COVID-19: What we have done? Where we are headed?

Produce Safety Educator’s Call #49
September 28, 2020

Natalie Seymour
North Carolina State University

Annalisa Hultberg
University of Minnesota
Instructions

• All participants are muted.
• There will be time for questions and discussion at the end of the meeting.
  – *6 to unmute your phone line
  – Raise hand online, or use Q&A box
• This session will be recorded and the presentation will be shared via the listserv and on our website after the call.
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Agenda

• PSA Response
• Speaker Introductions and Presentations
• Silver-Linings and Open Conversation
  – We want to hear from you!
Temporary Remote PSA Training Updates

- Temporary policy extended to April 30, 2021
  - Potential to extend policy depending on COVID-19 and travel status
PSA Response to COVID-19

• Keeping PSA Grower Trainings Available
  – Temporary Remote Grower Training
  – Online Grower Training
  – Pilot Remote Train-the-Trainer

• Institute for Food Safety at Cornell University
  COVID-19 office hours

• Additional Efforts
PSA Temporary Remote Delivery Grower Training

• Quickly developed a ‘Remote Delivery GT’ policy

• Offered weekly office hours for trainer preparedness in remote delivery format

• Co-trained and mentored training teams

• Remote trainings held: 61 – As of June 30th
• Fast track the launching of the online course  
  – Self-paced with assistance from PSA Lead Trainer  
• Piloted in February 2020  
• Course Launched April 2020  
• Hosted 7 Courses  
  – As of June 30th  
• Participants  
  – Limited to 20 per course
Pilot Remote Delivery Train-the-Trainer

• 15 participants

• 4 Days of PSA TTT Fun!

• New Trainers representing
  – AL, FL, HI, KY, MD, NM, NV, NY, OR, TN, VA, and the US Virgin Islands!

NOTE: Evaluating and making plans for consistency, for if we decide to move forward with future courses

Pilot PSA Remote TTT 9/21-9/24/20
Institute for Food Safety at Cornell University

- Participation in a Series of Food Industry Virtual Office Hours
- Frequently Asked Questions: Produce specific page
- “Protecting Yourself and Preventing the Spread of COVID-19”

www.Instituteforfoodsafty.cornell.edu
Additional Efforts

• Zoom Office Hours
• Remote “Produce Safety Professional Development Workshops”
• Remote PSA GT Tips
Today’s First Speaker

Natalie Seymour

Food Safety Extension Associate & Associate Director of Outreach and Teaching

North Carolina State University
Responding to a Pandemic

- We recognized early this was unlikely to be foodborne, but an issue that impacts food environments
- Outreach team shifted gears to COVID-19 response almost overnight
- Committed to expedited response, review and revision
- Used our existing process and infrastructure to create and disseminate resources
Responding to a Pandemic

- Already had a process and infrastructure to create and communicate resources
- Committed to expedited response, review and revision
WASHING PRODUCE

YOU SHOULD WASH PRODUCE WITH WATER BEFORE EATING

DO NOT USE DISINFECTANTS, CLEANING WIPES, OR SOAP ON PRODUCE

SARS-CoV-2 VIRUS TRANSMISSION

PERSON-TO-PERSON

- SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) is primarily transmitted person-to-person.
- The virus is transmitted through respiratory secretions, such as droplets from the nose and mouth, or via direct contact with infected individuals.
- The virus can also be transmitted through indirect contact with contaminated surfaces or objects.

SURFACES

- Surfaces have been shown to be a factor in transmission, although it is not yet clear how long the virus can survive on surfaces.
- In general, surfaces with higher temperatures and lower humidity may be more likely to support virus survival.

FOOD

- There are no documented cases of COVID-19 being transmitted through food, but it is important to practice good hygiene and handling practices while preparing and consuming food.
- Avoid cross-contamination between raw and cooked foods.

COVID-19 PREVENTION MEASURES

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid close contact with sick individuals and practice social distancing.
- Wear a face mask in public settings where social distancing is difficult.
- Stay home if you are feeling sick.

COVID-19 SEGURIDAD DE ALIMENTOS

- La investigación actual demuestra que el riesgo de transmisión del COVID-19 a través de alimentos es bajo. No se ha probado que el virus pueda sobrevivir en alimentos.
- Sin embargo, sigue siendo importante practicar buenas higiene y manipulación de alimentos para prevenir la transmisión de otros patógenos.

HACIENDO LA COMPRA

- Evitar entornos con mucha gente.
- Llevar una mascarilla.
- Mantener una distancia de seguridad.
- Lavarse las manos antes de comer.

MANEJO DE COMESTIBLES

- Lavar las frutas y verduras en agua fría.
- No utilizar jabón desinfectante.
- Desinfectar la superficie de los frutas y verduras antes de comer.

CONSEJOS

1. Lavar las frutas y verduras en agua fría.
2. Desinfectar las superficies antes de comer.
3. Mantener la distancia de seguridad.
4. Lavarse las manos antes de comer.

COVID-19: SEGUROS DE ALIMENTOS

- Los alimentos de origen animal, como carnes y aves, pueden contener virus, por lo que deben ser cocinados a temperaturas adecuadas para eliminarlos.
- Las frutas y verduras deben ser lavadas con agua fría.
- No se recomienda el uso de jabón desinfectante en la limpieza de alimentos.

COVID-19: SEGUROS DE ALIMENTOS

- Las frutas y verduras deben ser lavadas con agua fría.
- No se recomienda el uso de jabón desinfectante en la limpieza de alimentos.
- Se deben seguir las recomendaciones de los expertos en alimentos para prevenir la transmisión de virus.

COVID-19: SEGUROS DE ALIMENTOS

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- Las frutas y verduras deben ser lavadas con agua fría.
- No se recomienda el uso de jabón desinfectante en la limpieza de alimentos.
Resource Reach

- **150+** NCSU branded resources in four languages
  - **710** co-branded resources created for 20 partners
  - **39** total partners using resources
- **50,013** webpage views
- **450,000** individuals reached through SPFSIC social media
Count On Me NC

- Short courses for restaurant staff, cleaning and general business best practices

- Spread:
  - 14,895 certificates issued
  - 6,879 businesses certified

- Additional course for community living, faith gatherings, schools and agribusiness/agritourism
FoodCoVNET

- The team of experts collaborating on COVID-19 response formalized into FoodCoVNET

- This integrated research and extension project that leverages existing food safety networks to rapidly address SARS-CoV-2 concerns within the food sector

- Follow soon at foodcov.net and on social @foodcovnet
Contact
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nrseymou@ncsu.edu
go.ncsu.edu/covid-19
Next Up!:

Annalisa Hultberg
Statewide Extension Educator, Food Safety at University of Minnesota
COVID – 19:
“It’s not a foodborne illness, but I’ll talk about it anyway”

Annalisa Hultberg, Extension Educator, Food Safety
University of Minnesota
Sept 28th, 2020, PSA Educators Call
POLLS

• Did you conduct COVID specific outreach this past spring and summer with farms in your state? (Y/N)
• If yes, did you/do you find it challenging to determine your role in COVID outreach? Y/N
• What is your role? Extension, State Dept of Ag, other
MN Farms and the pivot to COVID

• 3000 fruit and vegetable farms - 100 covered by PSR, 15 GAP audit. Small, diverse, direct-to-consumer.
• Long-term goal for GAPs and COVID: keep it positive, focus on risk reduction.
• Good COVID protocols can protect your business, customers and employees, just like GAPs.
• Find parallels with GAPs: handwashing, cleaning and sanitizing, systems

What motivates people to change?
Farmers adapted quickly
March – May COVID scramble

- Farms, farmers’ markets, community gardens need info
- Questions about longevity on surfaces and packaging, droplets and efficacy of masks, cleaning/sanitizing, training

  - How long will this last on a wax cardboard box?”
  - “Will Sanidate inactivate it? What rate?”
  - “Can we use wooden tokens at our farmers’ market?”
  - “Are gloves required? Are shields as good as masks?”
  - “How can we do CSA drop off?”
Information Sources on a Novel Disease

• Turned to national resources: CDC, Cornell IFS calls, published data and articles, popular press
• Synthesized recommendations for farmers
• Much guidance was not written with agriculture in mind
• Reiterated common themes:
  • Masks
  • Physical Distancing
  • Handwashing
  • High – touch surface sanitation
Communications strategies

- Statewide webinars with various partners (approx. 5)
- Plug in to existing networks: Farmers’ Market Assn’
- Blog posts summarizing latest science and best practices
- Podcasts/webinar with MOSES
- COVID-19 Videos in English, Hmong and Spanish
COVID-19 Response Plan Template and FAQ

https://z.umn.edu/COVIDplan

- Released 4/30/2020
- Risk-based template designed as series of questions (like a FSP!)
- Over 3000 unique views of Google drive-based document
- ID risk, develop policies to minimize, train, evaluate
COVID-19 Response Plan Template and FAQ

7. How are you changing the way you interact with employees to ensure physical distancing?
Some examples might include:
1. We will use walkie-talkies or text messages for communications from physical distance, and sanitize devices throughout the day.
2. Rather than have morning meetings, we will send an email to each employee every morning with a list of their tasks for the day.
3. We will use a video chatting app such as facetime for training when employees need to see how things are happening close up (If so, remember to sanitize phones regularly), or we will use video chatting for crew meetings.
4. We will hold crew meetings outside with at least 6' distance between people.

8. How will you continue to remind your employees about the policies?
Some examples might include:
1. We will post signs around the farm encouraging employees to wash their hands.
2. We will post signs around the farm reminding people to stay at least 6 feet apart.
3. We will post signs with pictures indicating how and when to sanitize tools and surfaces.
4. We will have a short meeting at the beginning of each week to check in on the COVID-19 response plan, what’s working, what’s not, and any necessary changes.
5. We will use group texts, email, apps or other technology to continually remind employees of our policies and monitor when refresher meetings are needed.
Pivoted to Regulatory Phase

June – Aug
- COVID preparedness plans became mandatory 6/29 for every farm
- Statewide indoor mask mandate 7/24
- Farmers must navigate the maze of rules
  - Food and beverage onsite sales
  - Recreational activities
  - Christmas tree farms?

Made regulators speak directly to farmers: Webinars on 6/24 and 6/26 with MDA/H and MNOSHA (over 400 people attended the 2 webinars with 3 days notice) re: COVID plan requirements and COVID guidance

8/13 Orchards and MDA listening session – changes to guidance made!
Blog posts to try to break down complex regulatory guidance

Apple Orchards, Pumpkin Patches and Agri-Tourism - what COVID rules apply?

August 26, 2020
Next steps

• Evaluation of UMN COVID-19 preparedness plan and farmer’s needs
• Series of key-informant interviews, focus groups, survey fall/winter 2020/21
• ID what worked during farm’s initial COVID response – what was the biggest challenge? How did farms ID their biggest risks re: COVID?
• What lessons can be applied to food safety, farm safety, creating a culture of safety on the farm to ensure profitability as pandemic continues
UMN Extension GAPs Education Program

Annalisa Hultberg
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Growing safe food

Food safety on the farm is good business

Our on-farm Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) Education Program works with Minnesota’s produce farmers to help you develop and implement on-farm food safety plans and prepare for GAPs audits.

Farm food safety planning

- Plan templates and log sheets
Silver Linings-

- Areas that may have benefited due to the pandemic
  - Travel for trainers and participants
    - ease for access to courses for some growers, though not for all
  - Multi-state collaborations and ability to cross train
  - Effective use of polling questions
We Want to Hear from You!

• Any questions for our presenters today?

• We want to hear how your experiences have gone through the pandemic so far:
  – How has worked had to adapt for you?
  – How have Grower Trainings been going?
  – If you have not trained yet, do you have any questions?
Next Meeting

• Reminder: Annual PSA Trainer Update Webinar: Tuesday, October 20, 2020

• Webinar Series to Prepare Trainers for Remote Delivery of the PSA Grower Training Course

Schedule:
All meetings will be at 12 PM ET

- Oct. 1 – Module 1: Introduction to Produce Safety
- Oct. 8 – Module 2: Worker Health, Hygiene, and Training
- Oct. 15 – Module 3: Soil Amendments
- Oct. 22 – Module 4: Wildlife, Domesticated Animals, and Land Use
- Oct. 29 – Module 5-1: Agricultural Water – Production Water
- Nov. 5 – Module 5-2: Agricultural Water – Postharvest Water
- Nov. 12 – Module 6: Postharvest handling and Sanitation
- Nov. 19 – Module 7: How to develop a Farm Food Safety Plan
Next Meeting

• Next meeting TBD;
• Submit other topics for discussion to Gretchen (glw53@cornell.edu)
The PSA Website
http://producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu/
En español: es.producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu