

Food Safety Alert – 10/12/06

Senator Florez, D-Shafter, who chaired a state Senate Hearing yesterday (which only had two members present from the 9 member Committee on Governmental Organization, <http://www.kcra.com/news/10056349/detail.html>), has stated that he will pursue state regulation of crop production, including leafy greens, and which will be tougher on Salinas Valley growers and processors. After the hearing Florez stated, "The Salinas Valley shouldn't ruin it for the rest of agriculture in the Central Valley or the Coachella Valley," Florez said. His plans include introducing at least six bills to clarify the authority of state health officials for such activities as field inspections, mandatory audits and recalls and locating portable toilets for workers where they won't leak onto fields. The bills will also likely address issues such as runoff, wildlife and water quality and could call for additional inspections in the Salinas Valley.

Ag representatives at the meeting agreed in state involvement, but requested that lawmakers wait until the conclusion of the FDA investigation before implementing any regulatory measures.

Senator Denham of the Ag Committee criticized Florez for holding the hearing prematurely. Florez cited the lack of a conclusion to the investigation of the E Coli outbreak traced to Dole lettuce, which occurred more than a year ago.

<http://www.californianonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20061012/NEWS01/610120342>

Mexico's lettuce ban, a response to news of the Nunes Co.'s voluntary recall on lettuce which eventually tested negative for the 0157:H7 strain of E Coli, was lifted by the government, except for lettuce grown in California. Even though there has been no health issues with lettuce, Mexico will keep the ban in place until the FDA confirms the absence of E Coli.

<http://www.montereyherald.com/mld/montereyherald/15738870.htm>

Although Mexican health officials have stated that the ban was implemented out of health concerns for Mexican citizens, there is speculation that the ban is favorable to Mexican growers, and is just another bump in Mexico/U.S. trade relations.

<http://www.montereyherald.com/mld/montereyherald/15738870.htm>

Richard Raymond, Agriculture Department undersecretary for food safety has spoken out against the idea of a single federal agency for oversight of food safety.

http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/S/SPINACH_FOOD_SUPPLY?SITE=KVUE&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT