



# Scranton SBDC

Friday, March 13, 2009

## HR 875: The Food Safety Modernization Act



The Scranton SBDC is a member of PASA, Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture. Recently, as a listserv member, the following information was provided, which may be of interest to our agriculture and food-oriented clients. We have PASA's permission to provide you with the information through our Blog. The original data comes from Food and Water Watch, which I'll discuss at the end of this entry.

**PASA Members: The following information about a bill now before Congress, HR 875, was developed by our friends at Food and Water Watch, and forwarded to us by the National Sustainable Ag Coalition (NSAC), of which PASA is a member. This Myth/Fact sheet was developed to help answer some of the rumors that are fairly rampant on the Internet right now. We will keep a close eye on the situation, and share further updates from NSAC as they become available.**

### Myths and Facts: HR 875 - The Food Safety Modernization Act

**MYTH:** H.R. 875 "makes it illegal to grow your own garden" and would result in the "criminalization of the backyard gardner."

**FACT:** There is no language in the bill that would regulate, penalize, or shut down backyard gardens. This bill is focused on ensuring the safety of foods sold in supermarkets.

**MYTH:** H.R. 875 would mean a "goodbye to farmers markets" because the bill would "require such a burdensome complexity of rules, inspections, licensing, fees, and penalties for each farmer who wishes to sell locally - a fruit stand, at a farmers market."

**FACT:** There is no language in the bill that would result in farmers markets being regulated, penalized any fines, or shut down. Farmers

## Welcome to the Scranton SBDC Blog!

Check in often for information relevant to the eight counties that we service: Bradford, Lackawanna, Monroe, Pike, Susquehanna, Tioga, Wayne and Wyoming; and for information on important news and items for small business owners (and those who want to be)!

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markets would be able to continue to flourish under the bill. In fact, the bill would insist that imported foods meet strict safety standards to ensure that unsafe imported foods are not competing with locally-grown foods.

**MYTH:** H.R. 875 would result in the "death of organic farming."

**FACT:** There is no language in the bill that would stop organic farming. The National Organic Program (NOP) is under the jurisdiction of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The Food Safety Modernization Act only addresses food safety issues under the jurisdiction of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

**MYTH:** The bill would implement a national animal ID system.

**FACT:** There is no language in the bill that would implement a national animal ID system. Animal identification issues are under the jurisdiction of the USDA. The Food Safety Modernization Act addresses issues under the jurisdiction of the FDA.

**MYTH:** The bill is supported by the large agribusiness industry.

**FACT:** No large agribusiness companies have expressed support for this bill. This bill is being supported by several Members of Congress who have strong progressive records on issues involving farmers markets, organic farming, and locally-grown foods. Also, H.R. 875 is the only food safety legislation that has been supported by all the major consumer and food safety groups, including:

- Center for Foodborne Illness Research & Prevention
- Center for Science in the Public Interest
- Consumer Federation of America
- Consumers Union
- Food & Water Watch
- The Pew Charitable Trusts
- Safe Tables Our Priority
- Trust for America's Health

**MYTH:** The bill will pass the Congress next week without amendments or debate. **FACT:** Food safety legislation has yet to be considered by any Congressional committee.

If you haven't checked out [Food and Water Watch's website](#), you may want to make it one of your favorites. Even if you are not presently farming, there are a number of good, solid resources for consumers as well.

Food and Water Watch is a nonprofit organization whose mission statement (to "ensure clean water and safe food") is a simple one. Newsletters covering the aspects of water protection (*Currents*) and food protection (*Food Alert*) are archived on the site for review. There are links to a Blog list and a Consumer Tools list on the home page. It's worth your while to investigate what the site has to offer.

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