
Improving Response Capabilities with Food Emergencies

- A Produce Industry Perspective

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United Fresh Produce Association

June 8, 2009

“Fresh Produce” is diverse

- Includes over 300 different commodities: tree, bush, row and root crops
 - Most have never been linked to a food safety issue
- Includes fresh-cut in retail, foodservice and manufacturing facilities
- Includes whole, trimmed and field-packed raw agricultural commodities, ready-to-eat and ready-to-wash
- Over a billion servings sold each day

Fresh Produce Food Safety

- Relies almost exclusively on prevention of contamination
 - No “kill” step
 - Every step in the supply chain, farm to fork, is vulnerable
 - Once contaminated, very difficult to make safe

Outbreak Investigation



U.S. Food and Drug Administration



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
P06-131
September 14, 2006

Media Inquiries:
301-827-6242
Consumer Inquiries:
888-INFO-FDA

FDA Warning on Serious Foodborne E.coli O157:H7 Outbreak One Death and Multiple Hospitalizations in Several States

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is issuing an alert to consumers about an outbreak of E. coli O157:H7 in multiple states that may be associated with the consumption of produce. To date, preliminary epidemiological evidence suggests that bagged fresh spinach may be a possible cause of this outbreak.

Based on the current information, FDA advises that consumers not eat bagged fresh spinach at this time. Individuals who believe they may have experienced symptoms of illness after consuming bagged spinach are urged to contact their health care provider.

"Given the severity of this illness and the seriousness of the outbreak, FDA believes that a warning to consumers is needed. We are working closely with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and state and local agencies to determine the cause and scope of the problem," said Dr. Robert Brackett, Director of FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN).

E. coli O157:H7 causes diarrhea, often with bloody stools. Although most healthy adults can recover completely within a week, some people can develop a form of kidney failure called Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS). HUS is most likely to occur in young children and the elderly. The condition can lead to serious kidney damage and even death. To date, 50 cases of illness have been reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, including 8 cases of HUS and one death.

At this time, the investigation is ongoing and states that have reported illnesses to date include: Connecticut, Idaho, Indiana, Michigan, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah and Wisconsin.

FDA will keep consumers informed of the investigation as more information

“FDA advises that consumers not eat bagged fresh spinach at this time”

Outbreak Investigation



U.S. Food and Drug Administration



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 7, 2008

Media Inquiries:
Kimberly Rawlings, 301-827-6253
Consumer Inquiries:
888-INFO-FDA

FDA Warns Consumers Nationwide Not to Eat Certain Types of Raw Red Tomatoes

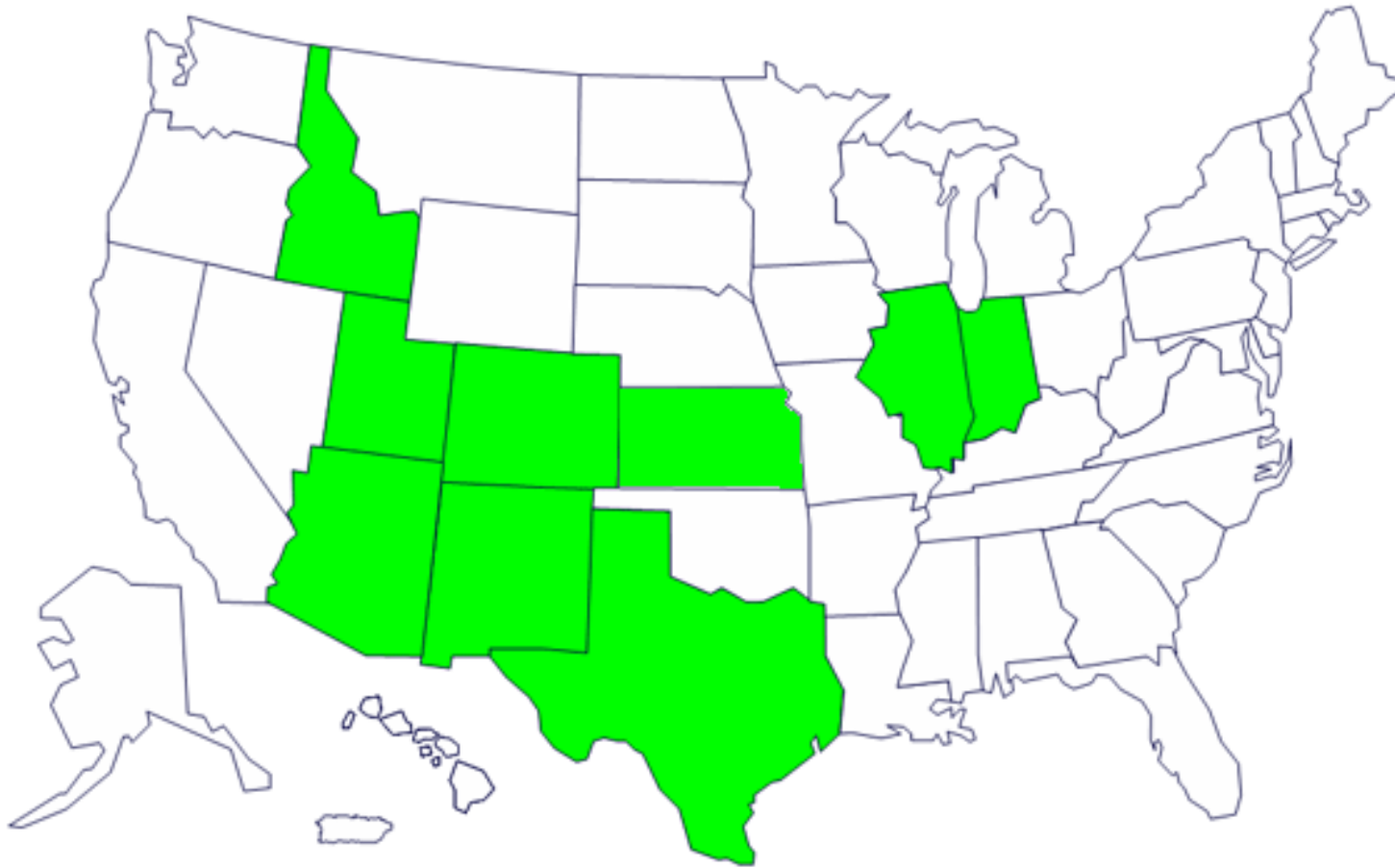
The Food and Drug Administration is expanding its warning to consumers nationwide that a salmonellosis outbreak has been linked to consumption of **certain** raw red plum, red Roma, and red round tomatoes, and products containing these raw, red tomatoes.

FDA recommends that consumers not eat raw red Roma, raw red plum, raw red round tomatoes, or products that contain these types of raw red tomatoes **unless** the tomatoes are from the sources listed below. If unsure of where tomatoes are grown or harvested, consumers are encouraged to contact the store where the tomato purchase was made. Consumers should continue to eat cherry tomatoes, grape tomatoes, and tomatoes sold with the vine still attached, or tomatoes grown at home.

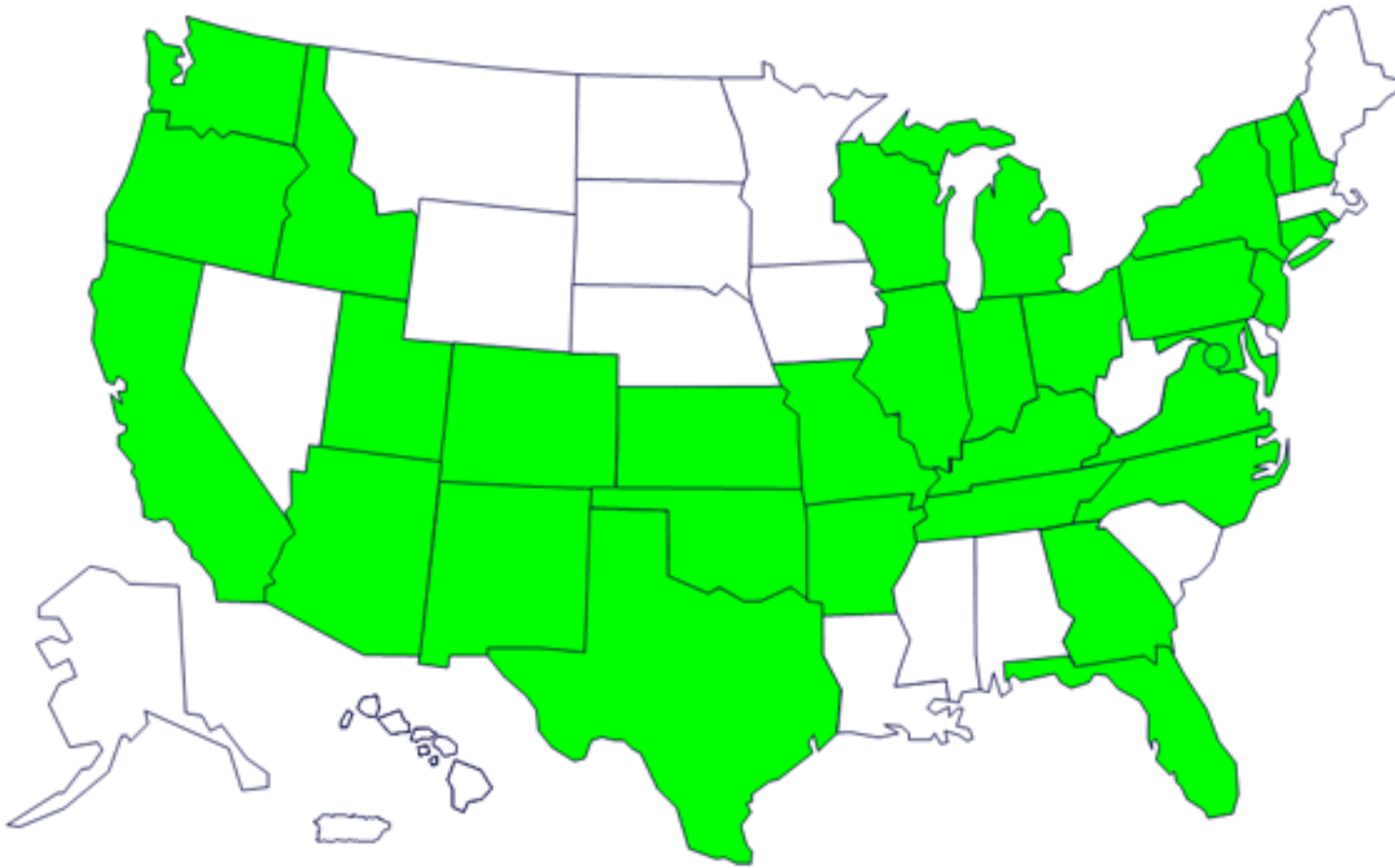
On June 5, using traceback and other distribution pattern information, FDA published a list of states, territories, and countries where tomatoes are grown and harvested which **have not been associated with this outbreak**. This updated list includes: Arkansas, California, Georgia, Hawaii, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Belgium, Canada, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Israel, Netherlands, and Puerto Rico. The list is available at www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/hottopics/tomatoes.html#retailers. This list will be updated as more information becomes available.

“FDA recommends that consumers not eat ... raw red tomatoes **unless”**

June 2



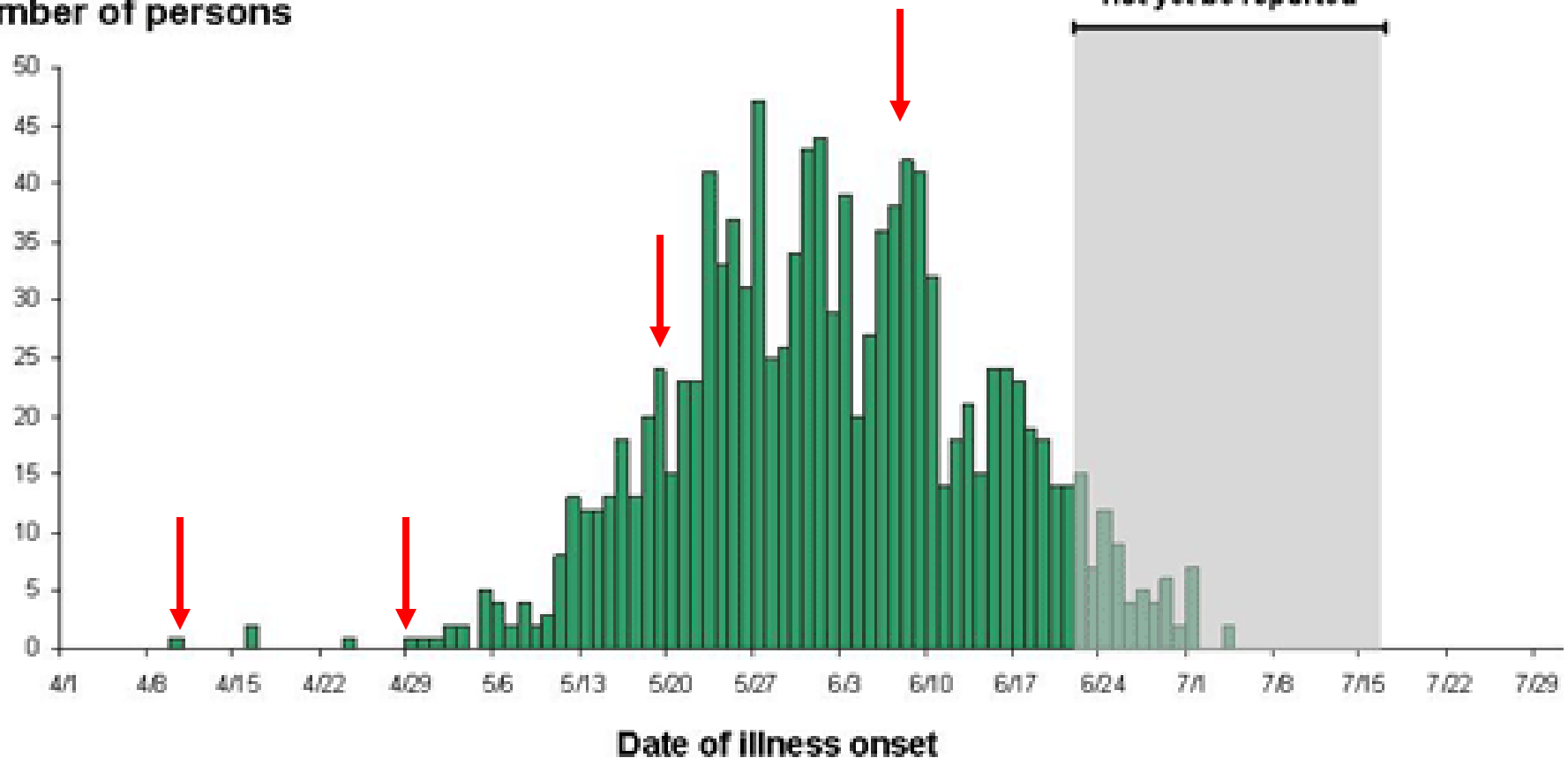
June 20



Infections with the outbreak strain of *Salmonella* Saintpaul, by date of illness onset*

(N=1167 for whom information was reported)
(as of July 16, 9pm EDT)

Number of persons



Consequences

- Avoidable illnesses: ??
- Tomatoes: >\$100M lost sales; impact on consumer confidence and future sales (CA - \$14M loss)
- Epidemiology: Loss in trust, confidence
- FDA/CDC: Loss in trust, confidence; numerous legislative initiatives to “fix the system”
- “Tomato/pepper related outbreak”

Outbreak Investigation

- Spinach – E. coli O157:H7
 - Outbreak ended October 2006
 - Final Report March 2007
- Iceberg Lettuce – E. coli O157:H7
 - Outbreak ended December 2006
 - Final Report February 2008
- Iceberg Lettuce – E. coli O157:H7
 - Outbreak ended December 2006
 - Final Report February 2008
- Jalapeno Peppers – Salmonella Saintpaul
 - Outbreak ended August 2008
 - Final Report ?

Outbreak Communications

- Communication with the media
 - Coordinated, consistent messages between agencies
 - Provide clear, timely, accurate information, and then Stop
 - Speculations feed anxiety, don't help
 - "Is it possible that...?"
 - "Could this be...?"
 - "Do you think that it may be...?"

Outbreak Speculations

“Ottawa, November 11, 2008 - The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is informing the public of its investigation into potential food sources linked to an E. coli outbreak...

Although no common food source has yet been confirmed, local and provincial investigators along with the CFIA are studying whether the outbreak is linked to lettuce. ”

www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/concen/2008ecolonte.shtml

Lessons Learned

Industry can assist in investigation

- Industry and Agencies share responsibility in protecting public health
- Agencies must lead, but industry can provide important information
 - Sources, distribution, timing
 - Provide answers to speculations
 - Identify additional sources of information
 - Independently verify information
- Dozens of industry resources in each sector
 - Highly motivated to assist
- Must be allowed information, opportunity

Solutions for the Future

- Find ways, overcome obstacles to engage resources in industry
 - Identify and pre-clear industry resources; Special Government Employees?
 - Identify and find ways to share critical information; NDA?
 - Crisis exercises; “what-if” scenarios with all involved parties, away from the urgency of an outbreak investigation

Solutions for the Future

- Discussions between HHS, produce industry have begun
 - Tapping industry expertise more effectively before, during and after an investigation
 - Improving risk communication
 - Developing and testing crisis management plans with all stakeholders
 - Evaluating lessons after an outbreak

Outbreak Investigation

- Improved Communication with media, consumers, to avoid undue harm and fear
- Improved Communication with industry, to share information critical to rapid identification of outbreak source
- Improved Investigation reporting, to enable improvements in food safety practices, minimize speculations

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Questions?