

Next Generation Food Safety in Fresh Produce – An Industry Perspective

National Academy of
Sciences – Food Forum

September 9, 2008





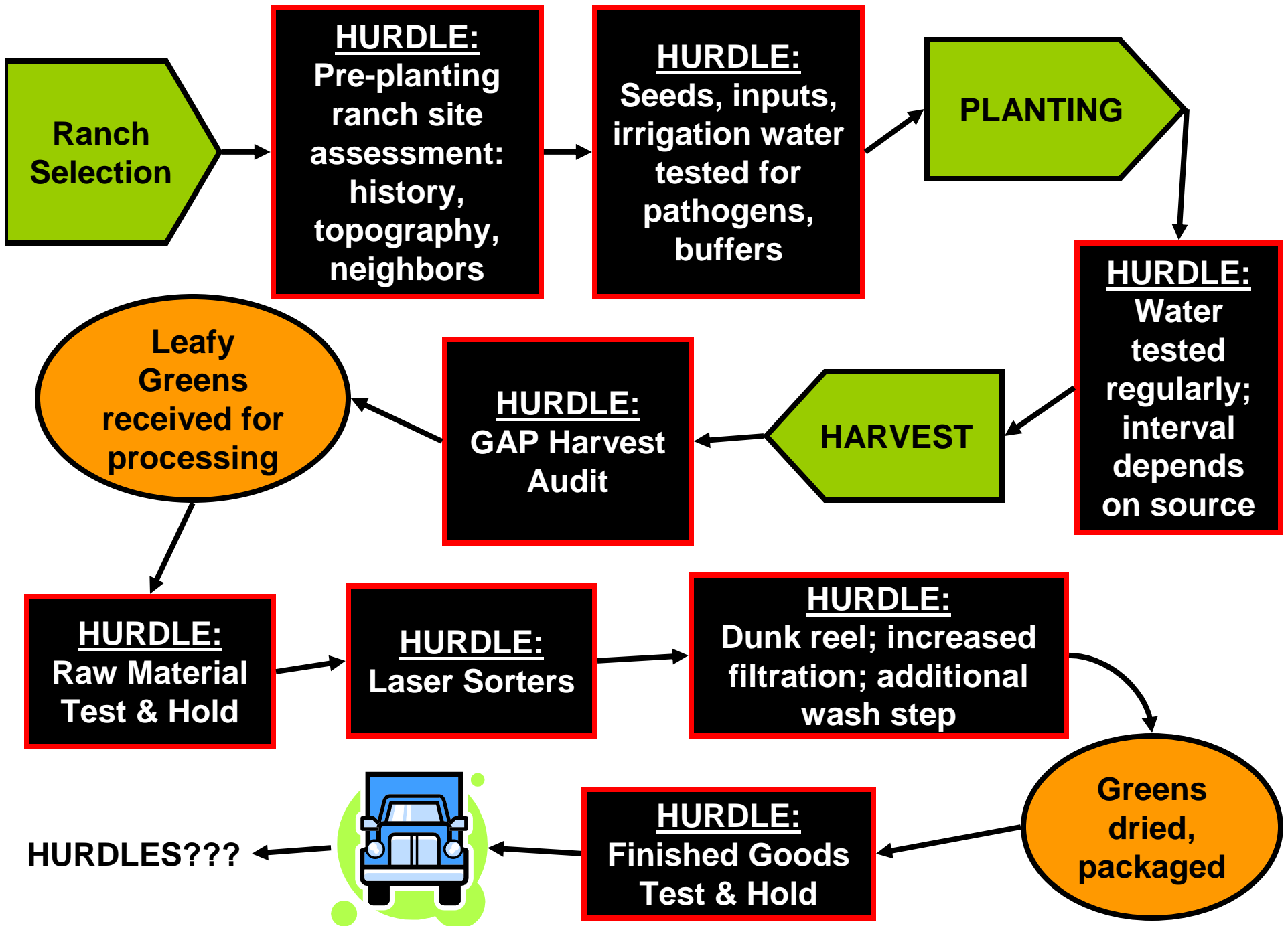
September 14, 2006

- First call from the Calif. Dept. of Health Services (CDHS) to alert us of possible *E. coli* outbreak
- Several participants on the call with CDHS and FDA - all brands identified by ill consumers
- On Sept. 15, with information still coming in from Center for Disease Control and the FDA, we opted to go to a **voluntary recall** because it was the right thing to do for our customers and public safety.



Re-Envisioning Food Safety: A Multi-Hurdle Approach

- Seed to Harvest: A new plan for enhanced GAPs
- Raw Material Firewall: A raw product test and hold program
- In the Plant: Enhancements in our packing facilities
- Finished Product Firewall: A finished good test and hold program
- Gaining Deeper Knowledge: Using testing program data to develop a deeper understanding of what's needed to prevent outbreaks





The Food Safety Continuum

- Food safety does not stop at the farm (Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement) or at our facility.
- Strong efforts are being made at the farm.
 - *What about the rest of the continuum?*
- Real collaboration is lacking.
- We must coordinate efforts to make real progress and reduce the risks we know exist.



Can Audits Ensure Safety?

- Pressure on industry to comply with a variety of competing audit standards
 - All are very similar
 - Slight differences could easily be resolved
 - Audits are seen as the answer to food safety
 - But buyers often don't understand what they are asking for
- Is this the best allocation of food safety resources? Will this process deliver the most improvement?
- Every producer, processor, distributor, retailer and consumer must be responsible for their part.
- Collaboration, *rather than competition*, among those striving for improved food safety could achieve real results.

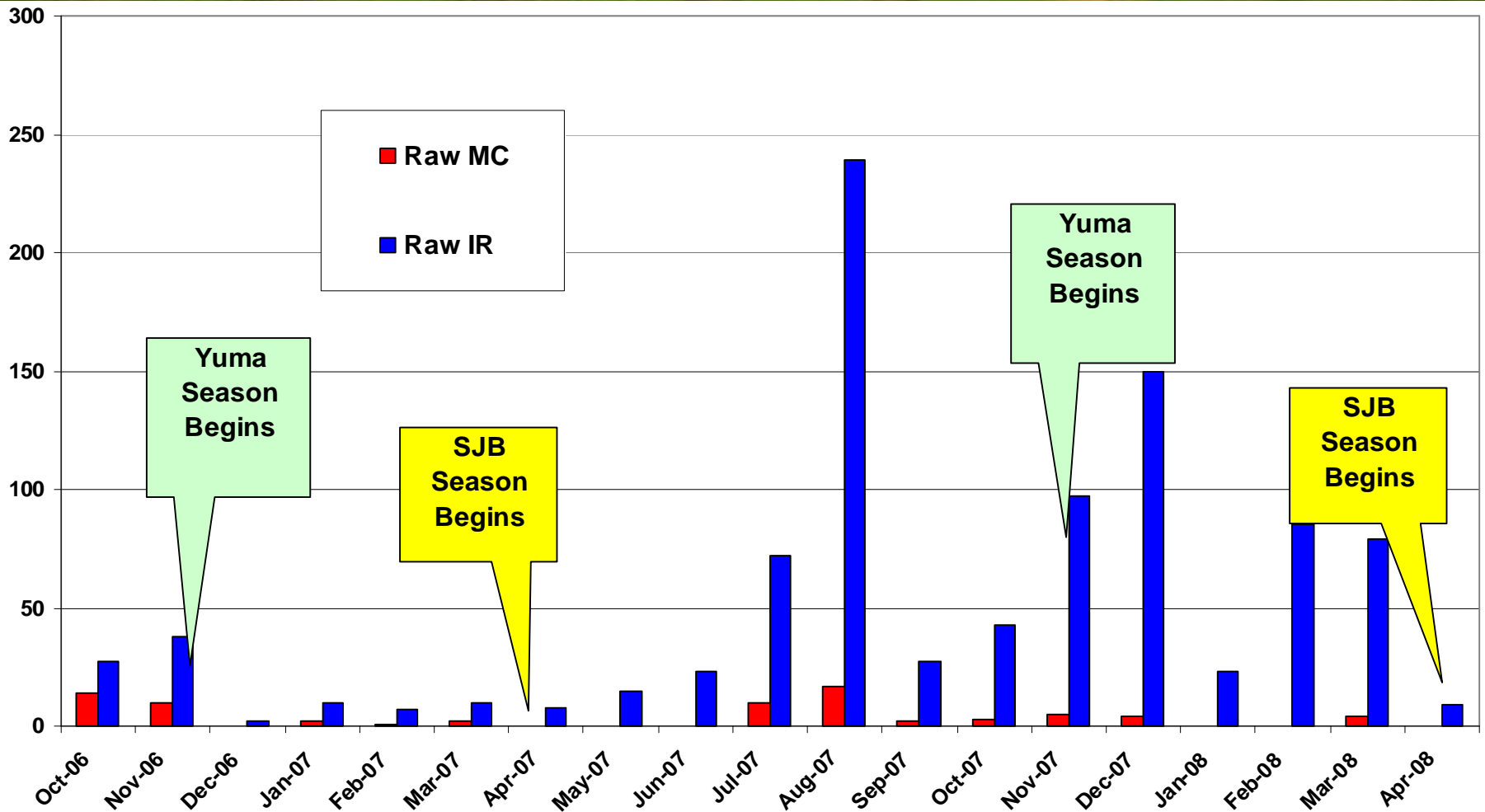


Will current research deliver useful results?

- Several universities and trade associations are trying to coordinate efforts
- There's a gap between research and practical application
- Most of the research approaches the issue as if foodborne illness happens only in the US.
- Government should take the lead to create a trusted, safe environment that will facilitate data-sharing and research collaboration to speed up the pace of concrete, applicable advancements.



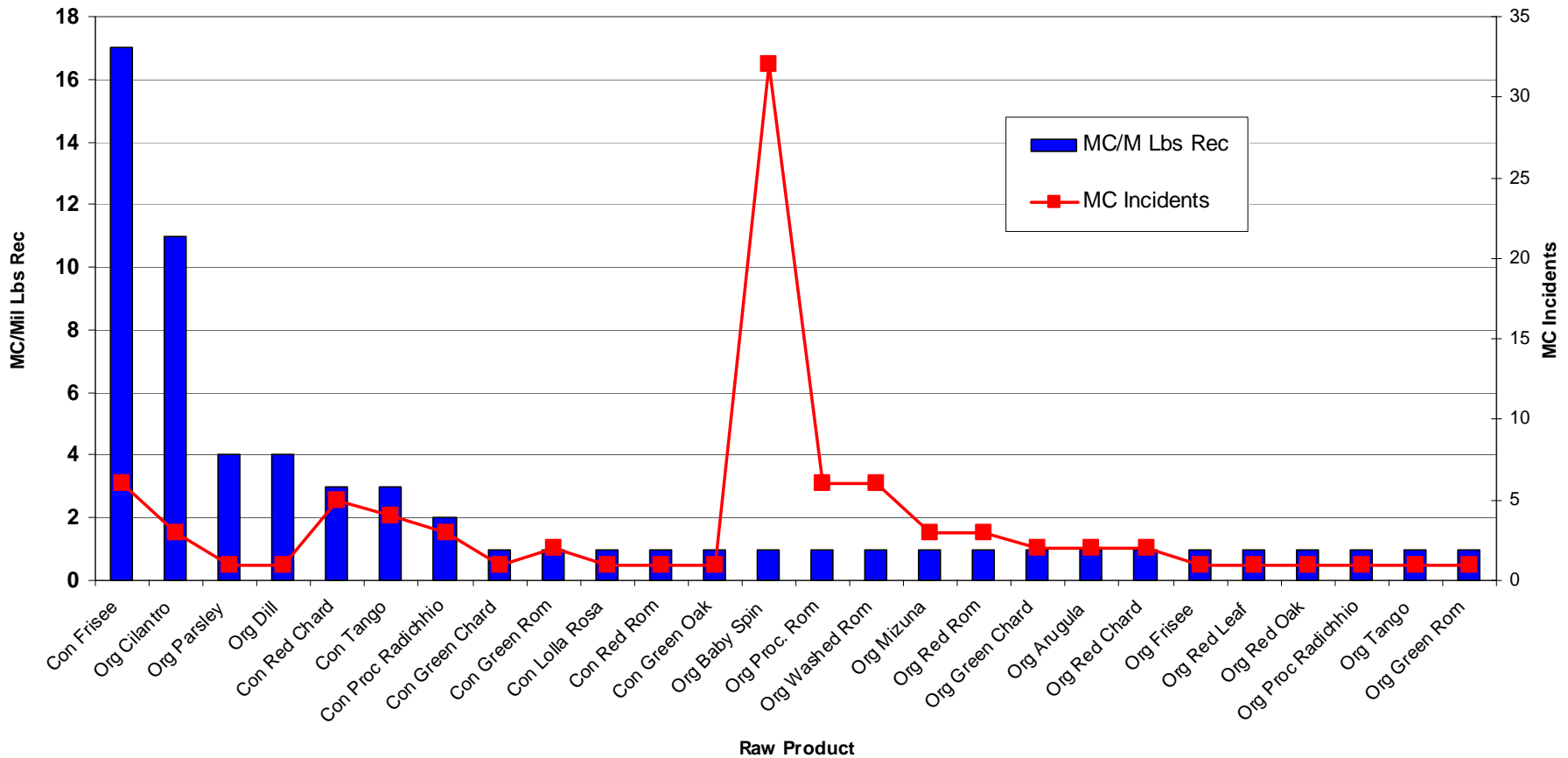
Initial Reactives and MC Positives Compared





Raw MC Positives - Normalized

Raw MC Incidents per Mil Lbs Rec
Oct 2006-Apr 2008





Government Transparency

- Government agencies are working hard in an effort to protect the consumer.
 - Tremendous public and legislative pressure to prevent and solve outbreaks
- These efforts have frequently generated misinformation, media frenzies, and a decline in consumer confidence without real solutions.
- In an effort to act quickly in response, early misinformation has led to allocation of resources to the wrong things.
- Further efforts to help industry understand process of identification is needed.
- Likewise, further efforts need to be made to help government understand industry.
 - Perhaps inclusion would lead to faster results



Reform: Envisioning Future Best Practices – How to Get There

- Recognize that pathogens exist in our environment
- Realize that we are all in this together – one segment's isolated efforts will not protect the consumer
- Develop national standards for the continuum, leading to standardized audits
 - Important as verification of compliance
- Collaborate!
 - Work as an industry to make our produce safer
 - Create a secure environment where research efforts can be coordinated and application and evaluation of research improved
 - Improve government/industry relationship so that coordinated efforts result in quicker conclusions
 - Open dialogue + transparency = trust



Thank you

