Overview of Traceback

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What is Traceback

- Just one of many tool that can be used to enhance an investigation.

- Generally used in conjunction with:
  - Epidemiology information and/or
  - Laboratory information.

- The method used to determine and document the distribution and production chain, and the source(s) of a product that has been implicated in a foodborne illness investigation.
What is Traceback

- Involves:
  - Good interviewing techniques
  - Complete record review
  - Timely reporting to meet its intended purpose.

- A subsequent source investigation may be conducted to determine possible routes or points of contamination by:
  - Inspecting common distribution sites,
  - Processors, and/or
  -Growers identified in the traceback investigation.
What is Traceback

- FDA works with and relies upon our State and local partners as well as CDC to assist with ongoing outbreak investigations by
  - Obtaining good food histories
  - Collecting records
  - And much more!
- It can be a time consuming process when hundreds, if not thousands, of records have to be reviewed to put the puzzle together.
Example Master Diagram
Criteria Considered: When to begin a Traceback

- Many factors are considered to begin a traceback
  - Sufficient epi evidence (i.e. clusters, good food histories, geographic distribution, etc.)
  - Availability of Records
  - Adequate Environmental Investigation
  - Is the outbreak ongoing?
  - Are resources available to conduct a traceback?
  - And many more!
What FDA Looks For....

- Commonality in Sources
- Record reliability
- Industry information
- Understanding of normal commodity shipping patterns.
- And many more!
Challenges

- Lack of traceability within a distribution center
- Co-mingling of produce
- Unreadable records
- Business purchasing from suppliers outside of their normal suppliers (like a grocery store)
- And many more....
Current Resources Available

- Guide to Traceback of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Implicated in Epidemiological Investigations (located on FDA.gov)
- Traceback Course hosted by ORA U (“Train the Trainer” format)
- CORE website – past investigations
- RRT Manual – chapter on Tracebacks
Ongoing Development Projects

- Tracing by 3rd Parties
- Use of technological tools like Palantir
Questions?????