

Produce Safety Alliance Update and Reasons for Grower Engagement

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The Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) was formed to provide fundamental, science-based, on-farm food safety knowledge to fresh fruit and vegetable farmers as well as regulatory personnel. On January 4, 2011, the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) was signed into law and directed the US FDA to develop and release a draft produce safety regulation early in 2012. Prior to this regulation, guidance from the US FDA, such as the *1998 Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables*, has been voluntary. Looming federal regulation and changes within the produce industry have resulted in many growers reviewing their need to be engaged in produce safety. With funding from the USDA and US FDA, the PSA is developing a nation-wide food safety curriculum to help produce growers understand and implement food safety practices such as GAPs as well as prepare for the upcoming FDA regulation focused on produce safety.

Participation in the PSA is one way farmers can stay informed and prepared for the new regulation. All PSA activities are posted on the website at www.producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu and there is a general listserv farmers can join to receive email updates. To encourage participation in the PSA, ten Working Committees (WC) were formed to identify food safety challenges on the farm as well as discuss the development of effective food safety training programs. Six of these WCs have completed most of their work, but four are still actively meeting and accepting new participants. Anyone interested in joining a PSA WC should visit the website address above or contact Gretchen Wall at 315.787.2626 or glw53@cornell.edu.

A subject of much discussion for small farm owners is the Tester Amendment included in the FSMA. Understanding how the Tester Amendment may impact farms is important for all fresh produce farm owners. It is also important to consider that produce buyers may require food safety practices of their suppliers that exceed the standards included in the regulation. Until the regulation is complete, there is no way to be sure how buyer requirements and the regulation will overlap but farmers can prepare themselves by being part of the discussion and by developing their own farm food safety plans. This presentation will summarize the PSA efforts and discuss the draft regulation if it has been released.