

California FARMER

Details of new regional food policy see Page 7

Good times at Auction Napa Valley fundraiser see Page 18

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BEST PRACTICES: Underwood Family Farms, with employee Dave Warner at the counter in Pasadena, employs basic food safety practices for its farmers markets. The farm participates in 12 California Certified Farmers' Markets in the Southland. Underwood Family Farms grows a wide variety of fresh vegetable and fruits in Ventura County.

By **DON DALE**

IT'S a scary world in food-land, in the realms of food safety and environmental sustainability. Nothing illustrates this more than the food safety bill. It failed in the House, falling six votes short of the two-thirds needed for special House rules. But the defeat was short-lived, as leaders re-scheduled the vote — this time, under regular rules. It passed by a 283-142 margin, but this food fight isn't over.

Key Points

- Nothing illustrates the food fight like the pending food safety bill.
- Safety bill passed the House by 283-142, but fight isn't over.
- California Farm Bureau opposes the bill; United Fresh backs it.

Growers, packers, shippers, wholesalers and retailers are all following the food fight. That was the message coming out of the Institute of Food Technologists Annual Meeting

& Food Expo in Anaheim.

Small and mid-sized farms and organic farmers complicate the fight by challenging Food and Drug Administration efforts to expand food-safety powers. They worry that the FDA will set production standards and charge the same fees as for large food processors. It might also require more trace-back records.

New FDA powers

The FDA also gains subpoena power, mandatory food recall authority and the ability to

impose a regional quarantine if officials have a "reasonable belief" that there's a risk of death or serious illness.

The bill exempts wineries, as well as farms and facilities already regulated by USDA under rules governing safe meat, poultry and eggs. Small businesses also have longer to comply.

The California Farm Bureau Federation opposes the bill, saying that farmers will pay stiff \$20,000-a-day penalties for recordkeeping violations. CFBF

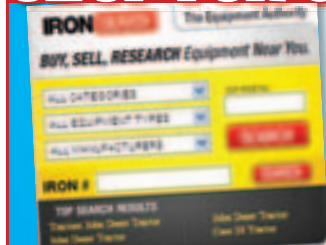
also raises concerns about the FDA's new quarantine and recall powers. But the United Fresh Produce Association, including California Grape & Tree Fruit League and Paramount Citrus, supports the bill.

Scientists at the IFT meeting spoke about the difficulty of managing risk in a global economy, where thousands of food ingredients may be sourced from dozens of countries.

Dale is an Altadena writer.

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