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Wholesale Food Prices Spike

February 2011 marked the largest one-month increase in 37 years for wholesale food prices, climbing by 3.9 percent.

An analysis of the latest Producer Price Index Report by The Food Institute, Upper Saddle River, NJ, indicates that wholesale prices have not experienced an increase this great in many years. This number was only exceeded in November 1974 when spiraling oil prices resulted in sharp food price increases amounting to 4.2 percent.

"Food retailers in the U.S. have been very adept at holding price increases at a minimum for the past 18 months but the February surge will make that task more difficult in future months," commented Brian Todd, president and chief executive officer of the non-profit trade association, which has been providing information about the food industry since 1928.

This latest increase in the Producer Price Index for finished consumer foods is driven by a 49 percent jump in fresh vegetable prices due to freezes and other crop issues in many farming areas. Price increases of 4 percent or more during the month for beef and pork also added to the surge in the overall index.

Of the 17 categories the Food Institute tracks on a regular basis, 13 posted increases during February, led by fresh vegetables, and followed by a nearly 10 percent jump in shortening and cooking oil, a 7.6 percent jump in egg prices, a 4.1 percent gain in dairy prices and a 3.2 percent jump in coffee prices.

NEFF To Host 50th Anniversary Gala

The New England Food Foundation (NEFF) will mark its 50th anniversary with a gala celebration on Saturday, May 7 at Lombardo's in Randolph, MA.

The group will honor its founding fathers and past presidents as it celebrates a half-century of charitable work on behalf of needy children in New England. NEFF will also be celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Cape House in Sandwich, MA. The Cape House has provided an escape for these children, offering an opportunity to learn and grow from their experiences at a beautiful property on Triangle Pond.

NEFF is seeking support from the food industry for this milestone in the form of gala attendance, program book sponsorship, or items donated for auction. Support of the NEFF allows for the continued operation of the Cape House, and the established Endowment Fund ensures that the Cape House will continue to operate in support of future generations of children in need.

Tickets are \$250 per person or \$2,500 for a table of ten. For more information or to purchase tickets, contact Rick Daly at rdaly@esm-ne.com, Kim Richardson-Roach at krichardroach@stopandshop.com, Jim Fowler at jim.fowler@shaws.com, Bob Turcotte at rhturcotte@demoulasmarketbasket.com, or John Saidnawey at jsaidnawey@johare.com.

New England NEW's Special Event

On April 14, the Network of Executive Women (NEW) is hosting a Special Sponsor Appreciation event. The evening includes inspiring and dynamic speaker Consuelo Kickbusch, a networking cocktail reception, and book signing at the Marriott in Newton, MA.

Highlighting the evening is a presentation by Lt. Col. Consuelo Castillo Kickbusch, U.S. Army (retired) and founder and president of Educational Achievement Services. Consuelo's presentation is filled with passion and humor and will help you achieve your personal vision by living your legacy every day. You will leave inspired to give back to your community and achieve your personal goals.

Join this admirable presenter and senior leaders of grocery retail and CPG companies from the New England region as Consuelo shares her personal knowledge on becoming an effective leader in today's global marketplace.

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The Frozen and Refrigerated Association of the NorthEast (FRANE) will host the annual FRANE/ Ryan Marrocco Memorial Golf Tournament on Tuesday, May 17, 2011 at Pinehills Golf Club in Plymouth, MA. Support of this event ensures the continued success of FRANE's scholarship programs, which to date has awarded over \$500,000 in scholarships to applicants from member companies. This event sells out year after year. Registration is \$500 per golfer, with foursome and sponsorship packages available. To book a foursome or sponsorship, call the FRANE office at 203-597-7215 for more information.

The Latest Word

The NorthEast Wholesale Food Distributors Association (NEWFDA) will host its 11th Annual Golf Outing on Tuesday, July 19, 2011. This year's outing will be held at the International Golf Club in Bolton, MA. For more information or to register, contact Kris Adams, member services manager, at 603-755-9426 or krisa@newfda.org. Registration forms are due April 3.

In response to community interest in helping the millions of people affected by the Japan earthquake and Pacific tsunami, Big Y World Class Markets, Springfield, MA, has launched a customer donation program in all of its 58 Massachusetts and Connecticut stores. Through Sunday, April

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