



Seasonality Webinar Series Key Takeaways

11/4/2020

Part 1: What we know about seasonality issues and transition periods

- According to FDA data, outbreaks associated with leafy greens from 2009 to 2017 suggest a potential correlation with seasonality as they tended to occur during late season and transition periods. Romaine lettuce was involved in most, but not all, of the outbreaks.
- A 2019 report by Dr. Gregory Astill (USDA Economic Research Service) demonstrated that USDA's daily shipments data can be used in outbreak investigations involving romaine lettuce to estimate a specific timeframe of the outbreak and to help rule out growing regions that were not in production when illnesses were reported.
- Currently, there are industry and government-supported research efforts aimed at finding the root cause of this pattern of seasonality in leafy green outbreaks.

Part 2: Industry efforts, tools, and best practices to consider before and during transition periods

- In 2019, the AZ LGMA conducted a survey to explore potential factors that may be impacting seasonal issues. Preliminary results suggest that no single practice, event or food safety system breakdown can explain outbreak occurrences.
- Proactively seeking out and correcting any potential issues can support prevention efforts during transition periods. Best practices include adjusting training programs and policies during this time and having a third-party service conduct assessment.
- Several areas that require extra vigilance include unusual weather events, potential sources of contaminated surface water, adjacent land use and canal or well maintenance.
- If any trends are identified after assessing water sources, consider water treatment as a solution.
- Ask questions regarding adjacent land use, irrigation systems and crop inputs. For instance: What are your neighbors doing? What crop products are being applied during the offseason on surrounding lands? Have your wells been inspected annually by an experienced professional? What do you know about your compost supplier's composting processes?
- Data analytics is more important than ever and can identify issues and prevent potential problems.
- WG Seasonality Best Practices document is available online. If you detect any potential issues, TAKE ACTION!
 - Environmental Assessments
 - o Check for possible contamination sources near fields
 - o Check for weather-related crop damage and impacts on pathogens
 - Irrigation Water
 - o Check for possible upstream contamination sources
 - o If water quality appears poorer than normal, increase testing frequency
 - Crop Treatments
 - o Make sure the water used for foliar applications meets water quality criteria
 - Worker Practices
 - o Frequently train workers regarding hygiene and sanitation practices and raise awareness of needed vigilance during transition periods
 - Equipment
 - o Consider more frequent training, more frequent monitoring, verification activities and/or additional measures during transition periods.

