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LGMA Food Safety Audits Continue Through COVID-19 Crisis

Sacramento, CA -- The California Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement (LGMA) is sharing information to inform retail and foodservice customers, as well as consumers, that activities in place to ensure the safety of leafy greens are fully operational during this rapidly changing COVID-19 situation.

“First and foremost, we want to assure people that LGMA audits conducted by state government personnel are continuing as usual,” said Scott Horsfall, CEO of the LGMA. “Audits are scheduled for the desert growing areas as the season wraps up there and will move with the harvest to the central valley and central coast regions.”

Horsfall noted that producing, harvesting and shipping of ag products are considered essential services and the requirements being placed by the federal and state governments recognize that food industries must continue to provide healthy food to the nation’s consumers.

“We are asking auditors and members to take all precautions necessary,” he said. “This is a rapidly changing situation, but when it comes to LGMA audits, they are expected to continue for the foreseeable future. If anything changes the LGMA will keep people updated.”

Over 90% of the leafy greens consumed in the U.S. are produced under the LGMA food safety program. On average each member company of the LGMA is audited by the government five times per year to verify food safety practices are being followed on leafy greens farms.

The LGMA has also issued information to several stakeholder audiences explaining the efforts in place under the LGMA program in the area of health and human hygiene.

“While all public health officials are emphasizing there is no evidence that fresh produce or any other food can transmit the virus, we think it’s important that people understand what happens on our farms each and every day,” said Horsfall.



Some of the measures in place through the LGMA to ensure the safety of leafy greens include:

- Bathroom and handwashing facilities are required to be present anytime harvest crews are working in leafy greens fields.
- Bathrooms must be clean and must always have water, soap, toilet paper, hand drying towels. Hand sanitizers are also provided on many farms.
- Workers must wash hands before and after breaks or whenever they use the bathroom.
- LGMA member companies who grow leafy greens are required to train workers on the required practices, including how to properly wash their hands. The LGMA provides a hand-washing training that is free to download. Use your smartphone for access: [English iOS](#) | [Spanish iOS](#)
- People who are sick are not allowed to come into contact with leafy greens products.
- No one is allowed to consume food, chew tobacco or spit near leafy greens fields.
- Harvest equipment and tools must be sanitized regularly.

Member companies of the LGMA are audited by government officials to verify these required practices are being followed. During on-farm visits, government auditors observe activities of work crews to make sure they understand and follow required hygiene practices. The auditors will test workers' knowledge by speaking to them directly asking questions such as, "Did your employer check with you today to make sure you weren't feeling ill before you began work?"

Last, but not least, the LGMA is working with the Produce for Better Health Foundation (PBH) and its team of registered dietitians to encourage consumption of fruits and vegetables, like leafy greens, and to inform people about the safety measures in place on farms. PBH has just published a post titled [Remain Calm and Eat Your Leafy Greens](#), by Neva Cochran, MS, RDN, LD, FAND. PBH is sharing this information via its popular 'Have a Plant' social media channels.

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