

## Food Safety: The Role of Traceback

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## 1997 Food Safety Initiative

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- ◆ Juice HACCP Rule (2000)
  - immediate issue for juice processors and producers
- ◆ Guidance for Industry: Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables - "The Guide" (1998)

## 1997 Initiative (con't).

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- ◆ Better information transfer among local, state and federal officials
- ◆ Better coordination during traceback investigations

## Traceback Investigations

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- ◆ A method used to determine the source and distribution of the implicated product associated with an outbreak, and
- ◆ Identification of potential points where contamination could have occurred

## How does it start?

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- ◆ Most outbreaks in the US are reported by consumers who suspect a connection with a food they have eaten and an illness they are experiencing
- ◆ Reported to local health officials
- ◆ Nationwide network of CDC, FDA, USDA and state health depts

## Recent Produce Tracebacks

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Product	Year	Pathogen	#
Cantaloupe	2000	<i>Salmonella</i>	43
Raspberries	2000	<i>Cyclospora</i>	16
Raspberries	2000	<i>Cyclospora</i>	17
Parsley	1998	<i>Shigella</i>	>400
Leaf Lettuce	1996	<i>E.coli</i> O157:H7	43

Source: Guzewich & Salsbury, 2000.

## **FDA Involvement**

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- Each outbreak involved interstate commerce
- All outbreaks were traced to primary source of contamination
- Some farms were/are being visited

## **“The Guide”**

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- Covers broad areas of:
  - Water
  - Manure and Municipal Biosolids
  - Worker Health and Hygiene
  - Sanitary Facilities
  - Field Sanitation
  - Packing Facility Sanitation
  - Transportation
  - Traceback

## **Traceback**

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- ◆ “The ability to identify the source of a product can serve as an important complement to good agricultural and management practices intended to minimize liability and prevent the occurrence of food safety problems”.

## **Produce Challenge**

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- ◆ Fresh produce is often quickly consumed; often gone by the time outbreak is reported
- ◆ Current industry practices make tracing difficult:
  - recycling of shipping containers
  - co-mingling during distribution and retail
- ◆ Difficulty of confirmation at the farm/packinghouse level

## **Advantages**

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- ◆ Protection from false association with a particular outbreak
- ◆ Rapid and effective traceback can minimize consumer anxiety and adverse publicity
- ◆ Competitive advantage to those that can demonstrate an effective program

## **Practical Matters**

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- ◆ Larger operations may have more direct distribution and marketing chain
- ◆ All packers can keep complete records
  - farm/field
  - sanitation
  - supplies
  - production codes

## Minimum Documentation

- ◆ **Date of harvest**
- ◆ **Farm Identification**
- ◆ **Handling chain from grower to receiver**
- ◆ **All aspects of packinghouse operations**

## Partnerships Needed

- ◆ Growers, packers and shippers have to work with partners in transportation, distribution and retail to identify the whole system
- ◆ Industry trade groups can help with this effort, and also help implement technologies
  - coding
  - labels
  - software

## Resources & References

- ◆ Guzewich & Salsbury. 2000. "FDA's Role in Traceback Investigations for Produce". Food Safety.
- ◆ FDA website: [www.cfsan.fda.gov](http://www.cfsan.fda.gov)
  - Guidance Document
  - Surveillance Data
  - Juice HACCP Rule