

Food Safety Alert – 11/01/06

Yesterday, the Canadian Food Agency (“CFA”) loosened their ban on importation of American Spinach, with the exception of produce grown in California’s San Benito and Monterey counties, where officials continue to focus their investigation into an E. coli outbreak. The CFA said in a released statement that “[t]he Agency has taken a precautionary approach to protect Canadians from exposure to E. coli 0157:H7 and is confident that spinach grown outside of these counties does not represent a risk to Canadian consumers.” This announcement comes following the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s new identification labelling program that will allow Canadian officials to reject any produce grown in the San Benito and Monterey counties. The CFIA also announced it has improved its import and domestic microbial sampling procedures.

<http://www.cbc.ca/consumer/story/2006/10/31/canada-spinach.html>

The estate of the Nebraska woman who passed away after eating spinach tainted with E. coli has filed a lawsuit in a Nebraska state court against “John Doe Farms,’ the Dole Food Company, Natural Selections Foods and No Frills Supermarkets.” The suit was filed by the Marler Clark law firm. As to the inclusion of Joh Doe Farms, Bill Marler stated, “We included John Doe Farms as a defendant to try to get more answers for our clients.” The Trautz lawsuit is the first to name the farm where the spinach was grown as a defendant. “It is time that the fresh produce industry, from farm to grocery store, takes responsibility for what happened,” Marler said.

<http://www.wowt.com/news/headlines/4530556.html>

As reported yesterday, Western Growers announced plans for food safety measure to help prevent food contamination such as the recent E. coli outbreak. According to the Californian, such procedures include harvest-time field inspections by California Department of Food and Agriculture staff to ensure compliance with WG’s new procedures. The article also details the proposed process to finalize such new procedures. Western Growers would draft the measures and procedures for enforcement. The CDFA would then hold a public hearing on the rules. Once the public hearing has been held, growers and processors would be allowed to approve or deny such rules by a vote.

<http://www.californianonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20061101/NEWS01/611010335&SearchID=73261632470851>

According to CNN.com, the Salmonella outbreak which was reported yesterday has been declared over by the FDA. Illness reports peaked in late September, leading officials to conclude that there have been no new reported illnesses. The outbreak sickened 171 people in Arkansas, Connecticut, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, New Hampshire, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Virginia, Vermont, Washington and Wisconsin.

http://www.cnn.com/2006/HEALTH/conditions/11/01/salmonella.outbreak.ap/index.html?eref=rss_health