

By: Hinojosa

S.B. No. 1532

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the regulation of food safety in fresh fruits and vegetables.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that:

(1) the agricultural industry is a vital part of the state's economy, contributing \$73 billion annually, or 9.5 percent of the gross state product, and is the state's second largest industry, with one in every seven Texans being employed in some segment of the agricultural industry;

(2) food safety must be a top state priority because an accidental or deliberate contamination of food or crops could be detrimental to the state's economy and would undermine consumer confidence in the integrity of food safety in this state;

(3) the growing and processing of fresh fruits and vegetables is crucial to this state, and since September 11, 2001, awareness of the threat of contamination of those products has increased; and

(4) the state should increase awareness of food safety among the state's growers and processors of fresh fruits and vegetables to avoid disastrous events.

SECTION 2. Subchapter A, Chapter 91, Agriculture Code, is amended by adding Section 91.009 to read as follows:

Sec. 91.009. COORDINATION. (a) The department is the lead

1 agency in the regulation of food safety in fresh fruits and
2 vegetables, including any federally mandated inspections of farms
3 and fresh-cut processing facilities, and is responsible for
4 coordinating the activities of state and federal agencies with
5 regard to such regulation.

6 (b) The department shall coordinate, plan, and approve
7 training and awareness programs among producers of fresh fruits and
8 vegetables in this state. The programs must inform and educate
9 producers about proper food handling procedures, the prevention of
10 accidental or deliberately planned outbreaks of disease, and the
11 enhancement of overall food safety. The department shall
12 coordinate with colleges, universities, the Texas Agricultural
13 Experiment Station, the Texas Cooperative Extension Service, and
14 private industry to jointly plan and approve programs required
15 under this subsection.

16 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect September 1, 2007.