

National pact for leafy greens?

By LEN RICHARDSON

PROPOSER groups of agricultural associations representing the leafy greens industry across the U.S. have sent a letter to the USDA formally requesting the agency begin the process necessary to establish a national marketing agreement for leafy greens, or NLGMA.

An NLGMA would implement best practices and a corresponding verification program that could reduce microbial contamination potential in these crops.

"This marketing agreement is an excellent example of our fresh produce associations working together for the good of the industry," says Charles Hall, executive director of the Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association. "The proposed agreement guarantees all parties — growers, packers, handlers, manufacturers and end users — are at the table as we move forward to ensure the food safety of leafy greens for the consumer."

Who they are

Proponents include the United Fresh Produce Association, Produce Marketing Association, Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association, Georgia Farm Bureau, Texas Vegetable Association, Arizona Farm Bureau, Leafy Greens Council, California Farm Bureau, California Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement, Grower-Shipper Association of Central California and Western Growers.

NLGMA's purpose is to raise consumer confidence in leafy greens; enhance quality of leafy greens through application of good agricultural practices; implement a uniform, auditable, science-based food-quality enhancement program; provide USDA validation and verification of program compliance; and foster more collaboration.

Quick action

The leafy greens industry took immediate action following the *E. coli* outbreak associated with spinach in 2006, developing and implementing the California Leafy Greens Producers Marketing Agreement within six months of the outbreak. Ninety-nine percent of all handlers participate in the program. They are assessed a per-carton fee paid to the state department of agriculture, which employs USDA-certified inspectors/auditors.

The program is administered by a nonprofit organization under state gov-

Key Points

- Letter sent to USDA for national leafy green marketing plan.
- National LGMA is supported by 12 produce organizations.
- NLGMA unites produce, college and regulatory stakeholders.

ernment oversight. A similar program is also now in place in Arizona.

First step

"A national leafy greens marketing agreement marries the talent and expertise of industry, academic and regulatory stakeholders in a union committed to the common goal of high-quality, safe

leafy greens," says Hank Giclas, Western Growers vice president of strategic planning, science and technology.

Next steps

USDA will now begin evaluating industry support for an agreement, and outline a method by which a formal agreement could come into place.



DuPont™
Coragen®

insect control

powered by
RYNAXYPYR®

**Spend less time on insect control
and more on what matters most**

Breakthrough insect control for vegetables

Put time on your side with DuPont™ Coragen® insect control powered by Rynaxypyr®. Coragen® delivers remarkable protection through its fast-acting, long-lasting control of Lepidoptera species and leafminers. What's more, it offers an excellent environmental profile, the shortest re-entry interval and short preharvest intervals. Count on DuPont™ for insect control to help you stay ahead. coragen.dupont.com



POSTER CHILD: Popeye became the symbol that boosted spinach sales in the 1930s. Today, the spinach leaf has become the poster child for food safety fears from salmonella to *E. coli*.

Always read and follow all label directions and precautions for use.

The DuPont Oval Logo, DuPont™, The miracles of science™, Count on DuPont™, Coragen® and Rynaxypyr® are trademarks or registered trademarks of DuPont or its affiliates.

Copyright © 2008-2009 E.I. du Pont de Nemours and Company. All Rights Reserved. RYNAX013054P137FVAR1



The miracles of science™