

## USDA To Host First Meeting Of Meat Industry's B2B Data Standards Group

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The USDA will host the first meeting of MeatXML.org, a new voluntary organization that will set electronic supply-chain standards for the meat industry, here Feb. 22.

Kathleen Merrigan, adminis-

trator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said, "AMS believes its support for these standards is critical to facilitating an open and efficient meat and poultry supply chain in the electronic age."

This voluntary consensus standards body is being formed

with the objective of developing data trading terminology that can be used industry-wide to facilitate Internet-based business-to-business (B2B) trading. This first meeting will focus on providing an overview of how extensible markup language, known as XML, facilitates electronic data exchange among companies using the Internet and the value of industry-wide standards. The group will also review the proposed structure and administration of the standards body and the process it will use to approve new or revised standards. The meeting will be open to the public.

Representatives from companies involved in meat and poultry production and processing, retail distribution, and commerce network integration are encouraged to attend.

More information about the February meeting can be found at [www.ams.usda.gov/meatxml.htm](http://www.ams.usda.gov/meatxml.htm) and [www.meatxml.org](http://www.meatxml.org).

## Lower Service Fee For Farm Bureau Workers' Comp

GLENMONT, N.Y. — New York Farm Bureau's Workers' Compensation Safety Group #486's Executive Committee has lowered the group's service fee for the upcoming year.

The service fee is used not only to administer the 2,600-farmer member group, but also to support the efforts of New York Farm Bureau on behalf of its members in a wide array of areas, such as efforts to promote school tax and sales tax reforms.

Safety Group #486 has exhibited proven stability and longevity since its inception in 1968.

"The service fee has been gradually trending upwards in recent years," said Daniel Hooker, New York Farm Bureau's director of member services. "We are very happy to see that trend reverse, putting us substantially below the state's maximum allowable amount. Our Safety Group Executive Committee has provided aggressive leadership in responding to the needs of the members and to the dictates of the market. I am sure that this is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to an even more competitive and business-

like Safety Group."

The New York Farm Bureau's Safety Group writes workers' compensation policies for nursery, sod, dairy, horse boarding and breeding operations, fruit, vegetable, berry, grape, poultry and greenhouse operations, in addition to feed manufacturing and retail grain and seed stores.

Farm Bureau members needing workers' compensation insurance or those farmers not yet members of New York Farm Bureau can obtain more details by calling (800) 342-4143.

## Direct Marketing Conference Sets Jan. 18 Registration Deadline

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. — Jan. 18 is the deadline to register for the upcoming Mid-Atlantic Direct Marketing Conference and Trade Show, set for Feb. 21-24 here.

The conference will provide expert advice and information for agricultural direct-sale businesses, including pick-your-own produce operations, roadside stands, and farmers' markets.

The theme for this year's conference is "Charting a New Course." Topics will include agritourism, community relations, customer service, business planning, food safety, buying techniques, visual presentation, advertising, e-commerce, retirement planning, and liability insurance.

Three preconference seminars are also planned. The first is the three-day Franklin-Covey 7 Habits™ workshop, which seeks to improve both personal and professional performance. In the other two seminars, participants may explore strategies for success at public farmers' markets and the possibilities offered by

the gift basket business.

The trade show will feature more than 50 exhibitors with products and services ranging from packaging and labeling supplies to fun activities for children, as well as private labeled items, gift shop suggestions, and more.

Post-conference tours — both virtual and actual — will showcase several area operations in action including a family dairy farm in Chesapeake and the Virginia Beach Farmers' Market.

For reservation information, contact Cathy Belcher, [cbelcher@vdacs.state.va.us](mailto:cbelcher@vdacs.state.va.us), (804) 786-4046 or click on [www.madmc.com](http://www.madmc.com). Register for the conference and make hotel reservations by Jan. 18 to ensure the best rates. The registration fee for the Franklin-Covey workshop must be paid by Dec. 29.

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