

Food Safety Alert – 11/13/06

The *California Chronicle* ran an article on Friday afternoon written by Re. Sam Farr (17th District). He spoke of the rich heritage the region has in the production of agricultural goods and specialty vegetable crops and the value this produce brings. He also provided a brief history on the spinach outbreak in August/September and a need for government to take a role in research on two fronts: “long term basic research and short term applied research to give producers, processors, and regulators practical help in making use of the current state of E. coli knowledge, however incomplete.” He indicated that it is crucial for Congress to ask the right questions about how the FDA managed the crisis and how it communicated with both the public and the industry.

<http://www.californiachronicle.com/articles/viewArticle.asp?articleID=16371>

The *Monterey Herald* ran an article on their website over the weekend showing how some farmers are trying to drum up support for spinach. You know those “I heart New York” bumper stickers? Well, thanks to the Central Coast Young Farmers and Ranchers, there are now “I heart spinach” bumper stickers.” The article states that it is a way to boost both support and confidence for spinach as well as other vegetables.

<http://www.montereyherald.com/mld/montereyherald/news/local/15987869.htm>

In a blurb on KESQ’s (Palm Desert) website, Gov. Schwarzenegger has asked Mexico’s President-elect to put California spinach back on the shelves when he takes office on December 1. Mexican officials are expected to visit California within the next two weeks to conduct inspections before lifting the ban.

<http://www.kesq.com/Global/story.asp?S=5665129&nav=9grx>

WMAQ, and NBC station in Chicago, posed the question of whether or not it was safe to eat bagged produce yet. And they put the question to the test. They and nine other NBC affiliates sent staff persons out to gather up not just spinach and lettuce, but carrots, celery, bean sprouts and coleslaw. (WMAQ gathered 100 bags alone). They sent the produce to an independent lab where it was found that no E. coli O157:H7, salmonella or listeria were present. However, its states that the government needs to take a more cohesive role in regulating the food industry. The article says that there are currently 12 to 15 different federal agencies that oversee farms and that there should be an overhaul of our nation’s food regulation. Sen. Dick Durbin is said to be co-sponsoring a bill that would streamline food safety into one government agency.

<http://www.nbc5.com/money/10291726/detail.html>