



STATE OF ALABAMA
FARMERS MARKET AUTHORITY



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Director

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ALABAMA GROWN PRODUCE SOLD AT FARMERS MARKETS IS SAFE

Montgomery, Ala. — The recent outbreak of salmonella across the nation has raised awareness and concern about food bourn illnesses. According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) data from investigations now indicates that jalapeño peppers and serrano peppers are most likely to be the cause of this outbreak, not tomatoes. No produce grown in Alabama has been linked to the salmonella outbreak.

“While I can’t guarantee that there is not harmful bacteria in local produce, I can tell you that that the produce that you buy at your local farmers market that has been grown by the producer is the same produce he or she feeds their own family. That gives me the assurance I need regarding safety of their food,” says Don Wambles, Director Alabama Farmers Market Authority (FMA).

Wambles encourages consumers that are concerned about food safety to Buy Fresh, Buy Local. “Purchasing locally grown produce supports your local farmers, your community and is the safest food for your family,” says Wambles.

The FMA also recommends asking the producer when you purchase fresh fruits and vegetables if they grow their own produce. “You can learn about the variety and seasonality of produce you are purchasing when you communicate with the farmers that grew it. You also build a trusting relationship with that farmer.” says Wambles.

After a lengthy investigation, the FDA has determined that fresh tomatoes now available in the domestic market are not associated with the current salmonella outbreak. As a result, the FDA has removed its June 7 warning against eating certain types of raw red tomatoes. “Alabama grown produce, including tomatoes, are safe and have not been linked to this salmonella outbreak,” says Wambles.

The FDA, working with officials from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention along with state and local health departments, is continuing to follow epidemiological and other evidence showing that raw jalapeño and raw serrano peppers that are now available in the domestic market may be linked to illnesses in this salmonella outbreak. At this time, people in high risk populations, such as the elderly, infants and people with impaired immune systems, should avoid eating raw jalapeño and raw serrano peppers.

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Below are FDA guidelines for safe-handling of fresh produce:

- Store raw produce such that it does not contaminate other foods with soil, etc. Store any fresh produce, whole or cut, where other products – especially raw meat and poultry – cannot cross-contaminate it.
- Segregate fresh produce from other refrigerated foods in refrigeration units by using a separate set of storage racks or separate cooler, if possible. Cover and store washed cut produce *above* unwashed, uncut fresh produce. Store all produce off the floor.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water before and after handling fresh produce.
- All sinks, utensils, cutting boards, slicers, etc., should be washed, rinsed, and sanitized before use with fresh produce.
- Always wash fresh produce under running, potable water before use. Soaking produce or storing it in standing water is not recommended for most types of fresh produce.
- Refrigerate foods prepared with raw fresh-produce ingredients.
- Minimize re-use of freshly prepared dishes containing raw produce. Examples include dishes made with raw tomatoes, cilantro, and hot peppers, such as salsa and guacamole.

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