



Food Safety Issues “Growers Perspective”

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LGMA

“Created by Necessity”

- Series of food-borne illness outbreaks linked to lettuce and leafy greens
- 2006 spinach outbreak was the “event” that resulted in the LGMA being created
- An aggressive approach was needed to control outcomes
- The marketing agreement ensured that State government would oversee operations



The LGMA

Operating with oversight from the California Department of Food and Agriculture, the LGMA is a mechanism for verifying through **mandatory government audits** that farmers follow accepted food safety practices for lettuce, spinach and other leafy green products.



LGMA

“An Overview”

- LGMA enforces mandatory food safety practices audited by USDA auditors
- Over 1600 audits have been completed
- Has become a model for food safety programs in other states and industries
- Currently have 114 members
- Members assessed to fund the program
- Approximately 99% of product “covered”



LGMA Program

“Five Core Components”

- Protect Public Health
- Mandatory USDA Audits
- Food Safety Practices
- Penalties and Compliance
- Certification



Mandatory USDA Audits

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- Each handler audited at least quarterly
 - Growers who provide product are where the audits are conducted
 - Audits are scheduled but audit site is selected randomly
 - Handlers subject to unannounced audits
 - Audits conducted against a detailed checklist based upon the LGMA accepted metrics



Food Safety Practices

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- Risk based and designed to reduce potential contamination sources on the farm
 - Reflect the “best practices” recognized to reduce the potential for contamination
 - Practices developed by an expert panel of academia, farmers, shippers and processors
 - Reviewed by state and federal health agencies
 - Will evolve as research (such as CPS) provides new information



Penalties and Compliance

- LGMA requires corrective actions for any and all violations
- Violations range in severity from minor to flagrant
- A flagrant violation results in decertification of handler and name posted on website
- Mexico and Canada only accept product from LGMA handlers
- LGMA audits are not “scored”



Certification

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- Certification represents compliance with all requirements of the LGMA
 - Certification is maintained through regular and government audits unannounced audits
 - Service mark is mandatory on all sales documents
 - Members in good standing posted on web site
 - Buyers alerted to significant developments



The Metrics “Audit Checklist”

- General Requirements
- Environmental Assessments
- Water Use
- Soil Amendments
- Field Sanitation
- Worker Practices
- Field Observations



Environmental Assessments

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- Pre-season assessments done before planting
 - Pre-harvest assessments done no less than 7 days out and on day of harvest
 - Evaluating conditions that can effect food safety:
 - Animal intrusion
 - Flooding
 - CAFO's



Water Use

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- Water quality is critical and must be tested
 - Irrigation water is tested monthly and must meet EPA recreational water standards
 - Water coming into direct contact with product must meet EPA drinking water standards
 - Established procedures when water not meeting standards is used and/or applied
 - SOP's for testing chlorine and pH levels



Field Harvesting

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- Worker Practices
 - Field Sanitation
 - Field Observations

Critical components of harvesting and the field audits verify that growers and harvesting companies are in compliance with sanitation and hygiene, field sanitation units, and other practices that may contribute to product contamination



Product Testing “A Necessary Evil?”

- Increasing pressure to test un-harvested and finished product
- Biggest challenge is lack of a validated sampling protocol
- What is the confidence level of results?
- Will on-going demands push back down to the production stream for more testing?
- What is the best course of action?
- Lots of considerations as things move forward



THANK YOU!

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