

*For Immediate Release*

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**Fresh Express Announces Release of its Blue-Ribbon Panel Interim Report on the Prevention of Foodborne *Cyclospora* Outbreaks**

***Comprehensive Interim Report and Fact Sheet Available for the Current Season***

June 5, 2019, Orlando, Florida – John P. Olivo, President of Fresh Express, a leading manufacturer of value-added leafy greens and fresh produce products, has announced the release of a far-reaching Interim Report by its Blue-Ribbon Panel on the Prevention of Foodborne *Cyclospora* Outbreaks and the availability of the report to the fresh produce industry timed to the current growing season in order to help protect public health.

In the spring and summer of 2018, multiple *Cyclospora* outbreaks occurred in the United States that were linked to various fresh produce items and their suppliers, including Fresh Express, some of which were also potentially sourced to U.S.- grown fresh produce. To address the outbreak concerns, which typically occur seasonally, Fresh Express formed a Blue-Ribbon Panel comprised of scientists with deep expertise in the biology of the *Cyclospora cayetanensis* organism, food safety, outbreak response and public health. The independent panel, chaired by noted infectious disease and food safety expert Dr. Michael T. Osterholm, was charged with studying the little-understood *Cyclospora* parasite and identifying controls to limit further outbreaks.

Following a November 18, 2018 meeting, the Blue-Ribbon Panel formed four distinct working groups focused on root cause assessment, preventive controls, collaboration and testing validation that met over several months to review existing information, research and data points and to form a more complete picture of the perplexing life cycle of the parasite, its dependence on human hosts, factors affecting its infectivity, potential modes of transmission and, importantly, recommendations for mitigation against contamination and future outbreaks.

The comprehensive Interim Report contains the preliminary findings, recommendations and ongoing priorities of the four working groups to more effectively curtail *Cyclospora* outbreaks going forward. The report also contains an easy-to-understand Fact Sheet about *Cyclospora cayetanensis* that outlines the illness and symptoms, testing methods, ways for growers, harvesters and handlers to reduce potential risk of contamination, and useful resources. The Fact Sheet can be easily printed, reproduced and shared.

The Interim Report also contains the full roster of those contributing to the comprehensive effort.

According to Dr. Osterholm, “This is an exceptional collaboration by those most knowledgeable about a particular food safety risk. Their value in shedding light on the *Cyclospora cayetanensis* outbreak problem cannot be overstated and is already providing long-needed assistance toward discovering how best to manage risk and limit future outbreaks.”

The full Interim Report and Fact Sheet are available on the Fresh Express website at [www.FreshExpress.com](http://www.FreshExpress.com) as well as through key fresh produce industry trade associations such as the Produce Marketing Association ([www.pma.com](http://www.pma.com)) and United Fresh Produce Association ([www.unitedfresh.com](http://www.unitedfresh.com)).

### **About Michael T. Osterholm, PhD, MPH**

Dr. Osterholm is Regents Professor, McKnight Presidential Endowed Chair in Public Health, the director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP), Distinguished Teaching Professor in the Division of Environmental Health Sciences, School of Public Health, a professor in the Technological Leadership Institute, College of Science and Engineering, and an adjunct professor in the Medical School, all at the University of Minnesota.

From June 2018 through May 2019 he served as a Science Envoy for Health Security on behalf of the US Department of State. He is the author of the 2017 book, *Deadliest Enemy: Our War Against Killer Germs*, in which he not only details the most pressing infectious disease threats of our day but lays out a nine-point strategy on how to address them, with preventing a global flu pandemic at the top of the list.

Dr Osterholm is the recipient of numerous prestigious awards and honors and has authored more than 315 professional papers and abstracts.

### **About Fresh Express**

Fresh Express is a leader in fresh produce foods and is dedicated to providing consumers with healthy, value-added salads, leafy greens, Cole slaw, juicing greens and more. Fresh Express is also a leader in food safety, recognized for its comprehensive approach throughout the supply chain. Fresh Express is a past recipient of the prestigious award for Corporate Excellence in Food Safety from the International Association for Food Protection.

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