

## **Calif. produce distributor recalls potentially contaminated bunched spinach**

September 20 2009, By Claudia Melendez Salinas

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The bad news: Salinas, Calif., produce distributor Ippolito International on Friday recalled two brands of bunched spinach after it tested positive for Salmonella. The good news: No one got sick.

And that's the way it should work as the world becomes more food-safety conscious, say industry experts.

"None of this is a surprise, this is how it's supposed to work, and I hope this is the way the story goes in the future," said Bob Perkins, executive director of the Monterey County Farm Bureau in California. "If we're correct in our program the way it will be is: detection, recall, nobody gets sick. It costs the producer something but we prevented (potential illnesses) and eventually this will end up being a non-story."

The voluntary call-back by Ippolito International, which has been in business for five years, comes after routine random testing of bunched spinach in Michigan by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Microbial Data Program, collected and analyzed by the Michigan Department of Agriculture, tested positive.

No illnesses have been reported to date, and the recall is limited to 1,715 cartons that have been distributed to 12 states, including California, and three provinces in Canada.

Industry experts say these types of recalls are likely to become more common with new procedures established by the U.S. Food and Drug

Administration, and as more stringent measures are able to detect pathogens.

"It's good that there are no reports of illnesses. The company did the responsible thing and took the product off market," said Scott Horsfall, chief executive officer of the California Leafy Green Products Handler Marketing Agreement, an agribusinesses association formed in the wake of the 2006 E.Coli outbreak for the industry to monitor its own [food safety](#) practices.

Ippolito is a member of the Leafy Green agreement, which means that it follows the organization's agricultural practices designed to prevent contamination. These measures include monitoring of [irrigation water](#) and soils, ensuring there is no animal invasion of flooding that could contaminate the fields, safe harvesting practices and accurate documentation for speedy tracking.

"We're in our third year, and everything we do is designed to reduce risk," Horsfall said.

But increased testing by the USDA has already resulted in false positives \_ as in the July 2008 case of cilantro that originally tested positive for [Salmonella](#) but turned out not to be \_ and industry experts expect more recalls as continued testing prevents possible contaminated produce from reaching the market.

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## SPINACH RECALL DETAILS

- "Queen Victoria" and cartons of "Tubby" bunched spinach were recalled

- There were 1,515 cartons of "Queen Victoria" brand, distributed in Alabama, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York and British Columbia, Ontario and Manitoba, Canada.

The cartons were labeled with the following Code Date Stickers which can be located on the outside edge panel of the carton.

- 10522441 5 205 (Harvested September 1, 2009)
- 10522451 5 205 (Harvested September 2, 2009)
- 10522461 5 205 (Harvested September 3, 2009)
- The 200 cartons of "Tubby" product were distributed in New York and California, and its stickers read: 10522451 5 205 (Harvested September 2, 2009)

Consumers who have purchased bunched [spinach](#) subject to this voluntary recall are urged to dispose of the product or return it to the place of purchase for a full refund.

Consumers with questions may contact the company at 1-831-772-9991 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. PDT.

For more information about Salmonella, visit:

[www.foodsafety.gov/poisoning/c ... uses/salmonella.html](http://www.foodsafety.gov/poisoning/c...uses/salmonella.html)

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