

BLUEBERRY INDUSTRY QUESTIONS “DIRTY DOZEN” FINDINGS

(FOLSOM CA – June 26, 2012) – Scientists are cautioning shoppers that the “Dirty Dozen” list of fresh fruits and vegetables that supposedly have elevated levels of pesticides, is misleading and may actually cause consumers to eat less of the fruit and vegetables they need for a healthy diet.

Domestic blueberries found their way to the 2012 version of the list, released June 19, by the Environmental Working Group (EWG). “We are mystified as to how EWG comes to that conclusion when USDA says in its [report](#) that the pesticides are at levels well below the tolerance levels set by the Environmental Protection Agency,” said Mark Villata, Executive Director of the North American Blueberry Council.

Villata noted that the scientific community has questioned the credibility of the Dirty Dozen list for several years. “The methodology used to create it does not follow any established scientific procedures, nor is it submitted for peer review, a fundamental in responsible science,” he said.

“Most important, it does not account for how much of a fruit or vegetable a person would have to consume in order to be at even the slightest risk,” Villata added. He cited a study by Dr. Carl Winter, a food toxicologist and Director of the Food Safe Program at the University of California, Davis, which noted it is a matter of the amount of a chemical – not its presence or absence – that determines the potential for harm. (<http://www.hindawi.com/journals/jt/2011/589674>)

To address that, the Alliance for Food and Farming established the Safe Fruits & Vegetables website (www.safefruitsandveggies.com). It provides a calculator for determining how many servings a person would have to consume, even if they contain the highest levels of pesticide residue, in order to experience any possible adverse effects. For blueberries, a man would have to consume 306 servings, a woman 219, a teen 233 and a child 175 in one day. (A serving equals 1 dry cup, so an adult female would have to consume more than eleven gallons of blueberries in a single day to exceed government tolerance levels on that day.)

“We also are concerned that the misinformation in the list is driving people away from produce, and they are not getting the many healthy benefits of fresh fruits and vegetables,” Villata said. “Blueberries, in particular, are known to provide many health benefits and people may be missing them because they are unnecessarily frightened by a report with little or no scientific validity.”