



COMMUNITY ALLIANCE  
WITH FAMILY FARMERS

## Food Safety - Get the Facts!

### Background

Last year's tragic *E. coli* 0157:H7 processed, bagged salad outbreaks led the leafy greens industry to design a set of rules that implements "Good Agricultural Practices" to reduce the risk of food contamination. The industry's goal is to lead the effort to prevent future leafy greens outbreaks due to its history of food safety problems. While all growers should use safe farming practices, the "one size fits all" approach of the rules does not work for family farms. CAFF believes that appropriate food safety measures should be developed with university researchers for all sizes of farms.

### Why the Rules Are Not Appropriate for All Farms

The "Good Agricultural Practices" in the rules are designed by and appropriate for farmers growing for the processed bagged salad industry. The industry's leading representatives sit on a board (Leafy Green Handlers Marketing Agreement) to enact these voluntary rules. They hope to make these rules mandatory for ALL farmers, which would be costly and inappropriate for growers that do not grow produce for the processed bagged salad industry. Some of the testing and agricultural methods the rules require are not scientifically proven. The rules call environmentally beneficial biological farming practices into question even though these practices have never been implicated in a food-borne illness outbreak.

### Why Processed Food Is High Risk

Based on data CAFF compiled from the US Food and Drug Administration, since 1999, 80 percent of California's leafy green *E. coli* 0157:H7 outbreaks and 98.5% of the reported illnesses have been traced back to processed bagged salad. The processing of pre-cut produce increases the risk of bacterial contamination by cutting into the leafy greens and breaking the natural outer layer of the leaves, opening pathways for contaminants. The centralized washing and packaging from mixed farm loads increases the risk of cross-contamination in processed bagged salad. The sealed plastic bags the pre-cut salads are placed in may be an ideal environment for contaminant proliferation if the temperature is not kept cold at all times. Due to the increased contamination risk of processed bagged salad, the food safety effort should be focused on growers who produce for that industry, not on the thousands of small to mid-size California growers that grow a variety of fresh, traditional leafy greens not destined for a processing plant.

### Preserve Your Right to Eat Fresh Leafy Greens from Family Farmers

If these rules become mandatory for all leafy green producers, it could limit the availability of fresh leafy greens. The cost and difficulty of complying with such rules may cause many small growers to abandon these crops. Consumers who enjoy their access to a variety of traditional, fresh, local, leafy greens may find them unavailable in stores. Mandatory rules may end up benefiting the processed bagged salad industry more than consumers or fresh-market growers.

### What You Can Do

**Demand** to keep your right to buy your unprocessed, leafy greens from local California growers!

**Sign** CAFF's letter to CA. Leafy Green Handlers Marketing Agreement Board, California Dept. of Food and Agriculture & Western Growers Association!

**Donate to CAFF's Family Farm Food Safety Campaign!** Help CAFF represent the interests of small family farmers and consumers in the discussions of food safety!

**Contact CAFF's Family Farm Food Safety Coordinator, Kira Pascoe** ([kira@caff.org](mailto:kira@caff.org)) or (530) 574-1901, to volunteer to help us in this important campaign. For more information, visit [www.caff.org](http://www.caff.org).