Ozone sanitation as an effective final intervention step for school food service programs
and commercial food service and retail locations

The health and safety of consumers is a priority for all of us as we consider our vision for agriculture now and in the year 2030.

All too often we read about breakdowns in the fresh produce supply chain resulting in food borne illness for consumers. In addition to the intervention processes and protocols on the supply side of the food industry, an effective antimicrobial intervention step is required at the food service location to increase the level of food safety and protect consumers. Ozone is an effective solution for this final food service intervention step.

Fresh produce is a particular concern for school food service programs and commercial food service and retail operators. Meat and seafood are often served fully cooked, a process that kills common food borne pathogens. Produce is often served uncooked; the only step to reduce pathogens on the surface of produce is rinsing during the preparation process, and most food service operators use only municipal water, which does not kill microorganisms or remove chemical residues, such as pesticides and herbicides.

Compact ozone sanitation systems are now available for school food service programs and commercial food service and retail operations. Washing and sanitizing produce is an important final intervention step that can protect students and the public from an unforeseen breakdown in our fresh produce supply chain.

Ozone is a powerful antimicrobial agent, approved for direct food contact by the FDA and listed in the National Organic Program by the USDA. Ozone is effective against bacteria, viruses and chemical residues, such as pesticides and herbicides. As an added benefit, ozone is a clean technology with a byproduct of only oxygen, making it a great fit for food and beverage applications and a “green” alternative to traditional chemicals. Its use continues to grow in industrial applications by food suppliers for sanitizing and disinfecting water, produce, meats, seafood and equipment.

As we consider the health and safety of consumers in this visioning process, ozone should be considered as an antimicrobial intervention step on both the supply side and food service/retail side of the food supply chain.

Thank you for considering this input in the California Ag Vision 2030 program.

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