

Considerations for Leafy Greens Food Safety Programs During Transition Periods, End of Season Harvesting

Data on foodborne illness outbreaks associated with leafy greens indicate that there have been more contamination events during the final months of the season in both coastal California (October and November) and the desert growing regions (March and April). As a precaution we encourage food safety personnel, ranch managers, and harvesting crews to be extra vigilant about minimizing the risks from microbial hazards during end-of-the-season harvest. Below is a list of recommendations to consider as you implement your food safety program during this time.

Environmental Assessments

- Check crops for weather-related damage.
- Check on any known potential contamination sources near fields to ensure situation has not changed (i.e., worsened).
- Look for previously unknown potential contamination sources
- If you are near a Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation, check in with its managers regarding their activities over the final weeks of harvest.
- Record your findings and take a corrective action.

Irrigation Water

- Check on any known potential upstream contamination sources to ensure the situation has not changed.
- Look for unknown potential upstream contaminants that threaten your irrigation water sources.
- Be on alert for increased water turbidity due to rainfall / storms.
- If water quality appears to be worse than normal, increase testing of water sources that is used for overhead irrigation.
- Decrease pumping rates for shallow or highly turbid water sources.
- If you are treating irrigation water, redouble efforts to ensure it contains effective sanitizer levels.
- Record your findings and take a corrective action.

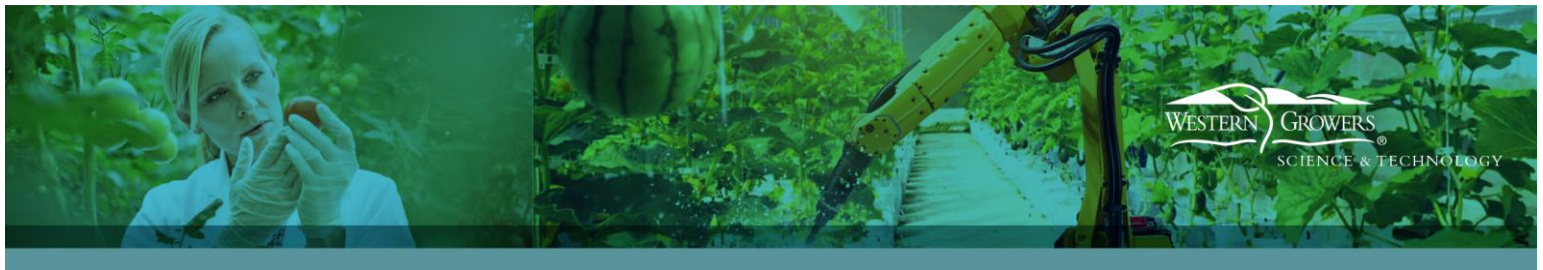
Crop Treatments

- Make sure the water utilized for foliar applications meet your water quality criteria.

Worker Practices

- Hold brief retraining exercises emphasizing good hygiene practices and worker health policies.
- Encourage and enforce increased vigilance in hand washing practices.
- Make extra gloves available.





Harvesting and Hydration Equipment

- Hold brief retraining exercises to go over your current equipment cleaning and sanitation procedures.
- Quality of water used to clean equipment.
- Clean and sanitize equipment as soon as possible after use and when moving between fields.
- Do not allow uncleaned equipment to sit in fields overnight.
- If equipment it is not stored overnight in an enclosed building, consider covering equipment after it has been cleaned and sanitized for the night.
- Verify cleaning and sanitation.
- If re-circulated rinse or antioxidant solutions are used on the cut surface, check the efficacy parameters frequently to prevent them from becoming a source of contamination.

