May 16, 2018

Re: New Product, Old Problem(s): Multistate Outbreak of *Salmonella* Paratyphi B Variant L(+) Tartrate(+) Infections Linked to Raw Sprouted Nut Butters, October, 2015

Dear Epidemiology and Infection Editors,

Attached please find an outbreak report for your consideration for publication in Epidemiology and Infection, which summarizes an outbreak of an uncommon serotype of *Salmonella* infections linked to raw sprouted nut butters. We believe this report would be of interest to your readers because this investigation calls attention to an emerging category of health foods that are causing illness, identifies a gap in regulatory policy, and highlights successful outbreak investigation strategies.

First, our manuscript calls attention to the risks not only of consuming raw sprouts, which is well-described, but of consuming products made using raw sprouted ingredients, which appear to be emerging as consumer interest in health foods increases. We discuss the challenge around producing raw sprouted nut butters that are free of *Salmonella* contamination, and suggest that firms that produce foods containing raw sprouted ingredients could implement a kill step to reduce bacterial contamination, and prevent future outbreaks.

Second, this investigation helped to identify an unclear FDA policy regarding sprout production. Specifically, it was unclear as to whether sprouted nuts would be regulated under the draft sprout-specific requirements part of the Food Safety Modernization Act. As a result of this investigation, this policy is currently being evaluated to determine the best way forward, which we hope will help prevent future illness.

Finally, we highlight successful outbreak investigation strategies that can be employed by other local, state, federal, and international agencies conducting foodborne outbreak response, including single-interviewer open-ended interviewing, which was particularly useful in identifying this novel outbreak vehicle.

This manuscript is not being considered for publication elsewhere. We are not aware of any financial or other relationships that may lead to conflict of interest. This manuscript has been read and approved by all authors.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please reach out with any questions you may have about this outbreak report.

Sincerely,

Katherine Marshall, MPH, and Karen Neil, MPH MD

Corresponding author:

Katherine Marshall

1600 Clifton Rd NE MS A38

Atlanta, GA 30333

Email: Uwj0@cdc.gov Office: 404.639.4405