

# SN

SUPERMARKET NEWS

## Paradise Lost?

After years of unbridled growth, Florida retailers are adapting to a slower pace of development — Page 12

PHOTO:DOO/ISTOCK



## New Bills Expand FDA Power

By MARK HAMSTRA

**WASHINGTON** — New legislation introduced in Congress last week seeks to strengthen the Food and Drug Administration's ability to monitor food safety.

The measures — one bill that was introduced in the Senate and another that was expected late last week in the House — follow recent calls from major industry associations for a stronger FDA following a series of outbreaks of foodborne illnesses.

"Recent outbreaks, recalls and food-safety scares have revealed weaknesses in our current system and new challenges in an ever-changing

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## Everyday Pricing, New Branding Drive Ahold

By JON SPRINGER

**AMSTERDAM** — Lower everyday prices at Stop & Shop and Giant-Landover are beginning to work just as officials had hoped they would.

Consumers seeking value amid deteriorating economic conditions helped Ahold here post increases in sales and net income for the recently ended fourth quarter and fiscal year, with its largest U.S. chains, Stop & Shop and Giant-Landover, each posting their best quarterly identical-store sales in five years.

What's more, the strong traffic allowed Ahold to back off on promotions and begin to leverage fixed costs during the quarter, leading to what one analyst called "blowout" earnings results that surpassed analyst expectations.

Larry Benjamin, chief operating officer of Ahold USA, in an interview with SN last week said that the chain had not

seen notable changes in consumer behavior attributable to the economy beyond an uptick in private-label sales, particularly among its lower- and middle-tier products.

He credited a "smart" mix of promotions and everyday pricing, along with positive response to new branding programs around the everyday lower pricing programs, as key factors in the resurgent banners.

"Given the remarkable changes in the economy, we really haven't seen anything particularly striking or off-trend other than a shift toward value and private label — but that's a trend we've seen for a long time," Benjamin said. "We've had good numbers on trips and good responsiveness to our everyday prices, and we were able to reduce promotional spending, which was counterintuitive. But we were able to drive IDs off our everyday pricing."

Promotions at Ahold, he said, are becoming more targeted

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# NCBA TRAINS RETAILERS

CHICAGO — The National Cattlemen's Beef Association here has offered its "Beef Training Camp" program for four years now, but only recently has it taken its efforts online. Since converting into an electronic format in October, page views of the Beef Training Camp page have doubled.

"Nearly all of the major retailers have either conducted a Beef Training Camp session or have incorporated Beef Training Camp into their own training programs," said Randy Irion, director of retail marketing for NCBA.

"As we were updating it, we decided to make it Web-based, and that has definitely struck a chord with our audience. I don't think anybody can afford anymore to have just volumes and volumes of books out there dedicated to various topics. What they want to do is, when they're ready to find out information or share information with their staff associates about crating, cooking or safe handling, they can just bring that information up on an as-needed basis. It also gives us the opportunity to update the information at a much reduced cost vs. updating printed materials."

The program, offered on [www.beefretail.org](http://www.beefretail.org), gives retailers the tools to create customized training sessions for meat associates using fact sheets, slide presentations and videos. It also helps gather information about new beef cuts, including preparation pointers and cooking methods to pass on to consumers in addition to quarterly graphs and charts on consumer trends in the meat case.

Besides converting into an electronic format, NCBA added Customer Service and Hispanic Marketing modules, as well as up-to-date consumer trend data and information on new cuts such as the Ranch Steak. The Beef Training Camp modules can be customized for various training scenarios, including new employee introductions, refresher courses on specific topics, periodic customer service training and preparation for the various selling seasons, such as summer grilling, Irion told *SN*.

— A.S.