

Food Safety Alert – 11/22/06

In an undated article in the *Salinas Californian*, fallout from the outbreak is sized up. The primary concern now is not just over faith lost in spinach, but the Salinas Valley crops as a whole. While estimates put the losses to the spinach industry could be nearly \$200 million, there is a ripple effect because salaries are impacted, re-investment back into the industry is affected, layoffs occur and fewer dollars get spent at shopping malls and the like. "Last year, county agricultural products were valued at \$3.3 billion, and in the Salinas Valley particularly, produce dollars approximately double as they flow through the economy from crop to shopping mall. Some predictions about the risk of financial fallout from E. coli are more dire than others," writes Dawn Withers. In fact, most growers have only planted about five percent of their normal spinach crop which will result in big losses for them. That means less money for new equipment, upgrades to facilities that process produce and to the industries locally that support agriculture in the Salinas Valley.

Bill Marler is reported to be saying that Natural Selection Foods could pay out upward of \$110 million to settle cases as a result of the outbreak. According to the article, he represents 97 of the victims. (The last official numbers indicated there were 204 victims). "John Baillie, president of Baillie Family Farms/Tri-Counties Packing in Salinas, said he expects it will take anywhere from six to 18 months for consumers to start buying bagged salads and spinach at pre-outbreak levels."

<http://thecalifornian.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20061104/NEWS01/611040369/0/NEWS>