

# Produce Safety

ALLIANCE



<http://producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu/>

## In This Issue

- [PSA Pilot Trainings](#)
- [PSA Milestones](#)
- [FDA & FSMA Updates](#)
- [Sister Alliance News](#)
- [New GAPs Media](#)
- [Executive Committee Members](#)
- [Steering Committee Members](#)

## Quick Links

- [PSA-FDA Q & A Series](#)
- [Archived PSA Newsletters](#)
- [Working Committee Archives](#)
- [Farmer Focus Groups](#)
- [Curriculum Learning Objectives](#)
- [Key Links to the Proposed Produce Rule](#)
- [University Contacts](#)



February 25, 2015

## Hello Produce Safety Alliance Members and Welcome New Subscribers!

Since our last issue of the PSA newsletter, we've seen a 9% increase in subscribers to the listserve, helping us surpass 1,000 followers! This is great news and we are happy to see the PSA continue to grow. With a final regulation for produce safety on the horizon, we hope to keep everyone up-to-date on the latest information from the FDA, available educational resources, and training opportunities for produce safety trainers and fruit and vegetable growers. Although the proposed Produce Safety Rule is not anticipated to be final until October 2015, it is our intent to begin training activities prior to the final regulation.

Our goal with outreach and education is two-fold: to help growers understand produce safety risks on the farm and implement good agricultural practices to reduce those risks; and secondly, help growers understand and comply with the first ever federal regulation for fresh produce. Ultimately, all produce growers should be aware of produce safety risks on their farms regardless of whether they are subject to the proposed regulations because they are growing food that people eat. Demand from produce buyers to adopt GAPs continues, even in the smallest market venues. So in the name of produce safety and maintaining markets, we boldly move forward.

With an estimated 189,000 produce growers in the United States, the task of providing education and outreach will be a challenge. In the past five years, the Produce Safety Alliance has established an extensive network of national collaborators and has been guided by two committees (Executive and Steering Committees, listed at the end of this newsletter) who have been diligently engaged in helping to finalize the standardized national curriculum for produce safety on the farm. We would like to extend a big thank you to EVERYONE who has volunteered their time for the Working Committees, to review drafts of the curriculum, share their technical and farming expertise, and those who continue to support the development of the Produce Safety Alliance and its' associated educational programs.

## Produce Safety Alliance Pilot Trainings

The major milestones summarized at the end of this newsletter have shaped the development of the curriculum content, structure of trainings for growers and trainers, and the trainer certification process (still in development). The curriculum was subjected to three open review periods and vetted by members of the Executive and Steering Committees as well as a number of growers, industry members, and educators who were interested in providing constructive feedback. As a result, the PSA piloted two programs with the developed curriculum to evaluate its' effectiveness and appropriateness with two audiences, prospective trainers and produce growers. We are currently in the process of reviewing the evaluation information collected at both pilots, but a brief summary of each program is below.



### **Pilot Train-the-Trainer December 17-18, 2014, Geneva, NY**

Thirty-eight individuals including produce growers, members of academia, regulators, and produce industry members convened at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, NY to evaluate the PSA's proposed Train-the-Trainer program, curriculum materials, and trainer certification process. We cannot thank these individuals enough for their time, effort, and constructive feedback throughout the two day pilot in effort to better refine the final program for national launch. The feedback we received was very positive and we have been working to streamline the curriculum's slide sets and teaching notes. The Train-the-Trainer program will include two days of classroom instruction and will cover discussions of each curriculum module, principles of adult education, considerations for developing training teams and hosting trainings, and available resources for growers from federal programs such as NRCS, USDA-AMS, and the FDA. The PSA will continue discussions related to trainer qualifications and the certification process, so stay tuned for more details regarding how to become a trainer as well as dates and locations of Train-the-Trainer Programs. **To date, the PSA does not have any Train-the-Trainer workshops scheduled, but we will send out updates through our general listserv as soon as they become available.**

### **Pilot Grower Training January 26, 2015, Hershey, PA**

With the help of collaborators at Penn State University, the Produce Safety Alliance hosted a pilot training for fresh fruit and vegetable growers at the Mid-Atlantic Fruit and Vegetable Convention in Hershey, Pennsylvania. The pilot was open to the public and, despite the snowy weather, was attended by thirty-three fruit and vegetable growers. The PSA Grower Training will satisfy the FDA proposed Produce Safety Rule requirement that "at least one supervisor or responsible party from the farm to successfully complete food safety training at least equivalent to that received under the standardized curriculum recognized as adequate by the Food and Drug Administration (§ 112.22(c))." The training for growers is a one day program, with seven curriculum modules including: An Introduction to Produce Safety; Worker Health, Hygiene, and Training; Soil Amendments; Wildlife, Domestic Animals, and Land Use; Agricultural Water; Postharvest Handling and Sanitation; and How to Write a Farm Food Safety Plan. The curriculum has been designed to teach growers how to assess food safety risks on the farm, implement practices to reduce risks, and understand the proposed FDA Produce Safety Rule requirements. The curriculum places an emphasis on small and very-small growers, providing solutions for limited resource farms.

## PSA Milestones

We anticipate that this may be the first update letter that many of you are receiving, so welcome and please do not hesitate to contact Betsy Bihn ([eab38@cornell.edu](mailto:eab38@cornell.edu)) or Gretchen Wall ([glw53@cornell.edu](mailto:glw53@cornell.edu)) if you have any questions, comments, or feedback to provide. We strive to make all of our activities as transparent as possible to keep everyone informed and we are always open to feedback that will help make our educational programs and activities more effective and efficient. For those of you who are not new and have been engaged with the PSA, we thank you for your continued support and interest in the program as it has continued to materialize over the past five years and as we prepare to launch nationally. Read on below for some of the PSA's major milestones since 2010.

- Oct. 2010**            **Produce Safety Alliance established**
- Apr. 2011**            **PSA website and general listserve launched**  
The PSA website serves as a repository for educational materials, training information, collaborator contacts, Working Committee notes, summary documents, and FSMA Produce Safety Rule updates. Launched in April 2011, the PSA General listserve currently reaches over 1,000 growers, industry members, regulatory officials, educators, and others interested in produce safety. All monthly listserve e-mails are catalogued on the PSA website at: <http://producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu/news.html>
- June 2011**            **GAPs Education & Training Materials Conference - Orlando, FL**  
Attended by 125 people from 28 states to discuss the PSA's goals and review outreach materials from 40 programs nationwide that have been developed to assist fruit and vegetable growers with understanding and implementing GAPs on farms and in packinghouses. Conference proceedings are available at: <http://producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu/2011%20PSA%20Proceedings.pdf>
- July 2011 -  
Dec. 2012**            **Working Committee Meetings**  
Ten working committees, including a total of 178 members, discussed the challenges of implementing GAPs on farms to identify critical content areas for the curriculum. In total, the PSA hosted 72 WC meetings to guide the development of curriculum content. All meeting notes and summary documents are catalogued at: <http://producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu/working.html>
- May 2012 -  
Nov. 2014**            **Curriculum and Training Program Development**  
A one-day produce safety training program for fruit and vegetable growers has been developed with seven hours of dedicated instruction time, including seven curriculum modules and associated learning objectives. A Train-the-Trainer Program has been developed in conjunction to ensure a qualified cadre of instructors is available.
- Feb. 2012 -  
Apr. 2012**            **Farmer Focus Groups**  
Eight focus groups with participation from 89 produce growers were conducted around the country (FL, CA, NY, OH) to understand growers' needs and expectations from produce safety training. A summary of the farmer focus groups is available at: <http://producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu/newsletters/FocusGroupSummary.pdf>
- Mar. 2013 -  
May 2013**            **PSA-FDA Question and Answer Series on the Proposed Produce Rule**  
A series of eight free teleconference sessions was hosted with the FDA Produce Safety Staff covering different areas of the proposed Produce Safety Rule. The calls included discussion about real on-farm situations and questions from farmers, packers, retailers, educators, and industry members. Audio recordings of these sessions are available at: <http://producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu/news.html>.
- June 2013**            **Trainer Competency Discussion at Center for Produce Safety Annual Meeting - Rochester, NY**  
Twenty-seven individuals from academia, industry, and government met prior to the annual CPS conference to discuss qualifications of trainers and logistics of trainer certification.
- Sep. 2013**            **Produce Safety Educator's Group Formed**  
The PSA began hosting monthly meetings and FSMA specific webinars for produce safety educators to discuss challenges related to outreach and education, funding for training, and technical assistance. Currently 200+ educators receive monthly updates, meeting notes, and webinar recordings, with an average meeting attendance each month of 35-50.

- Dec. 2014**      **PSA Train-the-Trainer Pilot - Geneva, NY**  
Thirty-eight individuals ranging from produce growers, academics, regulators, and produce industry members convened on December 17-18, 2014 at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, NY to evaluate the PSA's proposed Train-the-Trainer program, curriculum materials, and trainer certification process.
- Jan. 2015**      **PSA Grower Pilot - Hershey, PA**  
The first pilot grower training was held at the Mid-Atlantic Fruit and Vegetable Convention in Hershey, PA with the help of Penn State Extension Educators on January 26, 2015. Participation was open to the public. Thirty-three produce growers and 15 observers attended and provided useful feedback on the curriculum materials and training program.
- Jan. 2015 -  
Feb. 2015**      **Pilot Program Evaluation and Revisions**  
The Train-the-Trainer and Grower Training Pilots are currently being evaluated and modified, prior to nationwide launch of the training programs.

## FDA and FSMA Updates

### ***President's FY 2016 Budget Request: Key Investments for Implementing FSMA***

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced that it is requesting an additional \$109.5 million for the implementation of FSMA as part of President Obama's FY 2016 budget request, released to Congress on February 3, 2015. For more information, visit the FDA website at: <http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/ucm432576.htm>



### ***FDA Announces Competitive Grant Program with NIFA to Fund Food Safety Training, Education and Technical Assistance***

On January 15, 2015, the FDA announced the availability of funding and requests applications for Grants to Enhance Food Safety: National Food Safety Training, Education, Extension, Outreach, and Technical Assistance Competitive Grants Program for fiscal year (FY) 2015 to address the needs of small and medium-sized farms, beginning farmers, socially disadvantaged farmers, small processors, or small fresh fruit and vegetable merchant wholesalers, especially as they relate to the implementation of the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). For more information, visit: <http://www.fda.gov/Food/NewsEvents/ConstituentUpdates/ucm430492.htm>

### ***Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Comment Period Open until March 13, 2015***

The Environmental Impact Statement examines the effects that the FDA's proposed Produce Safety Rule may have on natural resources as well as how those impacts are weighed against other factors. The FDA released the draft EIS on January 12, 2015 to assesses the environmental and socioeconomic impacts for the provisions within the proposed Produce Safety Rule that the FDA has determined may significantly affect the quality of the human environment. The FDA held a public meeting on February 10, 2015 to discuss the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed rule and to solicit oral stakeholder and public comments. To learn more about the EIS, public meeting discussion, and how to submit comments, visit the following FDA web links.

#### **EIS Homepage:**

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/ucm396564.htm>

#### **EIS Public Meeting Handout:**

<http://www.fda.gov/downloads/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/UCM433541.pdf>

#### **Questions & Answers on the EIS with Annette McCarthy:**

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/ucm429368.htm>

## News From Our Sister Alliances

### [Food Safety Preventive Controls Alliance \(FSPCA\)](#)

As the anticipated publication of the final rule quickly approaches, the FSPCA has been hard at work editing the curriculum. Pilot sessions will be held in April, May, and June and Train-the-Trainer sessions are scheduled for late 2015, early 2016. Check the FSPCA website often for up-to-date details at: <http://www.iit.edu/ifsh/alliance/index.shtml>.

### [Sprout Safety Alliance \(SSA\)](#)

The Sprout Safety Alliance (SSA), an FDA/IFSH-IIT alliance, is developing a core curriculum, training and outreach programs for sprout growers to enhance the industry's understanding and implementation of best practices, and requirements in the rule on standards for produce safety required by the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). For more information about the Alliance, please visit SSA website: [http://www.iit.edu/ifsh/sprout\\_safety/index.shtml](http://www.iit.edu/ifsh/sprout_safety/index.shtml).

## New Media for GAPs Education and Training

In each newsletter we try to highlight new GAPs educational and training resources. If you have a new resource that you would like us to share with the produce safety community, please contact Gretchen Wall at [glw53@cornell.edu](mailto:glw53@cornell.edu).

While new resources are extremely valuable to share, it is easy to overlook the importance of data collection and its value in informing educators and policy-makers to create useful resources for growers and educators. Please take a moment to share this important survey opportunity with produce farm owners and managers in your region - plus, you'll be entered into a drawing to win a free iPad after completion of the survey!

### **Cost of Food Safety Risk-Reduction Survey**

Professor Erik Lichtenberg at the University of Maryland is conducting a nationwide survey of vegetable and fruit growers to better understand how FDA's proposed rule on produce safety under the Food Safety Modernization Act will impact them. The goal is to identify the current usage and cost burden of the kinds of food safety risk-reduction measures specified by the rule to determine how the rule will affect different types of growers. **Participants have the opportunity to enter a drawing for a free Apple iPad after completing the survey.** The survey is intended for farm owners and managers growing vegetables or fruit. It takes about 10 minutes to complete, and it will remain open through the end of March. This research is very policy-relevant and could help guide future produce safety legislation, so all vegetable and fruit growers are encouraged to participate. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Professor Lichtenberg by email at [elichten@umd.edu](mailto:elichten@umd.edu) or telephone at (301) 405-1279.



**SURVEY LINK:** <http://www.arecdept.umd.edu/foodsafety>

**PASSWORD: CORNELL**

## PSA Executive Committee Members

### **Cornell University**

- Elizabeth (Betsy) Bihn, Ph.D., PSA Director
- Robert Gravani, Ph.D., Professor

### **Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO)**

- Byron Beerbower, Compliance Manager, Michigan Dept. of Agriculture & Rural Development
- Stephen Stich, Director, Div. of Food Safety & Inspection New York State Dept. of Ag. & Markets

### **National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA)**

- Bob Ehart, NASDA Public Policy Director
- Dan Ragan, Director of the Food and Drug Protection Division of the NC Dept. of Ag.

### **U.S. Food and Drug Administration**

- Samir Assar, Ph.D., Director Produce Safety Staff, FDA Center for Food Safety & Applied Nutrition
- Cathy McDermott, FDA Division of Federal State Relations
- We would like to recognize the contributions of Dr. Erick Snellman, policy analyst with the FDA Produce Safety Staff, and a valuable member of our Executive committee, who passed away in August 2014.

### **U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service**

- Jennifer Dougherty, Audit Programs Coordinator USDA, AMS, Fruit & Vegetable Programs
- Charles Parrot, Deputy Administrator, Fruit & Vegetable Program, USDA

- Leanne Skelton, USDA, AMS Fruit & Vegetable Programs, Senior Policy Analyst, FDA Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition

### **U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service**

- Diane Gelburd, Ph.D., Special Assistant to the Chief for Strategic Natural Resources Initiatives
- Karen Lowell, Ph.D., Agronomist

## **PSA Steering Committee Members & Working Committee Summaries**

The Working Committee process was open to the public and concluded in December 2012. We greatly appreciate the contributions of all WC members and Steering Committee Co-Chairs who led the process. For more information about the outcomes of each committee, click on the committee's title to read the summary report.

### **WC 1: Core Curriculum/General Topics**

#### **57 members**

Benjamin Chapman - Assistant Professor, North Carolina State University  
James Theuri - Extension Educator, University of Illinois Extension

### **WC 2: Core Curriculum/Hazards & Preventive Controls - Common Issues**

#### **59 members**

Diane Ducharme - NCSU GAPs Program Coordinator  
Brian Reeves - Owner Reeves Farms

### **WC 3: Core Curriculum/Hazards & Preventive Controls - Farm Review**

#### **44 members**

Robert Hadad - Cornell Cooperative Extension  
Henry Giclas - Senior Vice President Science & Technology, Strategic Planning

### **WC 4: Core Curriculum/Hazards & Preventive Controls - Production**

#### **72 members**

Fred Finney - Owner, Moreland Fruit Farm Ltd  
Karen Killinger - Associate Professor, Washington State University

### **WC 5: Core Curriculum/Hazards & Preventive Controls - Harvest**

#### **55 members**

Reggie Brown - Manager, Florida Tomato Committee  
Trevor Suslow - Extension Research Specialist, University of California, Davis

### **WC 6: Core Curriculum/Hazards & Preventive Controls - Postharvest Handling**

#### **68 members**

Wesley Kline - Agricultural Agent - Cumberland County, Rutgers  
Barry Eisenberg - Vice President of Food Safety Services, United Fresh Produce Association

### **WC 7: Train the Trainer Lesson Plan**

#### **45 members**

James Rushing - Manager of International Training Programs, JIFSAN  
Michael Villaneva - Technical Director, California Leafy Green Marketing Agreement

### **WC 8: Education Outreach Program Delivery - Farmers & Trainers**

#### **68 members**

Craig Kahlke - Extension Educator, Cornell Cooperative Extension  
Keith Schneider - Associate Professor, University of Florida

### **WC 9: Education Outreach Program Delivery - Regulators & Trainers**

#### **45 members**

Bill Miller (Retired) - Grading Inspector III, New York State Dept. of Ag & Markets  
Anita MacMullan - FDA Branch Director, Contracts and Grants

### **WC 10: Certification**

#### **41 members**

Joseph Corby - Executive Director, Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO)  
Janet Williams - Training Officer, FDA/DHRD/ORAU

## Stay in Touch!

Our general listserve reaches over 1,000 growers, industry members, regulatory agents, and educators in the United States and around the globe. Signing up for the listserve is the best way to stay in touch with the PSA. To sign up, please visit our website at <http://producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu/> or use the link included at the bottom of this e-mail message.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions, comments, or ideas.

Take care and stay warm - spring is just around the corner!

Gretchen & Betsy

**Gretchen L. Wall, M.S.**  
**Produce Safety Alliance Coordinator**

Cornell University - Dept. of Food Science  
186 Stocking Hall  
Ithaca, NY 14853  
Phone: 607.255.6806  
Email: [glw53@cornell.edu](mailto:glw53@cornell.edu)

**Elizabeth A. Bihn, Ph.D.**  
**Produce Safety Alliance Director**

Hedrick Hall - NYSAES  
630 W. North Street  
Geneva, NY 14456  
Phone: 315.787.2625  
Email: [eab38@cornell.edu](mailto:eab38@cornell.edu)



Cornell University



Like us on Facebook!