

# Sprouting Seeds or Beans



## **PUBLIC HEALTH REASONS:**

Since 1995, raw seed sprouts have emerged as a recognized source of foodborne illness in the United States. The FDA and CDC have issued health advisories that persons who are at a greater risk for foodborne disease should avoid eating raw alfalfa sprouts until such time as intervention methods are in place to improve the safety of these products.

Studies have indicated that contaminated seeds are the likely source of most sprout-related outbreaks, as this commodity is grown in warm and humid conditions that are favorable for the growth of bacteria such as *Salmonella*, *Listeria*, and *E. coli*.

**FOOD CODE, OAR 603-25-0030, CHAPTER 3-502.11**

Fresh produce is an important addition to a healthy diet. However, some produce, including sprouts, have been implicated in foodborne illnesses. **Raw and lightly cooked sprouts, especially alfalfa, clover, and mung bean sprouts, have been associated with foodborne illness in a number of outbreaks.**

Microorganisms already on the seeds or introduced during the sprouting process grow quickly during the ideal conditions of germination and sprouting. Because of this, it is required to have a variance to sprout seeds or beans in a retail food environment

**Sprouts are defined as the germinating form of seeds and beans. Examples of sprouts include:** alfalfa, clover, sunflower, broccoli, mustard, radish, garlic, dill, mung, kidney beans, pinto beans, navy beans, soybeans, and wheatberries (wheatgrass).

There is no single treatment so far that has been shown to completely eliminate pathogens on seeds or sprouts that cause foodborne illness without affecting germination or yield. Therefore, every precautionary measure should be taken to prevent high levels of bacteria from growing on the seeds or sprouts.



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Created 9/20