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PRODUCE

COVERING FRESH PRODUCE AROUND THE GLOBE SINCE 1897

NEWS

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FIT maker says sanitizer works in first rinse at salad processing plant

By JOAN MURPHY

Early test results show the product Fit Fruit & Vegetable Wash added to the first flume wash of greens at a major salad processor knocks out the threat of *E. coli*, said HealthPro Brands Inc. President and Chief Executive Officer Todd Wichman.

Mr. Wichman said that he was surprised to learn leafy green processors did not use a sanitizer during the first washing step. "They put chlorine in the second flume but nobody talks about the first flume not containing any sanitizer," he said. Because of the high level of dirt and organic matter, processors say chlorine would not be effective during the first rinse.

He suggested the lack of sanitizer during the initial rinse could result in a cross-contamination of harmful bacteria. The whole industry was focused on from where the *E. coli* came during last year's spinach outbreak, he said, but questions remained about why the chlorine-based sanitizer did not

eliminate the contamination.

Mr. Wichman said that tests this spring showed that Fit, added to the first flume, wiped out bacteria. "Our product can thrive in dirty water and is still active after the bacteria are killed off," he said. In the tests, Fit was added to the first and second flume rinse, but he said that the product was successful

acid and glycerol, ethyl alcohol, potassium hydrate, baking soda, citric oil, and distilled grapefruit oil.

The company has also inked a distribution deal with Dot Foods, one of the larger food redistributors in the United States, and has chosen a distributor to market Fit in Europe.

The arrangement with Dot Foods allows the Fit maker to get into the "backrooms of the supermarkets" in charge of cleaning fresh-cut produce. "Some people use chlorine and some don't," he said.

The marketing agreement with AddMaster, an additive company, is designed to capture the European market's move away from chlorine in food processing.

"There's a real market over there, and we're going after it aggressively," said Mr. Wichman.

In the meantime, he predicted that Europe's experience will play a role in moving the United States toward chlorine-free produce. "It's just a matter of time," he added.



in eliminating harmful bacteria during the first rinse step, which could save processing costs. Now HealthPro Brands is trying to test the product at other processing operations.

The natural product, which the company has been aggressively marketing as a consumer and industrial sanitizer, is made of purified water, oleic