

Food Safety Alert – 1/19/07

The *Salinas Californian* is reporting that the Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) is urging its members and the public to voice opposition to the Marketing Agreement by the end of the day. They believe many family farms would be put out of business because the agreement will require increased water and soil testing as well as other costs for compliance. "CAFF believes many of these proposed practices are misdirected and will do nothing to reduce the threat of future bacterial outbreaks," the organization said in an e-mail to its members." Many in the group believe the focus of any regulation should deal with the practices of some farmers and processors using water that has been contaminated by cow manure.

<http://www.californianonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2007701180316>

The *Courier Post* website is running an article out of Atlantic City that says a major grocery chain, Wegmans Food Markets, will start requiring an independent audit of all farmers' agricultural practices before buying their crops. Wegmans operates 77 stores in five states. The grocery chain wants a third party to audit the soil and water used for irrigation. The auditors will be watching handlers to verify they have washed hands after bathroom breaks, that packinghouses are bug free, and that farmers crops are not commingled. In addition, they will be checking for animal tracks near buffer zones and verifying if a farmer is applying proper fertilizers under appropriate conditions. William Poole, manager of agricultural production and research for Wegmans Food Markets, says, "If you can't prove to me that you use good agricultural practices, we won't be buying from you. We cannot afford to put our customers, the corporation and other growers in the industry at risk. The spinach outbreak this fall was the straw that broke the camel's back." Only a handful of companies actually perform farming operations audits and the number of qualified inspectors within the USDA is inadequate to handle this task, according to Poole. "Don Schaffner, a food scientist at Rutgers University, called E. coli 'one tough bug' because research shows it can survive on a sprig of parsley for more than 177 days."

<http://www.courierpostonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070118/BUSINESS/701180380/1003>

More links to yesterday's news about Fresh Express:

<http://www.infectioncontrolday.com/hotnews/71h1814483548360.html>

<http://www.theksbwchannel.com/news/10776486/detail.html>

More links to yesterday's news on Taco John's (AP feeds – same story):

http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/6420AP_MN_Taco_Johns_Lawsuit.html

<http://www.ktiv.com/News/index.php?ID=9232>