



Food Safety for Fresh Produce at US Foodservice

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Overview

- The Beginning: Previous Management of Produce Safety & Quality
- The Concerns: Issues with Produce Industry and Products
- Moving Forward: New Safety & Quality Initiatives





The Beginning

Produce Quality & Safety Program:

- Approval: Suppliers must meet Business, Safety & Quality expectations
- Requirements: Annual 3rd party GAP Audit
- Product Specifications: Include specific Quality and Safety expectations.
- Field Inspections at time of harvest : Only approved fields and product are accepted.



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Field Inspection





Concerns

- Validity of GAPs
 - Missing key food safety elements
- Industry Reliance on:
 - Voluntary Compliance [Complacency with food safety]
 - No Continual and Consistent Verification of GAP Adherence
 - Confidence in Third Party Validation (valid, reliable, effective, training of auditors, conflict of interest)

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Concerns

- Government Agencies:
 - CDC Data
 - Year to Year increase of foodborne illnesses associated with produce
 - FDA Actions
 - Safety of produce identified as an issue since 90's
 - Developed Produce Safety Action plan in 04
 - 04 & 05 letters to industry expressing concerns with continuous outbreaks and expecting industry to improve produce safety

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Concerns

- Industry Visits **AFTER** spinach issue still showed:
 - Employee Hygiene: Training for harvest crews very inconsistent and not verified
 - Pre-Harvest Inspections: Key food safety elements not completed
 - GAPs Verification by 3rd Parties: Inconsistent **at best**

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Concerns

- Industry Visits AFTER spinach issue still showed:
 - GAP third party audit criteria not adequate to control food safety hazards
 - Water Testing: Programs with little criteria and verification

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Moving Forward

- Goal: Minimize food safety risks while providing the highest quality product to customers
- Food Safety & Quality Supplier Expectations Manual: Transparent communication of USF expectations
- Grower/Shipper Review: Visit with all Approved growers/shippers of leafy greens to understand their food safety programs and steps taken to improve since 06
- Stronger Food Safety Training: GAP & food safety training & verification practices with our field staff
- Expand certification program into other high risk fresh produce (tomatoes, melons, herbs)

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Moving Forward

- Work with Foodservice Industry (NRA, ANSI, FMI, IFDA) to :
 - Get agreement on minimum and uniform food safety standards that manage the recognized food safety risks
 - Provide a globally recognized verification (certification) program to ensure consistent and continuous compliance with established standards

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Why a Globally Recognized Certification Program?

- National and Global Sources: Need verification of food safety standards regardless of source
- ISO Certification:
 - International recognition of standards
 - Promotes consistent training and application by auditors
 - Requires quality system implementation, and
 - Prevents conflict of interest from 3rd party audit companies (consulting vs. auditing).

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Challenges

- Standards:
 - Produce Industry must improve draft standards to include:
 - Harvest crew training or verification
 - A science based water monitoring criteria
 - Adequate pre-harvest verification
 - FDA:
 - GUIDELINES are too general to consistently measure
- Verification:
 - Produce Industry draft standards do not include verification
 - Current globally recognized certification program in place in US not readily accepted

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Future Actions at USF

- Committed to work with Foodservice industry to:
 - Finalize Minimum Industry Expectations & Standards
 - Develop Industry Verification program
- Continue to communicate food safety expectations of our suppliers
- Work with OUR Suppliers to:
 - Implement industry standards
 - Add additional food safety measures if needed
 - Participate in a globally recognized verification program

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QUESTIONS?