

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**CONTACT:** Amanda Brokaw
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(212) 679-6600**ANNUAL FOOD EDITOR SURVEY REVEALS TOP FOOD STORIES OF 2008**
Rising Global Food Prices Claims No. 1 Spot

DECEMBER 17, 2008, NEW YORK, NY — When asked to recall the top food-related stories of 2008, the nation's food editors focused on issues with global significance. Topping the list was the spike in food prices across the world, followed by the tainted milk scandal in China—a crisis that spanned five continents.

The sixth annual year-end survey was conducted by Hunter Public Relations, one of the nation's leading public relations agencies serving the food and beverage industry. Hunter Public Relations reached out to more than 900 food editors and bloggers across the country and asked them to rate the top ten food-related stories of 2008.

The **biggest food story of the year** was decidedly the **rise in food prices around the world**. Countries across the globe faced food crises due to high oil prices, growing demand, lower food reserves and unexpected weather patterns. As a result, the hunger rate grew rapidly, especially in Haiti, Cairo, Niger, Malaysia, Senegal, Indonesia and many Latin American countries. Rice prices hit a record high in Asian countries, and this caused major concern since rice is a staple for the world's hungry.

Close behind in the **No. 2** spot was **China's tainted milk scandal**, which began in August 2008 after tests indicated that China's leading dairy companies produced milk containing the industrial chemical melamine. Tainted baby formula was responsible for killing six infants and causing harm to tens of thousands of individuals. Recalls of milk-based products made in China spread to dozens of countries across the globe, including Britain, Indonesia, Japan, Singapore, New Zealand, Australia and the United States.

The **salmonella outbreak in raw tomatoes** took the **No. 3** spot. FDA officials warned consumers about the salmonella, which was said to have infected 145 people and caused at least 23 hospitalizations in 16 states. McDonald's pulled sliced tomatoes from its restaurants, and Winn-Dixie Stores and other supermarket chains pulled tomatoes off their shelves as a precaution.

These top three stories won by a landslide vote among those surveyed. Several of the

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additional top food stories reflect our nation's growing concern with the nutritional standards of the foods we consume. The remaining top ten food stories of 2008 are:

No. 4: Supermarket Chains Offer More Locally Grown Food: Supermarkets are now offering a wider variety of locally grown produce and meat. Wal-Mart plans to spend \$400 million on locally grown foods in 2009, making it the largest player in the locally grown market.

No. 5: New Labeling Laws: The USDA implemented new labeling laws requiring retailers to include country-of-origin labeling for produce, meat and chicken products.

No. 6: Big Food Companies Adopt Nutrient Standards: As part of the "Smart Choices Program," many of the country's largest food and beverage companies have agreed to use the same logo on their packaging to denote products meeting certain nutritional guidelines. Currently, the participants are Kraft Foods, Coca-Cola, Wal-Mart, General Mills, ConAgra Foods, Kellogg, PepsiCo and Unilever.

No. 7: Jalapeño Peppers Test Positive for Salmonella: More than 1,200 people across 44 states contracted salmonella poisoning from jalapeño peppers, prompting the FDA to issue a nationwide warning.

No. 8: Paul Newman Dies: Legendary actor and philanthropist Paul Newman passed away. He was one of the founders of Newman's Own, a company that produces a wide variety of foods.

No. 9: NYC Restaurant Regulations: New York City issued a trans fat ban across all restaurants. Additionally, a judge ruled that all NYC restaurants with at least 15 outlets nationwide must post calorie count information.

No. 10: New Levels of Alarm Associated With High Salt Intake: The FDA is considering the removal of salt from its list of Generally Recognized as Safe foods.

Survey participants were also asked what they thought food companies should make their No. 1 priority for the coming year. In line with the economic crisis of 2008, editors overwhelmingly believed that food companies' top priority should be offering budget-friendly meal options.

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