

Food Safety Alert – 10/26/06

The government in Hong Kong is reporting that sales of fresh spinach have resumed after the FDA confirmed that the farms associated with the outbreak are “no longer producing.” The Center for Food Safety says it has tested samples and found no E. coli problems. Spinach dated October 2 or later has been given the all clear.

<http://www.news.gov.hk/en/category/healthandcommunity/061025/html/061025en05008.htm>

The *Salinas Californian* is reporting that Leon Panetta believes it is time for “state and federal officials to establish a permanent team to deal with food safety problems like the E. coli outbreak in the Salinas Valley.” He made those comments to the California State Board of Food and Agriculture. He states in the article that he predicts such outbreaks will continue. He believes “a joint venture of state and federal agencies and farmers is needed to take preventative steps, such as more testing and sampling.” He argues that this type of outbreak doesn’t just affect one farm, but the entire industry. “The industry obviously needs to be at the table, but this is a huge issue when millions of dollars are lost in a business,” he said. “They (public agencies and industry) should not only speak with one voice but should act with one authority.”

<http://www.californianonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20061026/NEWS01/610260314>

The *Monterey County Herald* is reporting that some growers along the Salinas River may turn to fences to keep livestock and wildlife away from their crops. The article states that they are working with state wildlife officials to determine the best way to erect fences along the riverbed. “Though the cause of last month’s E. coli outbreak in fresh spinach bagged by a San Juan Bautista processor hasn’t been determined, wild pigs and deer are among prime suspects in crop-contamination cases, farm industry officials say”... “We can’t wait for the results of the investigation,” King City farmer Bob Martin said last week. “(Health officials) are telling us to take every precaution we can to keep wildlife out of our leafy green crops.”

<http://www.montereyherald.com/mld/montereyherald/news/15821578.htm>

On a related note, the *Monterey County Herald* is also reporting that Mexico has lifted its ban on lettuce after tests on irrigation water and lettuce proved negative.

<http://www.montereyherald.com/mld/montereyherald/living/community/15810555.htm>