

## Food Safety Alert – 2/09/07

The *Salinas Californian* is reporting that U.S. Representative Sam Farr is reintroducing legislation that will ask for \$26 million for food safety research and financial assistance for fresh spinach growers and handlers. "We are asking for relief from an economic disaster,' Farr said." The bill is called the Spinach Research and Recovery Act of 2006. The funds would be dispensed from the \$40 billion Commodity Credit Corporation. Only those eligible for financial assistance will receive it.

The bill will go to the House Committee on Agriculture today. Farr believes the bill will be added to a larger bill that will cover disaster relief for California growers that were affected by freezing temperatures last month. Trevor Suslow, a professor of plant sciences who studies pathogens in food crops at the University of California, believes the \$26 million is a good start because there are gaps in what we know scientifically about the O157:H7 strain of E. coli. "Obviously anything that would allow for multidisciplinary research toward those goals is very important and very welcome, because it will take that level of funding,' Suslow said." More needs to be learned about how the bacterium survives, how resistant it is to chemical treatments at processing plants and how it is transferred to produce from the environment. He adds that researchers will need a control farm where the pathogen can be released into the environment and they can watch how it reacts with the environment.

<http://www.californianonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2007702090332>

As we know, the California Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement (MA) was certified by the CDFA Wednesday. "I think it's great for food safety. I think it's great for the industry. I think it's great for consumers,' said Jim Bogart, president and general counsel of the Grower-Shipper Association of Central California." What he particularly likes, according to an article in the *Monterey County Herald*, is the flexibility the MA provides over state or federal regulation. "As we get more science, as we obtain useful and effective data, the marketing agreement can be amended. It can reflect the latest science, the latest data and the latest trends,' Bogart said. 'A law is very difficult to change.'"

Sen. Dean Florez calls the MA a "smoke and mirrors" plan that doesn't do enough to protect the public. "You can have one rogue processor or shipper that doesn't want to live up to the standards,' Florez said on Wednesday. 'One hundred seventy out of 170 processors have to have good practices in terms of the safety of the product. There is no room.'" Florez has recently introduced three bills that are aimed at strengthening rules growers and shippers would follow. Under his plan, however, the CDHS would have authority rather than the CDFA.

"Patti Roberts, spokeswoman for the Department of Health Services, said she couldn't comment specifically on the leafy green marketing agreement, but only marketing agreements in general. Her department's main mission right now, she said, is to make sure that something is done quickly to reduce the risk of another outbreak." She further commented, "Marketing order and agreements are the fastest way of implementing standardized, good agricultural practices. It's the fastest way to reduce risk now."

State Secretary of Agriculture A.G. Kawamura will review the nominations and appoint the 13-member advisory board. He may include one member from the public.

<http://www.montereyherald.com/mld/montereyherald/news/local/16651096.htm>