways they do business. Mr. Moon indicated that thus far, the Flowers sustainability project has been an overwhelming success and all employees are fully vested and behind the effort.

Jay Friedman discussed the increasing presence and demand for organic foods in the U.S. In 2005, the estimated retail sales of organic products topped \$20 billion and major retailers such as Wal-Mart, Target, and Costco have started to stock more organic products. Additionally, Mr. Friedman described that the rise of organic products and the "ethical" consumer coincides with the proliferation of sustainability. He also addressed the business and legal considerations for companies to consider moving forward.

"Sustainability is an area that all companies and organizations need to explore further. With all of today's technology at our disposal, we should utilize innovative procedures to be more efficient and positively impact the environment. FTRAC will continue to explore ways that our member companies can produce products in a cost effective, sustainable manner," said FTRAC Chairman Len Heflich.

Among other topics on the FTRAC agenda was the USDA Women, Infant and Children (WIC) supplemental feeding package revision package. ABA plans to submit comments to USDA by

November 6th that will advocate for the further expansion of grain products to include enriched products based on nutritional benefits of folic acid found in enriched products. FTRAC members debated the issue and agreed that 8 grams per serving was a reasonable level to produce palatable whole wheat and grain products for the targeted program demographic and easy for consumers to comprehend. The group also agreed to ask for an increase in acceptable loaf weight to 20-24 ounces from 16 ounces, since whole grain products are heavier.

Lee Sanders, Senior Vice President, Government and Public Affairs, ABA provided the committee with an update on the National Uniformity bill in the US Senate and thanked member companies for their support during the lobbying effort. At this point, there is a chance the bill might be marked up by the Senate after the November elections.

Ms. Sanders also shared the work the International Food Information Council (IFIC) has done regarding high fructose corn syrup (HFCS) messaging research. ABA has partnered with IFIC on this consumer research which will be completed in November. Thus far the results of the project look very favorable for the industry and demonstrate that HFCS has mainly been given a bad reputation through media misinformation, citing it as a reason for the increased obesity of many Americans.

The afternoon session was highlighted by a discussion on Avian Bird Flu preparation by Peter Susser, Esq., Littler Mendelson. Mr. Susser stressed that companies need to be well aware of the liabilities and possible problems that an outbreak of a viral avian flu strain may cause. Companies need to monitor their employees closely and provide them with the right kind of workplace protection as required by OSHA, so that any exposure to the flu is limited. Experts' estimate that two million Americans could die as a result of a full outbreak, but the last occurrence was 1918.

Dr. Maureen Olewnik, American Institute of Baking (AIB), presented the committee with a review of AIB's research priorities. Among some of the research that AIB is conducting: nutrition and food safety (acrylamide); enrichment; training on current good manufacturing practices (CGMP), labeling and food defense. Also test baking on new varieties of wheat, test baking for model systems, and enhancement of flour tortillas with Omega-3's is being done.

Mike Florio, ABA Federal and State Government Relations Manager, provided FTRAC with a brief overview of issues impacting the baking industry on the state level. Mr. Florio also previewed some of the issues that State Legislatures are likely to take up when they return to session next year, including school nutrition and childhood obesity.

Among the other items discussed, ABA is working to revise its allergen guidelines, work with members to compose comments to FDA on CGMP's, and ask the FDA for a response to comments submitted on ABA's Standards of Identity on Baking Products citizens petition that was submitted last year to the agency.

"This was very informative and productive FTRAC meeting", said Lee Sanders, ABA. "We covered a wide berth of issues and received great input and critical feedback from our members

assisting ABA in moving these issues forward on behalf of our members in Washington, DC and beyond”, she concluded.

Additionally, at the Committee dinner, Judi Adams, President of the Grain Foods Foundation (GFF), presented the committee with a review of GFF activities and encouraged companies to use the GFF product logo program. Ms. Adams also updated the committee on the success of the retail program and on the successful partnership with the March of Dimes with their Walk America campaign.

The FTRAC Committee is currently considering several locations and dates for its 2007 meetings schedule. ABA will be in touch with members when plans are finalized.

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