

Food Safety Modernization Act Update

USDA AMS maintains a full-time position with primary responsibility to engage with the Food and Drug Administration on issues related to the Food Safety Modernization Act. Specifically, the work focuses on the produce safety regulation that is likely to become final later this calendar year with compliance dates in late 2017, 2018 and 2019 based on the size of produce farming operations.

AMS is available to provide more detailed information on the FDA produce safety regulation. In addition, AMS can connect Native American farmers with FDA so we all (FDA and AMS) can learn about your farming practices and the challenges you may face as you strive to maintain and build markets for produce.

Produce Safety Alliance Update

The Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) is a collaborative project between USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) – both of which provided funding for its operation. Established in 2010, the PSA operates under a Cooperative Agreement with Cornell University. The cooperative agreement was extended to cover fiscal years 2015 through 2017. The overarching objective of this project is to provide the produce industry and associated groups with training and educational opportunities related to current best practices and guidance, and future regulatory requirements. Specifically, the primary goal of the PSA is to develop a nationwide curriculum to increase the understanding of the principles of Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) and to facilitate the implementation of food safety practices on fresh fruit and vegetable farms and in packinghouses. The curriculum is being designed so that growers and packers subject to the FDA Produce Safety Regulation can meet the training requirement; and, so growers and packers NOT subject to the regulation have access to fundamental education in on-farm produce safety.

Main Objectives of the PSA are to:

- Provide educational outreach assistance to fresh produce growers and packers, including grower cooperatives, to increase their understanding of the critical role they play in public health via implementation of on-farm and packinghouse GAPs, on-farm environmental coordinated management (co-management), and other preventive controls;
- Develop a standardized, multi-format training and education program to assist the produce industry including growers and packers and regulatory agencies with the implementation of FDA's requisite produce safety regulation;
- Develop a standardized, multi-format, training and education program to assist the produce industry including growers and packers and regulatory agencies in understanding the environmental benefits of co-management and to integrate food safety and environmental co-management principles while implementing FDA's produce safety regulation; and
- Be a repository for and providing easy access to stakeholders of up-to-date scientific and technical information related to FDA's produce safety regulation, on-farm and packinghouse produce safety, and related environmental co-management.

In addition:

- Train-the-Trainer curriculum development is nearly complete. Beta testing was conducted in mid-December 2014. Farmer Training curriculum development is also nearly complete. Beta testing with approximately 35 farmers was conducted in late January 2015. However, each curriculum can be modified/revised to address specific challenges within the tribal communities;

- PSA staff is eager to outreach with tribal nation representatives to learn what training may be best suited for the tribal communities, how training objectives can be achieved, and what resources may be needed to accomplish both outreach and training.
- Training classes to be held across the nation – number and locations yet to be determined – with input sought from the various stakeholder communities, including tribal nations; and
- Website and list-serve are accessible via the internet. Materials can also be mailed when mailing address is provided to PSA.

Reference Materials include the PSA Website Home page and the PSA Website “Contact Us” page.

Primary Contacts at the PSA are its Director, Betsy Bihn, and Program Coordinator, Gretchen Wall, who are continuing to build upon the network of cooperative extension professionals from the land-grant colleges and universities across the nation as a means to engage with them and ultimately, with stakeholders (i.e., growers and packers) throughout the nation on the topic of on-farm produce safety. Currently, 22 different land-grant institutions are active on the PSA, and we encourage participation by cooperative extension personnel at tribal colleges. We would appreciate any assistance to identify contacts at the tribal colleges to engage with Ms. Bihn, Ms. Wall, or myself.

Contact Information

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