



Romaine Farmers Take Action to Prevent Future Outbreaks

Leafy Greens Marketing Agreements Announce Food Safety Task Force

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The [U.S. Centers for Disease Control](#) updated information today concerning the multi-state outbreak of *E. coli* O157:H7 associated with romaine lettuce from the Yuma region. Yesterday the [Food and Drug Administration](#) released additional information about their investigation saying, “Any contaminated product from the Yuma growing region has already worked its way through the food supply and is no longer available for consumption.” As this tragic outbreak continues to be investigated, farmers, food safety experts and government are coming together to prevent future outbreaks associated with leafy greens.

“Our heartfelt thoughts and prayers continue to be with all of those impacted by this tragedy,” said Arizona Leafy Greens Food Safety Committee Administrator Teresa Lopez. “This incident is a stark reminder of the size and scope of our reach, and we, more than anyone want to understand how it happened. Our primary intent is to minimize risk and protect consumers. We remain absolutely committed to that.”

In response to this outbreak, the Arizona and California leafy greens industries, along with PMA, Western Growers, United Fresh, and other stakeholders are convening a task force to sharpen food safety systems through the entire supply chain from production, to packaging, processing and distribution. The Leafy Greens Food Safety Task Force will include industry members as well as food safety experts, researchers and government representatives.

“It is very difficult to identify an issue weeks or months after the fact, primarily because of the expediency with which our product is harvested and in the marketplace,” said Arizona Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement Chair Jerry Muldoon. “With our industry knowledge, scientific experts and the collaboration of state and federal agencies, we believe we can help get to the bottom of this and make changes to processes after our product leaves the farm, as well as closely examine other factors at play.”

“The strength of the LGMA is that if we learn how and where problems may be occurring, we can quickly change our program,” said California LGMA Chairman Steve Church of Church Brothers Farms. “With the right people at the table, we are confident that we can address the issue.”

“The California and Arizona Leafy Greens Marketing Agreements are taking the lead in creating this Task Force, and we want to ensure comprehensive representation from the entire supply chain,” said Scott Horsfall, CEO of the California LGMA.

One group committed to be a part of the Task Force is STOP Foodborne Illness, a national nonprofit, public health organization dedicated to the prevention of illness and death from foodborne pathogens.

“We want the families impacted by this outbreak to know that STOP Foodborne Illness is here for them and we hope they will reach out for resources and support when they are ready,” said STOP Foodborne Illness Board Co-Chair Lauren Bush, who has been a passionate advocate for increased consumer



protections after contracting hemorrhagic E. coli in a 2006 outbreak involving spinach. “It’s essential that everyone involved in producing and marketing food for consumers be committed to continuous improvement in how we prevent, detect and respond to outbreaks. The industry and government must learn from every tragic outbreak to prevent more families from being impacted. We know that the LGMA cares deeply about food safety and STOP Foodborne Illness looks forward to working together with the Task Force partners to find answers.”

The LGMA programs work closely with the government agencies in Arizona and California. Both operate under the oversight of their state departments of agriculture and all LGMA members are subject to mandatory audits of leafy greens farms by government inspectors to verify that a set of science-based food safety practices are being followed on leafy greens farms. Under this rigorous system of mandatory food safety practices and government audits, leafy greens producers in California and Arizona safely grow, harvest and ship 130 million servings of leafy greens every day.

“As a father and a farmer – I’m committed to making sure the food that goes on your family’s table -- and mine – is safe and healthy,” said Dan Sutton of Pismo-Oceano Vegetable Exchange. “Food safety is our number one priority and we’re committed to learning from this to improve our practices.”

A list of Steering Committee members for the Leafy Greens Food Safety Task Force is below:

Co-Chairs:

- Jerry Muldoon, Dole Fresh Vegetables, Arizona
- Steve Church, Church Brothers, California

Committee Members

- John Boelts, Desert Premium Farms
- Mary Campbell – Yuma Safe Produce Council
- Bonnie Fernandez-Fenaroli – Center for Produce Safety
- Ed Foster – Arizona Dept. of Agriculture
- Hank Giclas/Sonia Salas – Western Growers
- Scott Horsfall – California Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement
- Natalie Krout-Greenberg – California Department of Food and Agriculture
- Teresa Lopez – Arizona Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement
- Drew McDonald, Taylor Farms
- Jennifer McEntire – United Fresh Produce Association
- Vicki-Lynne Scott, Amigo Farms
- Victor Smith – JV Smith Companies
- Abby Taylor – Grower-Shipper Association of Central California
- Michael Taylor – STOP Foodborne Illness
- Shelly Tunis – Yuma Fresh Vegetable Association
- Jack Vessey, Vessey Farms
- Kami Weddle, Rousseau Farms
- Bob Whitaker – Produce Marketing Association

Federal agencies will be involved on a collaborative basis, serving as technical and informational advisors to the task force.