

ARS Research Program on Food Safety of Leafy Greens and Other Fresh Produce

ARS research to improve the safety of leafy greens and other fresh produce—such as spring onions and tomatoes—is part of the overall ARS national program for Food Safety (#108), described on the Web at www.nps.ars.usda.gov. This is a cross-cutting program that looks at all aspects of the food safety continuum, from plant and microbial genetics to food-production techniques. The program develops tools and information for understanding the sources and transfer of microbes through the food supply.

ARS coordinates its research program in this area with other U.S. Department of Agriculture agencies, including the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; Economic Research Service; and National Agricultural Statistics Service.

The agency also works closely with commodity organizations such as United Fresh, industry producers and processors, universities, and other federal organizations, such as the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Such extensive coordination ensures that ARS is addressing the most critical needs and priorities with its research. It also helps make sure that research programs funded by federal dollars are

integrated without being duplicative and takes advantage of each agency's unique abilities and expertise.

Most recently, the priorities on which ARS is concentrating include:

- identifying genetic and biochemical factors involved in the colonization of produce by human pathogens
- developing and implementing science-based strategies to prevent on-farm contamination of produce with enteric pathogens
- determining the role of harvesting methods, postharvest processing, and storage in contamination
- developing comprehensive postharvest systems for eliminating or controlling growth of human pathogenic microorganisms
- developing accurate, high-speed tests for inspecting foods and sanitation conditions during processing by very small to very large commercial processors
- inventing new or improved intervention technologies for significantly reducing contamination by human pathogens while maintaining quality of fresh and minimally processed produce.

■ States Where ARS Does Research on Food Safety of Leafy Greens and Other Fresh Produce

