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## **STOP Foodborne Illness Partnership Takes Action to Prevent Tragedy**

**Chicago, IL** -- As an example of what U.S. Food and Drug Administration Deputy Commissioner Michael Taylor calls "a spirit of partnership which characterizes today's food safety landscape," a new training video was unveiled today by STOP Foodborne Illness and the California Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement.

"STOP Foodborne Illness is a national nonprofit public health organization dedicated to the prevention of illness and death from foodborne illness," said Deirdre Schlunegger, CEO of the organization which is a strong advocate of new federal food safety laws being implemented through the Food Safety Modernization Act and is calling for full funding of this important new law as a means of preventing foodborne illness.

"We recognize, however, that rules and regulations alone will not prevent foodborne illness," continued Schlunegger. "This is why we are very pleased to be involved in a project that is part of a comprehensive food safety training program in California also designed to prevent foodborne illness."

The training program, known as *LGMA Tech*, is a component of the California Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement created in the aftermath of a tragic foodborne illness outbreak associated with spinach in 2006. Leafy greens farmers vowed to do everything possible to prevent a future outbreak. In 2007 they launched a model food safety program which utilizes mandatory government food safety audits to ensure a set of science-based food safety practices are being followed on leafy greens farms. The LGMA operates with oversight from the California Department of Food and Agriculture and membership represents approximately 99 percent of the lettuce and leafy greens produced in the state.

"Training is a critical tool in making sure everyone on our farms knows about and understands proper food safety practices," said Ryan Talley, of Talley Farms in San Luis Obispo, and chairman of the California LGMA. "But in order to truly educate people and make real change, not only does everyone on the farm need to understand what to do, but they should also know why food safety is so important."

This is where STOP Foodborne Illness comes in. Members of the organization who have been sickened in past foodborne illness outbreaks are featured in a video that is part of the *LGMA Tech* leafy greens food safety training program. In the video, they explain in vivid detail about their illnesses to illustrate why it is so important for workers to follow proper food safety practices.

“Through this video, the voices of people impacted by foodborne illness will now be heard by those who work with leafy greens and are on the front lines of producing our food,” continued Schlunegger. “We are very pleased to be a part of this important, groundbreaking project.”

“As a result of our growing relationship with STOP Foodborne Illness, the LGMA has come to understand the value of hearing from real people who have experienced severe foodborne illness,” said Dan Sutton, an LGMA member who is featured in the video. “I often share the stories I’ve heard from these individuals to help me communicate how critical it can be to always follow the food safety practices required by the LGMA. We don’t want anyone to become sick from eating our products.”

Lauren Bush, a representative of STOP who was sickened in 2006 after eating a spinach salad is also featured in the video. She came to know the LGMA when she and other members of STOP were invited to visit leafy greens farms in California to see first-hand the food safety program and meet some of the farmers behind it.

“We all learned so much during this visit,” she said. “After we met the farmers and heard about their program, we could see the real commitment they have to preventing foodborne illness. In turn, we were impressed with the impact hearing our stories had on the farmers. We wanted to be able to share this experience with others in the leafy greens community. So, we were very pleased the LGMA asked us to work with them on this video.”

The video will now become part of the [LGMA Tech](#) training program, which includes a series of workshops targeted at supervisor and/or lead food safety personnel who are responsible for ensuring leafy greens workers are adequately trained on proper food safety practices. To learn more about the program, please visit the LGMA website.

A shorter version of the [video](#) that highlights the partnership between LGMA and STOP Foodborne illness is available on the STOP website along with more information about the organization and its programs.

“When people see this video, they will recognize what can be done when we all work together for real change,” said Schlunegger. “Further, we must all continue working to achieve full funding of FSMA so that programs like this can exist throughout the produce industry.”

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