

Why California LGMA Leafy Greens Are Low Risk for Cyclospora



CALIFORNIA LGMA METRICS CREATE MULTIPLE PREVENTIVE BARRIERS THAT INTERRUPT THE CONDITIONS REQUIRED FOR CYCLOSPORA CONTAMINATION TO REACH LEAFY GREENS.

How Cyclospora Causes Illness

What is Cyclospora?



Cyclospora is a microscopic parasite that causes stomach illness in people. It spreads only when food or water is contaminated with human fecal matter containing the parasite.

Cyclospora only infects humans - animals are not known sources.

Not Immediately Infectious

When shed in stool, Cyclospora is not immediately able to infect another person.

It must spend 1-2 weeks in the environment before becoming infectious.

CALIFORNIA HAS SOME OF THE STRONGEST PRODUCE SAFETY STANDARDS IN THE WORLD



AG WATER
MANAGEMENT



WORKER
HEALTH
HYGIENE &
SANITATION



HARVEST &
HANDLING
CONTROLS



PRODUCT
TRACEABILITY



COMPLIANCE
WITH FSMA
PRODUCE
SAFETY RULE



THIRD PARTY &
GOVERNMENT
AUDITS

How LGMA Metrics Break the Chain

Cyclospora Needs	LGMA Control
Human contamination	Worker health, hygiene, training and handwashing requirements
Environmental contamination	Sanitation and restroom facility requirements and flooding protocols
Water exposure	Agricultural water assessments and risk management
Crop contact	Field assessments and hazard evaluations
Harvest and handling	Harvest sanitation and food safety practices
Consumer exposure	Traceability, verification and mandatory audits

Why LGMA Members Are Low Risk

- Mandatory food safety standards beyond regulatory requirements.
- Rigorous agricultural water management to help reduce the potential introduction of pathogens.
- Strong worker health and hygiene practices, including prohibiting persons with symptoms of infectious disease.
- Post-flood requirements including soil sampling and a no-plant period.
- Routine independent verification audits with a rapid response and corrective action process.

BOTTOM LINE: California LGMA Handlers follow science-based food safety metrics that address the key pathways associated with Cyclospora contamination, making California leafy greens a very low-risk commodity. LGMA's program focuses on preventing contamination before it occurs through risk identification, mitigation practices, and continuous improvement.

The Science Behind California Leafy Greens & Cyclospora



UNDERSTANDING CYCLOSPORA BIOLOGY AND CALIFORNIA'S ENVIRONMENTAL ADVANTAGES SHOWS WHY LGMA LEAFY GREENS PRESENT A VERY LOW RISK FOR THIS PARASITE.

1. The Parasite Originates From Humans, Not Animals

Cyclospora's only known host is humans. Cattle, wildlife, and other farm animals are not recognized sources of human Cyclospora infections.

As a result, potential contamination pathways are significantly narrower than those associated with pathogens that can originate from both human and animal sources. Preventing human fecal contamination is therefore the primary focus of Cyclospora prevention efforts.

2. California's Environment May Be Less Favorable for Cyclospora

Cyclospora sporulates most effectively at temperatures ranging from approximately 22°C to 32°C (72°F to 90°F). Several characteristics of California production regions may reduce opportunities for the parasite to become infectious:

Cooler Coastal Growing Conditions

Major produce-growing regions such as the Salinas Valley generally experience cooler summer temperatures than many tropical and subtropical agricultural regions where Cyclospora is more commonly found. These cooler conditions may slow sporulation and reduce the period during which oocysts can become infectious in the field.

Dry Summer Climate

California's Mediterranean climate is characterized by limited summer rainfall. Reduced rainfall may decrease the movement and spread of human fecal contamination through agricultural environments compared with regions that experience frequent heavy rains.

Water and Sanitation Controls

Scientific literature and outbreak investigations consistently identify contaminated water as one of the most important pathways for Cyclospora contamination of produce. California's agricultural water management requirements, sanitation infrastructure, and food safety programs help reduce the likelihood of contamination reaching crops.

3. Recent Outbreak Investigations Have Not Implicated California Growers

During recent U.S. Cyclospora investigations, California public health officials reported that California was not among the states experiencing increased cases, had no known local outbreaks, and had not been linked through traceback investigations to outbreak sources. In July 2026, state and industry officials reported that federal investigations had not identified California growers, processors, or distributors as outbreak sources.

4. Cases in California

According to the California Department of Public Health, current Cyclospora cases reported in California are associated with international travel, not locally grown produce. State surveillance continues to monitor for domestically acquired infections, but case counts remain within expected ranges.

Sources

- California Department of Public Health (CDPH)
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- California Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement (LGMA)
- World Health Organization (WHO)
- Merck Manual Professional Edition
- FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule
- Peer-reviewed publications on Cyclospora cayetanensis environmental persistence and produce safety risk factors.