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For immediate release from the Smoke Manufacturers and Processors Association.

The Smoke Manufacturers and Processors Association (SMPA) is an association of the major manufacturers of smoke flavorings (also known as condensed smoke), whose sole purpose is dedicated to providing accurate and informative information to consumers, processors, and regulators about smoke condensates, and the benefits of smoking meats, and flavoring foods with these products.

Smoke condensates are produced by burning wood chips to generate smoke, and then cooling and condensing the smoke to make a liquid. The liquid is then subjected to a filtration and purification step where most of the undesirable tars are removed. This process of purification is what makes smoke condensates more desirable than smoking with freshly generated smoke as indicated in EU regulation 2065/2003 that states....."*Because smoke condensates are produced from smoke which is subjected to fractionation and purification processes, the use of smoke flavorings is generally considered to be of less health concern than the traditional smoking process.*"

The above statement is confirmed in the more than 50 years that condensed smoke has been used in the process of smoking meats, and flavoring foods there has never been an link between its use, and consumer health issues. In the United States 'condensed smoke' has been recognized by the Health Authorities within the US Department of Agriculture with a status of Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS), a status similar to other common foods.

The SMPA supports the European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) efforts related to food safety, and looks forward to working with the Commission to make sure that smoke condensates are used according to best practices so consumers will continue to have the benefits of the highest smoked food safety. The Association would encourage EFSA to evaluate all the traditional smoking processes to give a more complete comparison of health and environment issues of each process. We are also committed to work with authorities to make sure they are aware that smoke condensates are used in the smoking process to obtain smoke color, flavor, and preservation, and not only as a flavor mixed into a product as seems indicated in the EFSA reports.

The SMPA looks forward to the remainder of the EFSA reports on smoke condensates that are still being reviewed, and expects these reports to be released in 2009. We will work closely with the Commission and EFSA to address any open questions that the reports may have raised.

The EFSA reports as they were released will raise food safety concerns about smoked foods, foods smoked with smoke condensates, and foods flavored with smoke condensates. The SMPA would like to assure processors and consumers that smoke condensates have never been identified as unsafe for human consumption, and look forward to the discussion about the safety of all smoked foods since we know quite well that the highest food safety, cleanest environment, and lowest carbon foot print is obtained when smoking meats, or flavoring foods with smoke condensates.

The SMPA is aware that 2009 will mark an important year as we work together with EFSA and the Commission to establish processing guidelines for all the primary products that maintains the current high level of food safety, and benefits these products provide.

Charles Lohmeyer – Director
Smoke Manufacturers and Processors Association