

Food Safety Alert – 11/29/06

The *Salinas Californian* is running an article about the food wraps I discussed in an earlier update. They are paper thin and are made from fruits and vegetables. The USDA is currently conducting the three-year study to determine if the wraps – made from oregano, cinnamon and lemon grass – can act as an antibacterial agent against E. coli and salmonella. It appears that the three oils combined with an apple wrap worked to thwart bacterial growth. Monterey County Agricultural leaders have expressed mixed optimism with cautious interest. "Since this is something out of the USDA, it is worth taking a look at," said Bob Perkins, executive director of the Monterey County Farm Bureau." Marty Ordman, a Dole spokesman, says it doesn't have a practical application and for that reason, it is too early to tell if the company will use the wraps or the solution derived from the oils. Andrew Cumming, president of Metz Fresh, stated he "would welcome an approach that legitimately improves safety."

<http://www.californianonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20061129/NEWS01/611290342>

WESH-TV in Orlando, Florida is reporting on their website that the CDC took days to warn the FDA about the E. coli outbreak. Microbiologist in Wisconsin sent the message to the CDC via PulseNet shortly after 4 p.m. central time on Friday, September 8. It was after 5 p.m. eastern time in Atlanta where the CDC is located. PulseNet is a national computer database that scientist use to warn the CDC of viral and bacterial outbreaks. "It's very possible people got sick and for all we know, maybe died in this outbreak because they didn't move faster," said Jim Prevor, the editor-in-chief of Produce Business Magazine and author of the blog Perishable Pundit." However, Dr. Tauxe, the man in charge of PulseNet for the CDC, says the weekend wouldn't have made a difference because no other health departments noticed the urgent message from Wisconsin health officials. Prevor says that the system failed and that left other states to identify the threat by themselves. The CDC has not made any changes to the way they operate or interact with PulseNet.

<http://www.wesh.com/news/10416448/detail.html>

WJZ-TV in Baltimore, Maryland is making a claim on their website that the E. coli threat is as big today as it was in Late August and September. Mike Taylor, the former director of the Agriculture Department's Food Safety and Inspection service, says "we have a system that's not working as well as we can and we will continue having these problems until we address prevention." Experts believe that the fix lies in better farming practices and government regulation of the industry. According to the article, there is legislation pending that would unify the food safety agencies.

http://wjz.com/topstories/local_story_331214824.html