

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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AFFI *Listeria Monocytogenes* Fact Sheet

- *Listeria monocytogenes* (*Lm*) is a type of bacterium that is widely recognized as ubiquitous in the environment, in soil and ground water and on plants. Most people are routinely exposed to *Listeria* with no health consequences. However, one species of *Listeria* – *Listeria monocytogenes* – is pathogenic and can lead to the very serious disease, listeriosis, among at-risk populations, including pregnant women, newborns and people who are immunocompromised.
- *Lm* can grow readily in the conditions that frequently exist in food processing facilities. While frozen vegetables are blanched to destroy *Lm* and frozen fruits are washed and flash frozen, this environmental bacterium can recontaminate products while being packaged, handled or stored.
- *Listeria* is killed by cooking and pasteurization. Consumers should follow the manufacturer's cooking instructions provided on the product packaging.
- Packaged frozen vegetables, and frozen vegetable blends, are produced by: 1) grading and sorting just-harvested vegetables, with only the highest-quality vegetables being retained; 2) vegetables are then washed, blanched, frozen and packaged; and 3) stored in a temperature-controlled environment until being transported to grocery stores and foodservice providers.
- Food safety assurance measures in typical frozen vegetable operations include: 1) an effective sanitation program; 2) adherence to good manufacturing practices; 3) use of quality water sources; 4) validated blanching procedures; and 5) science-based validated cooking instructions.
- Packaged frozen fruits are produced by: 1) grading and sorting just-harvested fruits, with only the highest-quality fruit being retained; 2) fruits are then washed, frozen and packaged; and 3) stored in a temperature-controlled environment until being transported to grocery stores and foodservice providers.
- Food safety assurance measures in typical frozen fruit operations include: 1) an effective sanitation program; 2) adherence to good manufacturing practices; 3) use of quality water sources; and 4) adherence to rigorous health and hygiene programs for personnel.

- Both the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service regulate *Lm* in the food supply chain.
- Detailed information regarding signs, symptoms and treatments for listeriosis is available from the FDA at:
<http://www.fda.gov/downloads/Food/FoodborneIllnessContaminants/UCM297627.pdf>.
- Further materials are available via the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov) and the FDA (<http://www.fda.gov/Food/>).

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The American Frozen Food Institute is the national trade association promoting and representing the interests of all segments of the frozen food and beverage industry. AFFI works to foster industry development and growth, and advocates before legislative and regulatory entities on the industry's behalf. More information can be found at www.affi.org.