

Food Safety Alert – 1/12/07

The *Salinas Californian* discusses both meetings on food safety that I reported on yesterday. Over 100 growers, shippers and other agricultural leaders discussed the details of the proposed Marketing Agreement at Sherwood Hall. The majority support guidelines but are concerned about the potential costs. The Western Growers Association believes this will head off legislation in Sacramento. "There's a perception out there that we need to do more, and we are trying to prevent legislation from dictating how farmers farm," said Thomas Nassif, president and CEO of Western Growers, after the meeting, which was not open to the public." The agreement is, however, being written in connection with the CDFA. Jim Bogart, president of the Salinas-based Grower-Shipper Association of Central California, says it is not mandatory for those who sign on. "Once you sign, it's a contract. You're bound, and it's mandatory that you procure, process and ship leafy greens that are grown pursuant to strict guidelines," Bogart said. "Joseph Pezzini, vice president of operations for Ocean Mist Farms in Castroville and chairman of the Grower-Shipper Association, said the agreement and order will allow the industry to develop more effective food safety rules than those that exist now."

In the other meeting on the topic, Assemblywoman Anna Caballero (D-Salinas) met with nine officials from state health, environmental and water agencies. CDFA Secretary A.G. Kawamura was also in attendance. "They have established a collaborative approach," Caballero said. "I was very happy, and I was surprised to learn that."

<http://www.thecalifornian.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070112/NEWS01/701120331>

The *Santa Cruz Sentinel* is also reporting that Schwarzenegger is has earmarked millions for the state's food safety program. The proposed budget includes an increase of 2.1 million to fight foodborne illness. This is one of many state efforts to boost safety in the industry. The budget will double the current funding dedicated to investigating outbreaks. When the budget takes effect on July 1, a newly created Department of Public Health will take the place of the Department of Health Services in handling food safety. "I think it's a good beginning," said state Assemblywoman Anna Caballero, D-Salinas, reacting to news of governor's budget, "but I also believe we need to fully fund research that can find the source of contamination."

<http://www.santacruzsentinel.com/archive/2007/January/11/local/stories/03local.htm>

The *Arizona Daily Star* is running an article that says the recent E. coli outbreaks point to the need for irradiation. Ronald Eustice, head of the Minnesota Beef Council, believes that most of the harmful bacteria in meat, poultry, fruit and vegetables can be killed by irradiation. Currently, less than 1 percent of meat and poultry in the United States is irradiated. That number is less in fruit and vegetables. However, two recent E. coli outbreaks in Minnesota and across the nation have renewed calls to increase the use of this method of riding our nation's food supply of the potentially deadly bacteria. Dennis Olson, professor at Iowa State University, believes that if irradiation had been a technology used to combat the germ, there would not have been an outbreak from spinach last fall. Opponents of irradiation are bracing for another fight over it. "People jump right on any outbreak to promote irradiation," said Patty Lovera, assistant director of Food and Water Watch, a consumer advocacy group in Washington. "We think that would be an unfortunate result of the increased attention on food-safety problems." Irradiation uses electromagnetic waves to kill germs and parasites. Some believe it is safe and others believe it kills nutrients and can generate harmful cancer-causing chemicals.

<http://www.azstarnet.com/allheadlines/164144>

According to CTV in Canada, researchers have developed a vaccine that will significantly decrease the amount of E. coli that gets into their nation's food and water supplies. The vaccine reduces the amount of E. coli that cattle shed in their manure. Dr. Lorne Babiuk, who helped develop the vaccine with a team from the University of British Columbia, the University of Saskatchewan and the Alberta Research Council, says it can reduce the bacteria a thousandfold. "For example, in a normal animal, they might excrete 1 million bacteria per gram of manure," Babiuk explained to Canada AM. "After they're vaccinated, they excrete maybe 1,000." The vaccine targets O157:H7. She believes cattle farmers will use the

vaccine because consumers will demand it. The vaccine should be available on the market within 18 months. It currently has preliminary approval from the Canadian Food and Inspection Agency.

http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20070111/ecoli_vaccine_cattle_070111/20070111?hub=Canada