

Brent P. Baker
Farmers Produce Auction
8076 ST. Rt. 241
Mt. Hope, Ohio 44660
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Dear Reader:

It is my pleasure to tell you that my family and I are the 7th generation to farm on the same property which my relatives purchased in the early 1800's. On our farm we raise apples, peaches, and many different vegetables, including those that fall into the leafy greens description. Many things have changed since my great grandfather built our roadside market in the 1920's. One thing that hasn't changed is the desire to grow the highest quality and safest food possible.

In addition to my family's involvement in the produce industry, I work part time as a field consultant for Farmers Produce Auction, with many farmers in the plain community. I am reminded daily, of the agricultural heritage of these hard working individuals. Many Amish growers are able to trace their farming roots and many agricultural practices back two centuries to their European ancestors. Although, often seen as antiquated and sometimes naïve or even described as being backwards in this modern day and age, I can testify to the fact that these individuals who market the majority of their fresh fruits and vegetables through a "produce auction", are some of the most progressive and food safety minded individuals to ever plant a seed. Through implementation of Good Agricultural Practices as well as our own "In House" inspections we feel that at Farmer's Produce Auction, we are ahead of the curve.

The problem that I see with the national marketing agreement in question is first that it is said to be a voluntary program, however, proponents are the first to admit that those parties not participating will not realize the preference for the labors of their toil that those participating will receive. Those not informed of the parameters of the agreement might say, "then just sign up", however a University of California research document states that compliance costs average \$13.60 per acre, food safety costs in general increased to \$54.63 per acre. The same document also states per acre costs for a medium grower are 159% higher than that of the largest growers, who would normally hire an individual for all their food safety compliance issues. The agreement has an air of prejudice towards the small farm!

Secondly, I take issue with the exclusion of all animals, including those providing the means to execute most farming operations for an Amish grower, the majestic draft horse. I can find no instance where it has been stated that horses have ever been the point source for contamination of Escherichia coli in fresh grown produce. Therefore, to assume the metrics being applied in California for this marketing agreement are a standard for the whole country is not founded in science.

In conclusion, I would like to state that the effectiveness of the California Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement is not well represented, as evidenced by the IPPOLITO INTERNATIONAL, a CLGMA signatory, recall on September 18, 2009, of over 1700 cases of spinach potentially contaminated with salmonella. It is unfortunate that product was possibly contaminated but it bears witness to the fact that another seal of quality does not mean an end to all food safety concerns, especially to the consumer!

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