

Food Safety Alert – 10/18/06

The Presidents of the California Farm Bureau Federation and Western Growers have provided a combined commentary on the current E. Coli and food safety situation. Doug Mosebar states that although the investigation is focused in California, all of the Federation's members should address food safety because the entire produce industry has felt the effects- unity and uniformity is the way to restore consumer confidence. Mosebar proposes rechecking farming practices, supporting research on food safety vocally and financially. Thomas Nassif of Western Growers, proclaims that cooperation and coordination throughout the entire produce production and supply chains to restore confidence.

<http://www.cfbf.com/agalert/AgAlertStory.cfm?ID=695&ck=E4BB4C5173C2CE17FD8FCD40041C068F>

The Food Marketing Institute posted a letter today addressed to its retail and foodservice customers asking for their cooperation in restoring consumer confidence, now that all spinach has been declared safe except for that from the Natural Selection processing center, by putting spinach products back on shelves and on menus.

http://www.fmi.org./Letter_to_Customers_10-6-06.pdf

The *Monterey County Herald* is running an article detailing what local government officials' plans are regarding the outbreak. Sam Farr plans to huddle privately Oct. 27 in Salinas with growers, researchers, and state and federal officials to "sort of brainstorm" about what research is most needed to solve the E. coli riddle. Jeff Denham is planning a joint session between the agricultural committees of the Senate and House to take place in 6-8 weeks so that the investigation can develop further. State and federal health officials, state agriculture officials and local growers will be among those in attendance.

<http://www.montereyherald.com/mld/montereyherald/15786199.htm>

The *Monterey County Herald* printed an editorial yesterday about the lack of urgency of officials and industry members involved in the outbreak. The editorial notes that in correspondence from more than eight months ago, a state health officer urged the Western Growers Association "to take immediate steps" that had been outlined by the Food and Drug Administration a year earlier, including assessing regulations on manure composting, septic tank leaks, worker hygiene and the flooding of fields. Under questioning by Florez, a key state official was forced to acknowledge that none of those steps had been completed. In the same article, the writer expresses concern that the new E. Coli study being conducted to research point sources of contamination and transmission will take 4 years.

<http://www.montereyherald.com/mld/montereyherald/news/editorial/15777947.htm>

The U.S. Attorney's Office in San Francisco hasn't unsealed affidavits filed by investigators to search two spinach processors, Natural Selection Foods and Growers Express in Salinas, on Oct. 4. A spokeswoman Tuesday said the office had no comment on the case.

<http://www.montereyherald.com/mld/montereyherald/15786199.htm>

In related news, a salad-processing plant in Plymouth, Ind., owned by Ready Pac Produce Inc. will close next month because of the market slowdown caused by the spinach recall, officials for the Irwindale company said. The plant employs about 200 people.

<http://www.fortwayne.com/mld/newssentinel/news/local/15780420.htm>