ISGA
International Sprout Growers Association
Sanitation Committee
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Department of Health and Human Services
Food and Drug Administration
Microbial Safety of Produce; Public Meeting
November 17, 1997

Thank you for inviting me to speak on behalf of the Sanitation Committee for the International Sprout Growers Association (ISGA). We well recognize the value of and need for the President's Initiative to ensure the safety of imported and domestic fruits and vegetables and other foods. This is about raising the awareness of all people producing food for human consumption as to the potential hazards to consumers from microbial and other possible contamination of the food. The ISGA has taken a strong role in educating all sprout growers in the particular hazards that we must address.

The Sanitation Committee has gathered information on Good Manufacturing Practices from the U.S., sprouting and seed guidelines from Australia, New Zealand and the UK, and guidelines from International Freshcut Produce Assn. (IFPA). These are compiled, along with reports on results of research sponsored by the ISGA members and other data collected by ISGA members. Experts from Silliker Labs, the University of Massachusetts and legal council familiar with FDA regulations have reviewed and edited the document. This information is now available to members of the sprouting industry in 4 papers known as the *Sanitary Guidelines for the Growing & Packing for Sale of Fresh Sprouts*. I have brought two of these papers (Procedural Guidelines and HACCP) to these meetings so that they may be a part of the information that the FDA brings to the table when the guidance on good agricultural practices and good manufacturing practices for fruits and vegetables document is being drafted.

These guidelines are not complete. There are at least two areas where research on human pathogens in sprouts is needed.

First, if there is a safe and effective way to sterilize the seed and eliminate all pathogenic bacteria without hurting the quality of the sprout, that would be important information for the industry. Members of the ISGA are funding several experiments with chemical sterilization, as President, Nancy Snider, has mentioned.

Second, we need to also be looking at ways to eliminate human pathogens more organically. Very interesting work is being done on investigating such things as antimicrobial compounds in foods and bacteria that make their own repellent against pathogens such as *E.Coli 0157*. To quote Lester M. Crawford, director of the Center for Food and Nutritional Quality at Georgetown University in Washington: "We've concentrated on the end product of food so long when we should be looking at how to stop it from being contaminated in the first place."[1]

[1] The Standard Times, New Bedford, MA, Thursday, October 30, 1997 (See attached copy)

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Scientists target microbes on farm

By Tara Meyer, Associated Press writer

GRIFFIN, Ga. -- Faced with outbreaks of salmonella and E. coli, scientists are developing a better way to protect food: killing deadly bacteria in the bowels of chickens and cattle before the animals even leave the farm.

"We've concentrated on the end product of food so long when we should be looking at how to stop it from being contaminated in the first place," said Lester M. Crawford, director of the Center for Food and Nutritional Quality at Georgetown University in Washington.

Salmonella, campylobacter and toxic forms of E. coli all get their start in animals' intestines. They can spill out in the slaughterhouse and make their way into food.

Currently, chickens are sprayed with chlorine and quick-chilled to retard bacteria. Inspectors touch, sniff and sometimes test animal carcasses for contamination. Another method, in which bacteria are killed with zaps of radiation, has proved too controversial for widespread use in this country.

In a lab in this Georgia town, food scientist Michael Doyle looked inside a cow's stomach for a way to kill E. coli 0157:H7, the mutant microbe blamed in the recall of 25 million pounds of ground beef over the summer.

Doyle found that several types of bacteria inside the cow make their own repellent against E. coli 0157. So he took those bacteria from cattle droppings and tissue, grew them in the lab and fed them to calves in their milk.

The bacteria not only wiped out E. coli 0157 in one group of calves within three weeks, they also kept it from invading a second group, said Doyle, who runs the University of Georgia Center for Food Safety and Quality Enhancement.

Doyle hopes his work will lead to a product that could be fed to cows to clean them out before they are sent to slaughter. He is hoping to get his product to market within three years, at a cost of about $1 per animal.

Several researchers are working on a similar concept in chickens.

A new oral vaccine aimed at cutting down salmonella infections from eggs and poultry could be available for farmers by early next year.

Developed by biologist Roy Curtiss III of Washington University in St. Louis, the vaccine is a weakened form of salmonella that allows the bird's defenses to fight off infections.

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
Food and Drug Administration
Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition

Please add to
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Meeting

Thanks
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