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Produce Safety ALLIANCE



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February 9, 2016

Hello Produce Safety Alliance Members,

We hope this e-mail finds all of you well and enjoying the start to the New Year. First of all, our website has a fresh new look, so visit the [Produce Safety Alliance website](#) and sign up for the listserve (if you have not already done so) to get the latest information on available trainings, curriculum materials, and other resources for produce safety and FSMA. Please update your web browser bookmarks - the previous website will have redirects for main pages for several months, but we encourage you to make this the permanent destination landing page for the PSA going forward.

Secondly, we greatly appreciate the continued interest in the availability of the PSA's training courses and curriculum materials. This newsletter will provide an update of the PSA's timeline and explanation for delays in launching the training courses. If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact any members of the [PSA team](#) to discuss how these delays might impact your 2016 training plans.

PSA Training Updates

As stated in the October newsletter, the PSA was asked to suspend the launch of all training programs until the final Produce Safety Rule was made publicly available. On November 27, 2015, the final Produce Safety Rule was published in the [Federal Register](#). As soon as the final Produce Safety Rule was available, the PSA incorporated the final language into the modules. While the proposed and final versions of the regulation are similar, there is some new information as well as nuances that had to be navigated including the differences between what are Good Agricultural Practices ("shoulds") versus what are required practices for the regulation ("musts"). To ensure accuracy and alignment of the curriculum with the regulation, the PSA has been

working with the FDA Division of Produce Safety staff to conduct a detailed review of all the curriculum modules with the final regulatory language incorporated. Due to the extent and in-depth nature of this editing process, there have been significant delays in finalizing these curriculum materials.

On January 13th, the PSA Executive Committee made the difficult decision to delay all of PSA's training programs until September 2016 in an effort to accommodate this revision process, allow the FDA additional time to work through their review teams, and provide time to print materials. We are hopeful this plan will allow us to provide certainty when scheduling training programs in the fall of 2016. Currently, we are helping collaborators who had scheduled trainings in early 2016 to resolve any issues related to the cancellation of their training courses. We will continue to provide updates through our general listserv and website as soon as the editing process is finished. We appreciate everyone's patience as we work through this delay.

Produce Safety Alliance Team

In October, we proudly introduced four new members of the PSA's team including Michele Humiston, Kristin Woods, Donna Pahl, and Don Stoeckel. Although we have delayed the launch of the PSA's training courses, we still continue to provide education, outreach, and technical assistance regionally and nationally. This past fall, the PSA Regional Extension Associates began introducing themselves and engaging in presentations, projects, and other outreach activities with state, university, and industry collaborators. They also are playing a key role in interfacing with the National and two Regional Coordination Centers that have been established as part of [FDA's strategy to support FSMA implementation](#).

Please do not hesitate to [contact any members of the PSA staff](#) if you have questions, training needs, or outreach opportunities - we believe collaboration at every level will benefit growers, educators, and industry members going forward. In the near future, we will be setting up individual pages on our website for each Regional Extension Associate to provide news and updates from their region.

PSA Team & Regional Extension Associates

Northwest:
Reviewing applicants

Midwest:
Don Stoeckel, Ph.D.

Southwest:
Donna Pahl, M.S.

Southeast:
Kristin Woods, Ph.D.

Northeast:
Betsy Bihn, Ph.D.
Gretchen Wall, M.S.
Michele Humiston

Produce Safety Alliance

FDA Announces Two Additional Funding Opportunities for Education, Training and Technical Assistance under the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)

On February 1, 2016, the FDA announced two opportunities for funding in the form of cooperative agreements to enhance food safety under the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). The first cooperative agreement is for Native American Tribes Outreach, Education and Training to enhance Food Safety and FSMA Compliance. The second cooperative agreement is for Local Food Producer Outreach, Education, and Training to Enhance Food Safety and FSMA Compliance. The outreach, education and training needs addressed in these cooperative agreements is to focus on applicable federal preventive controls regulations under FSMA, especially the Produce Safety and Preventive Controls for Human Food Rules. The funding opportunities can be found at:

- [RFA-FD-16-001: Native American Tribes Outreach, Education, and Training to Enhance Food Safety and FSMA Compliance \(U01\)](#)
- [RFA-FD-16-002: Local Food Producer Outreach, Education, and Training to Enhance Food Safety and FDA Food Safety Modernization Act \(FSMA\) Compliance \(U01\)](#)

Survey Opportunities

Survey and Listening Sessions to Characterize the Use of Soil Amendments in Organic and Sustainable Agriculture: Making Sure Organic Farmers Are Heard

In a national effort to evaluate the needs and concerns of organic producers surrounding the safe use of manure and compost in the production of organic produce, University of California-Davis, The Organic Center and Organic Trade Association are conducting a farmer-focused survey to characterize the use of manure and compost based soil amendments. In addition to the survey, a series of farmer-focused information gathering sessions will be held over the coming months at organic farming conferences throughout the nation allowing farmers to voice their concerns, share their priorities and discuss their beliefs regarding the use of manure and compost and any potential associated food safety risks.

The survey and information gathering sessions are funded by a grant (award # 2015-51300-24148) from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI).

Instead of its earlier proposed 9-month minimum interval requirement, in the final FSMA Produce Safety Rule, FDA moved to give the agency time to conduct research into determining an appropriate science-based application interval. FDA expects this process will take at least five years. In the meantime, all organic operations covered under the Produce Safety Rule continue to follow the established National Organic Program required 90- or 120-day intervals for application of untreated manure. Additionally, the 45-day wait period for compost application was removed from the final rule.

It is critically important that organic producers are being heard on this issue. The results from these needs assessments will be incorporated into a proposal for a long-term research project to study the use of untreated manure and compost in organic agriculture and the impacts of those practices on food safety. It will also ensure that the FDA's efforts to improve production and handling regulations that impact food safety take into account the needs of organic farmers.

The survey can be found at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/manurefoodsafety> or you can attend one of our listening sessions at the following conferences:

- Vermont Conference, NOFA-VT (Feb 13-15, 2016)
- California Small Farm Conference (table exhibit) (March 5-8, 2016)
- MOSES Conference, Wisconsin (Feb 25-27, 2016)

Survey for Produce/Shellfish Processors and Educators

Lori Pivarnik (University of Rhode Island) and Randy Worobo (Cornell University) are involved in an USDA/NIFA-funded project entitled "Inactivation of enteric foodborne viruses in high risk foods by non-thermal processing technologies" (No. 2011-680030-30005). The overall goal of this project was to 1) optimize non-thermal technology processing parameters to destroy human viruses and/or pathogenic bacteria in high risk foods such as shellfish (oysters and clams), fresh and frozen berries (strawberries, raspberries and blueberries), berry purees, green onions, and salsa and 2) disseminate knowledge about non-thermal processes through education curricula and extension outreach programs. The project responsibilities include a needs assessment of shellfish/produce processors and food safety outreach educators regarding knowledge and attitudes towards non-thermal processing. As a result the team developed, with the expertise of New Mexico State University, two (2), four-minute videos that address the knowledge gaps and misconceptions regarding non-thermal processing and its application to shellfish and produce.

The team is looking for individuals to review the videos entitled "Non-thermal or Alternative Processing of Produce and Shellfish: Keeping Products Safe to Eat" and "Exploring Specific Non-thermal Processes to Enhance the Safety of Produce and Shellfish" and answer a short evaluation for both. This should take about 10-12 minutes.

The link to the videos and corresponding Survey Monkey evaluations are provided below: <http://aces.nmsu.edu/nonthermal/>

These videos will be uploaded to YouTube. The videos are also part of an outreach effort that includes FAQs entitled "Non-thermal or Alternative Food Processing Methods to Enhance Microbial Safety and Quality" that are posted at <http://web.uri.edu/foodsafety/files/2014-FAQ-Non-thermal-processing.pdf>.

Stay in Touch!

Our general listserve reaches over 1,500 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 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.

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