

Ensuring Safe Produce

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Public Hearing on Safety of Fresh Produce
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Science IN THE
Public Interest

Ensuring Safe Produce

- Declining Consumer Confidence
- Produce Safety as a Public Health Concern
 - Produce Outbreak Trends
 - Major Produce Outbreaks
- Failure of Voluntary Guidelines
- Roadmap to Recovery
 - CSPI's Petition to FDA
 - Uniform Standards
 - Need for Resources



Declining Consumer Confidence

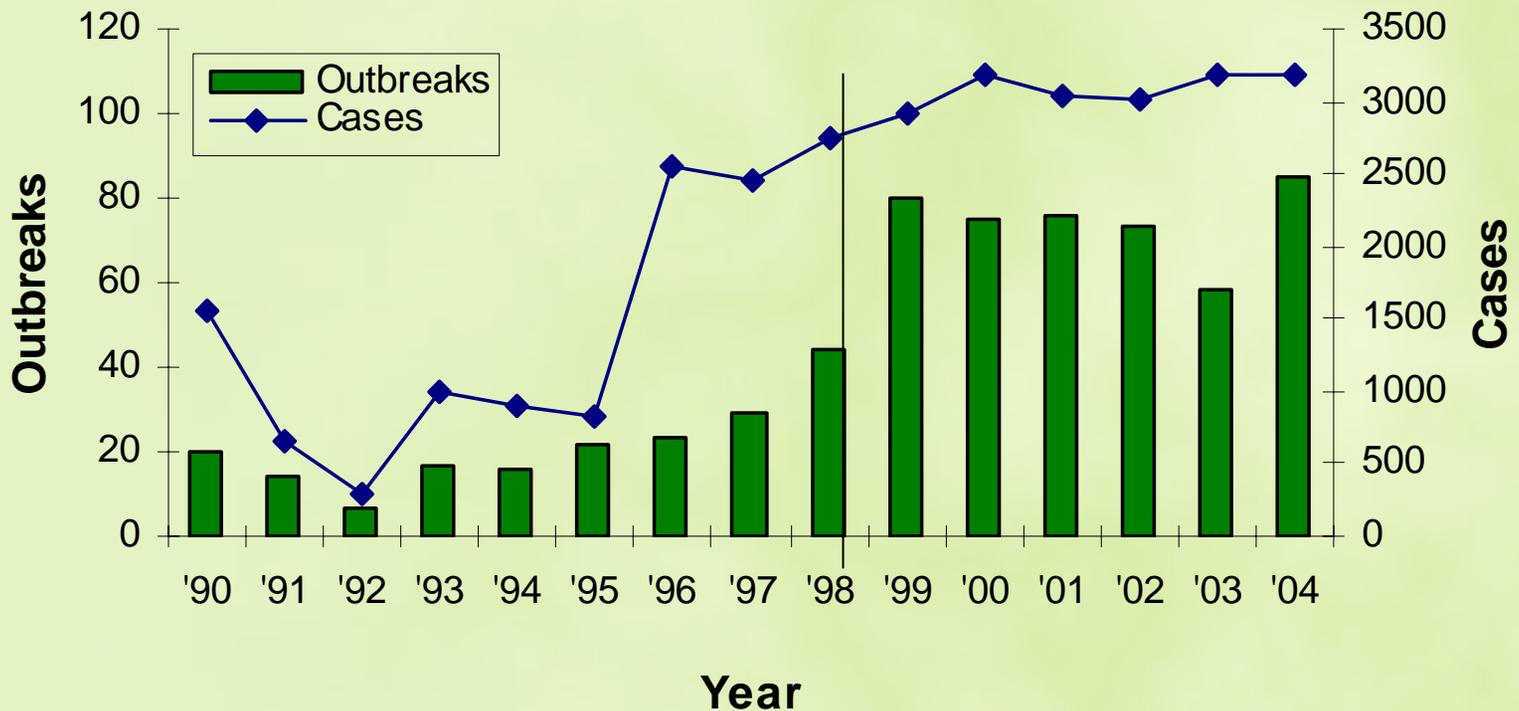
- Consumer confidence in bagged spinach has declined since the September 2006 outbreak.
- Rutgers University telephone survey in November 2006 found:
 - Consumers were confused about which types of spinach were affected.
 - Many were unsure of if and when the ban on spinach was lifted.
 - Consumers expressed concern about eating other fresh greens.



Produce Safety: A Serious Public Health Concern

In CSPI's survey of 5,000 outbreaks over 15 years, produce caused 13% of foodborne illness outbreaks and 21% of foodborne illnesses.

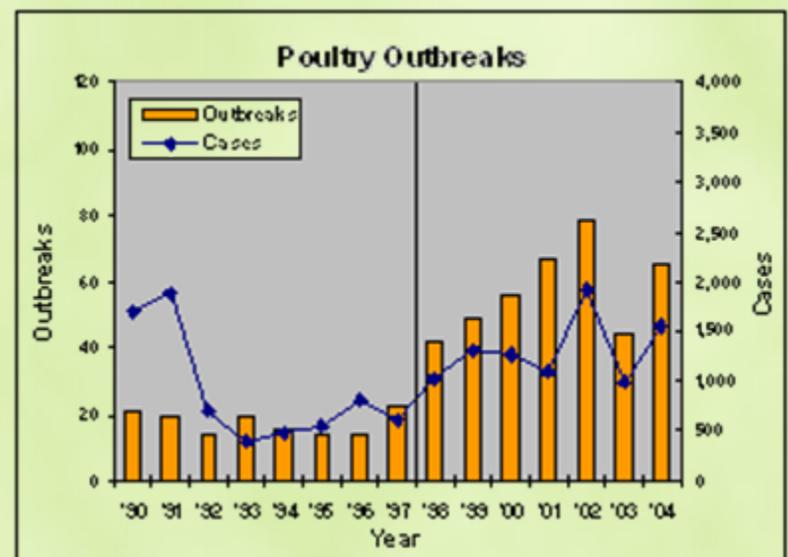
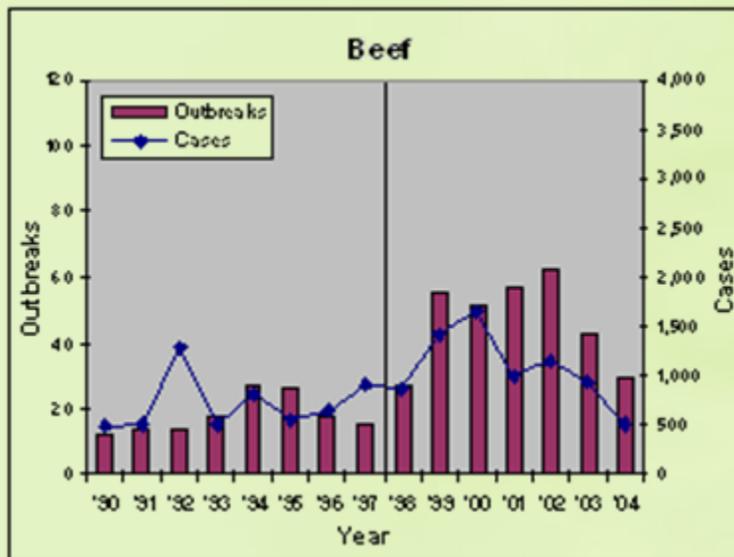
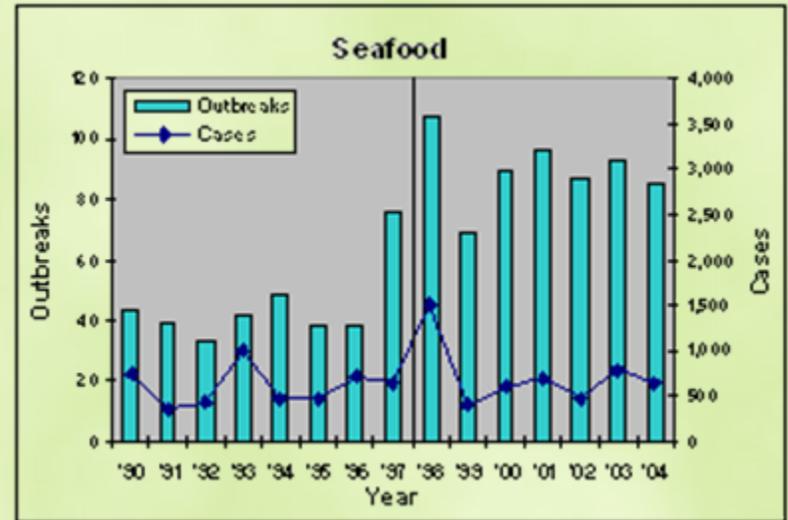
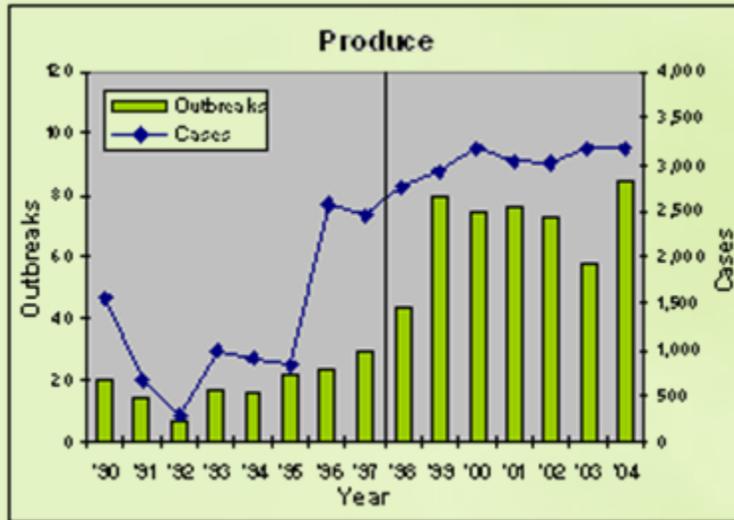
Yearly Trends in Produce Outbreaks



Source: *Outbreak Alert! Database 2007*. Center for Science in the Public Interest.



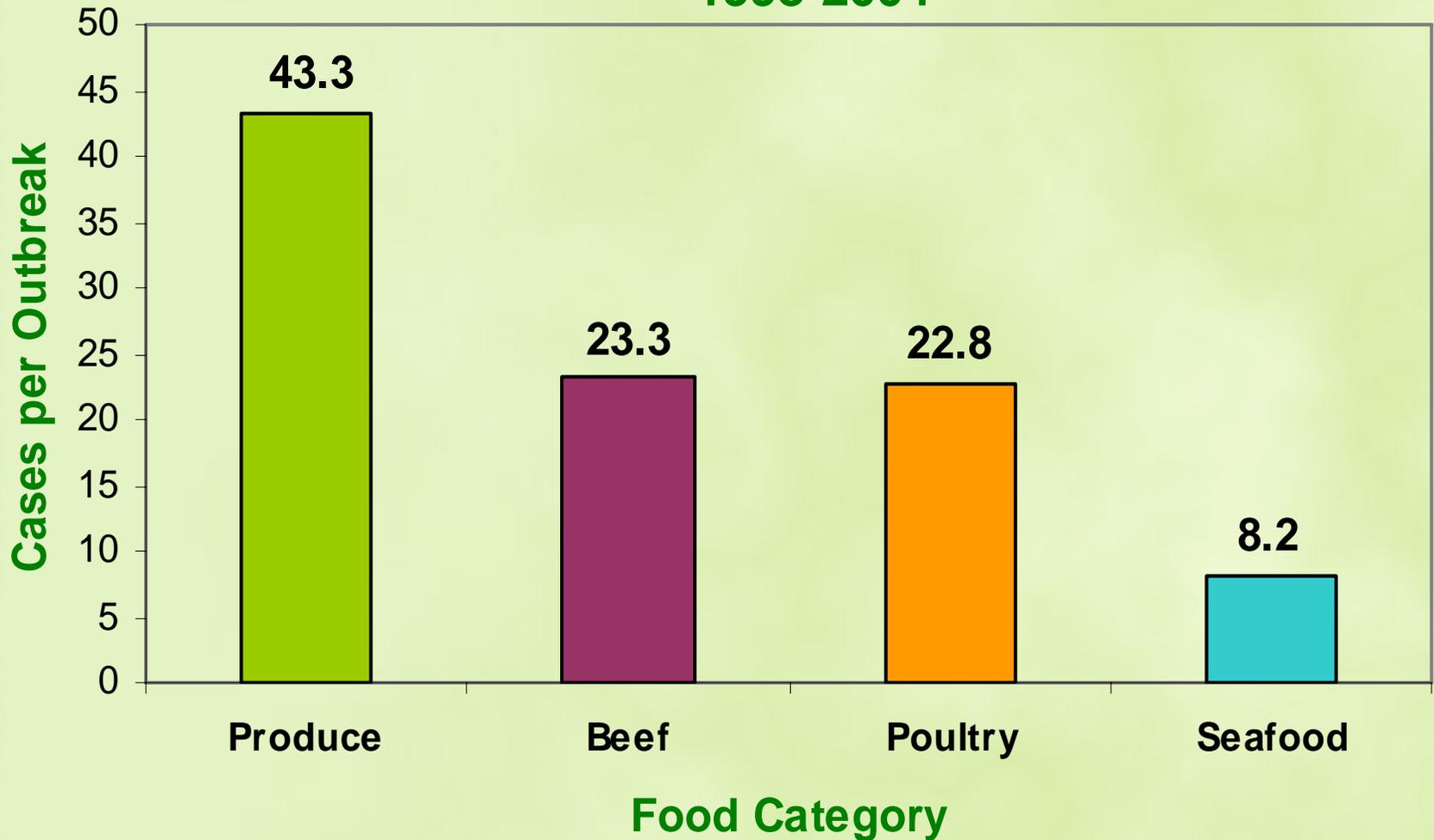
Outbreak Trends of Major Food Categories



Note: In 1998, CDC began enhanced surveillance efforts to increase FBI reporting.



Average Cases Per Outbreak by Food Category 1998-2004



Source: *Outbreak Alert! Database 2007*. Center for Science in the Public Interest.



Produce Safety: Pathogens in Produce

Vegetables			
	Pathogen	Outbreaks	Illnesses
1	Norovirus	56	2108
2	Salmonella	51	3591
3	Clostridium	31	1387
4	Escherichia	24	1466
5	Chemicals/Toxins	20	135
6	Bacillus	11	61
7	Hepatitis	9	1217
8	Other Virus	6	464
9	Shigella	5	604
10	Cyclospora	5	449

Fruits			
	Pathogen	Outbreaks	Illnesses
1	Norovirus	38	2000
2	Salmonella	31	1805
3	Cyclospora	9	2722
4	Hepatitis	7	486
5	Escherichia	5	111
6	Shigella	3	966
7	Staphylococcus	3	61
8	Chemicals/Toxins	2	23
9	Campylobacter	1	48
10	Other Virus	1	32

Produce Dishes			
	Pathogen	Outbreaks	Illnesses
1	Norovirus	38	2000
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Source: *Outbreak Alert! Database 2007*. Center for Science in the Public Interest.



Major Produce Outbreaks (Imports)

- 1996/1997 – Thousands become ill from *Cyclospora* in raspberries from Guatemala.
- 1997 – 256 become ill from Hepatitis A in strawberries.
- 2000-2002 – 3 separate *Salmonella* outbreaks involving cantaloupe from Mexico; at least one person died.
- 2003 – More than 555 become ill from Hepatitis A in green onions from Mexico; three people died.



Produce Outbreaks in 2006

June – 73 ill from *E. coli* 0121:H19 in Iceberg lettuce at a restaurant in Utah

September

- 204 ill, and at least 3 die, nationwide from *E. coli* 0157:H7 in bagged spinach
- 183 ill nationwide from *S. Typhimurium* in tomatoes (not discovered until mid-October)

November/December – Over 150 ill from *E. coli* 0157:H7 in lettuce in Taco John and Taco Bell restaurants in the Midwest and the Northeast



Ineffective Voluntary Guidelines

- FDA published Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) for produce growers in 1998.
- In February 2004, FDA sent a letter urging lettuce and tomato growers to review their current operations due to continuing outbreaks.
- In June 2004, a Cornell survey found that 1/3 of New York state producers were unaware of GAPs for their crop.



Roadmap to Recovery

- Using the Seafood HACCP model, which implemented a preventative control program for seafood processors in an industry with many small companies, FDA should:
 - Establish a regulatory requirement that all growers and processors develop a food safety plan.
 - Set requirements for what should be in the plan – based on evidence from outbreak data.
 - Publish a “Hazards and Controls Guide” outlining hazards in different produce and the best known controls to prevent or reduce the risk. This Guide can be updated to reflect new science.



CSPI's Petition to FDA

1. FDA should require all growers and processors to design and keep a written food safety plan specific to the environmental conditions on the farm.
2. FDA should develop uniform standards to evaluate the plans for water quality, manure use and management, and worker sanitation.
3. Written plans should be audited once per growing season, either by FDA or FDA should review state or third-party audits of written plans. Audits should be conducted by FDA, the states, or produce buyers.



Uniform Standards Are Needed

- **Manure** – Manage manure application and animal waste to prevent contamination of crops.
- **Water** – Assess microbial and chemical quality of water.
- **Hygiene** – Ensure accessible bathrooms for employees and place handwashing facilities within view of supervisors.
- **Sanitation** – Establish mandatory sanitation standard operating procedures for processors.
- **Traceback** – Mark packaging to ensure easy traceback to processors and farms during an outbreak.



Improving Food Safety Requires Resources

- FDA lacks the staff and resources to function effectively.
 - FDA Food Program has a shortfall of \$135 million.
 - Decreases in processing inspections:
 - Inspections declined 81% since 1972.
 - Between 2003 and 2006, inspections declined 47%.
- FDA's food safety budget is inadequate to meet its responsibility.
 - FDA regulates 80% of the nation's food supply with 38% of the nation's food safety budget.

These resources must grow to prevent future outbreaks.



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