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US: Foodborne illness on the rise: New York Academy Of Sciences publishes open-access eBriefing - (New York Academy of Sciences)

Published by June 11th, 2008 in IA STATE FOOD SAFETY NEWS

Fresh produce and plant-associated products have become "leading vehicles" of foodborne illnesses in the United States, a top food safety expert says in a new electronic briefing posted by the New York Academy of Sciences.

Available online at <http://www.nyas.org/foodborne>, this eBriefing includes a summary of a recent NYAS symposium on the topic, slide and audio presentations by five experts in the field, links to related information, and a video interview with Michael Doyle, director of the University of Georgia Center for Food Safety.

Although the precise causes aren't clear, the symposium panelists explained that growing consumption of uncooked produce, centralized industrial processing, nationwide distribution of fresh fruits and vegetables, and limitations in the Food and Drug Administration's capacity to monitor food safety are all raising the risk of geographically widespread outbreaks. These factors could lead to future incidents similar to the 2006 outbreak of E. coli that infected people in 26 states following contamination of packaged fresh spinach from California.

In addition, the eBriefing reports, the United States is increasingly importing its fresh produce. Because there are no universal standards in food production and processing, this means that a growing proportion of the food Americans consume is coming from places with substandard sanitary conditions, raising the risk of emerging infections like foodborne Chagas disease.

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