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Officials: Recycled water OK despite spinach

MONTEREY, CA Using recycled wastewater to irrigate vegetable crops is a safe, time-tested practice and shouldn't be banned following the current probe into *E. coli* contamination of some spinach products, California water and agriculture officials told the *Monterey Herald* in a September 21 article.

Although the exact cause of the spinach contamination has yet to be determined, at least one California state legislator, Sen. Dean Florez, D-Bakersfield, was calling for a ban on use of reclaimed sewage water in the growing of organic and possibly non-organic vegetable crops, the newspaper said.

However, Keith Israel, general manager of the Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency, said there was "no basis" for saying that reclaimed water is unsafe, and he noted that there had never been a problem with recycled water in the 30 to 40 years it's been used, according to the article.

Bob Perkins, executive director of the Monterey County Farm Bureau, said in the article that reclaiming water is part of state water policy, that any ban on its use "would undermine any plans to expand the water supply," and that it's premature to take action before the cause of the spinach contamination is known.