



**Produce Safety Educator's Monthly Call #22**  
**September 19, 2016**  
**2 PM EDT**  
**Meeting Summary**

**Total Attendance: 82 attendees, 12 panelists**

**Meeting recording available at:**

<https://cornell.webex.com/cornell/lr.php?RCID=518cde361e4b7efecd44323501aed5db>

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### **Summary of Session**

The Food Safety Modernization Act's Produce Rule is impacting fresh fruit and vegetable growers in a variety of ways. While many growers will be exempt from FSMA compliance, there is a continued increase in market demand for growers to have a food safety plan in place. Both states (Massachusetts and Maryland) have established state recognized certification programs that include food safety that help to reduce risks on-farm and increase markets for local production. This webinar will share approaches that Massachusetts and Maryland have taken to establish a collaborative partnership to provide technical support, food safety education, and regulatory guidance to growers. The session will open with a brief discussion of these local collaborations and be followed by time for questions by the webinar participants.

### **Speakers:**

Massachusetts: Amanda Kinchla, UMass Extension Specialist; Michael Botelho, Massachusetts Department of Agriculture, Commonwealth Quality Program Coordinator

Maryland: Christopher Walsh, UMD Professor; Justine Beaulieu, UMD GAP Educator; Deanna Baldwin: Maryland Dept. of Agriculture

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## **September 19, 2016 Meeting Notes**

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- I. Introduction to the Northeast Center to Advance Food Safety (NECAFS):**  
Chris Callahan (Principle Investigator – UVM Extension)
  - a. Introduction:**
    - i. 1 of 4 Regional Centers, working with National Coordination Center
    - ii. Maine to West Virginia (12 States & Washington, DC)
    - iii. Includes State Agencies, Trade Associations and Not-For-Profits
    - iv. Focus on implementation of and compliance with the Food Safety Modernization Act



- v. Project Principal Investigators / Directors (PI/PD's): Luke LaBorde (Penn State), Amanda Kinchla (UMass), Chris Walsh (UMD), Betsy Bihn (Cornell), Chris Callahan (UVM, lead), Elizabeth Newbold (Center Administrator).

**b. Goal:**

To build a Northeast regional network infrastructure to support a national food safety training, education, extension, outreach, and technical assistance system to increase the understanding and adoption of established food safety standards, guidance, and protocols through a comprehensive food safety training, education and technical assistance program for those affected by the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) with a particular, regional focus on the needs of owners and operators of small and medium-sized produce farms, beginning farmers, socially disadvantaged farmers, small processors, or small fresh fruit and vegetable merchant wholesalers.

- i. Providing financial support for training of trainers
- ii. Coordinating stakeholder training
- iii. Starting a new grants program – focused on small awards for quick projects with regional relevance
- iv. Collaborative research and sharing of resources, multi-state effort and impact

**c. Connect with NECAFS:**

- Web: [go.uvm.edu/necafs](http://go.uvm.edu/necafs)
- Email: [necafs@uvm.edu](mailto:necafs@uvm.edu)
- Listserv: [go.uvm.edu/necafslist](http://go.uvm.edu/necafslist)
- eNewsletter: [go.uvm.edu/necafsnewssub](http://go.uvm.edu/necafsnewssub)
- Facebook: [www.facebook.com/necafs/](http://www.facebook.com/necafs/)
- Twitter: [@necafs](https://twitter.com/necafs)

**d. Upcoming Events:**

- i. Upcoming Friday 10/14 Regional Roundtable – Webinar
- ii. Annual Meeting: In Planning: Jan 2016 – Boston, MA

**II. Lessons Learned in Food Safety Coordination and Collaboration**

Maryland: Chris Walsh, Justine Beaulieu and Deanna Baldwin

Massachusetts: Amanda Kinchla & Michael Botelho

**a. Maryland GAP Program**

- i. **History: See slide 14-15**
- ii. **Structure: Cooperative effort between UMD, UME, and MDA**
  - 1. University of Maryland:
    - a. Hosts GAP/GHP trainings and one-on-one assistance with farm food safety plans
    - b. Host presentations at annual grower meetings
    - c. Coordinate with MDA on GAPs certification requirements



- d. Published guidance documents on specific food safety issues
- 2. **Maryland Department of Agriculture:**
  - a. Offer USDA GHP/GAP and USDA Harmonized GAP Audits
  - b. Cost sharing opportunities (\$400 first audit and 75% of amount over \$400)
  - c. Meet with wholesale buyers to encourage acceptance of MDA GAP Certification
  - d. Provide funding for consumer education
  - e. Provide laboratory analysis for environmental samples collected by UMD to determine GAP/GHP training effectiveness
  - f. Plan to update MDA GAPs standards to meet FSMA Produce Safety Rule requirements
- 3. **Funding for Maryland GAP Program**
  - a. UMD grant through the USDA Specialty Crop Marketing Program
  - b. Funds for a dedicated GAPs educator at UMD
  - c. No fees charged for MDA GAP audits
  - d. Educational materials
  - e. Cost share assistance for USDA audits and assistance with implementation of GAP/GHP practices
- iii. **Roles of UMD/UME/MDA staff – Slides 22/23**
- iv. **Lessons Learned Over the Years:**
  - 1. Only a small percentage of attendees becoming certified
  - 2. Most attendees implement better food safety practices even though they don't become certified
  - 3. Usually a two-year process to become certified
  - 4. Getting food safety plans started at the training is key
  - 5. Usefulness of laptops in training very dependent on audience
  - 6. Creation of templates and examples is helpful
  - 7. Thumb drives a great tool
  - 8. Onsite inspections encourage continued improvement of food safety practices
- v. **Plans & Future Needs for Maryland:**
  - 1. NIFA project: "Develop and implement a hybrid workshop in FSMA produce safety and preventive controls rules for stakeholders engaged in growing and processing high-risk produce"
  - 2. FDA Cooperative Agreement - Local Food Producer Outreach, Education, and Training to Enhance Food Safety and FSMA Compliance



3. Five year Cooperative Agreement with FDA
4. Develop a Maryland Produce Safety Program – UMD, UME and MDA
5. Build on the existing Maryland GAP Program

**b. Questions:**

**Q:** *How does the MDA GAP standard differ from USDA/USDA Harmonized GAP?*

**A:** MDA GAP includes four basic food safety requirements (4 W's), but does not include traceback or written risks assessments. One of the advantages of the MDA GAP Program is that you are certifying the farm rather than an individual commodity. Many farms grow 25-30 different commodities and that is very challenging to participate in USDA Harmonized Audits for all commodities. The MDA program has the rigor of a normal GAPs program, but certifies farms, not just the individual commodities grown.

**c. Massachusetts Produce Safety– Commonwealth Quality Program (CQP)**

**i. Background & History of the CQP Program**

1. Launched in 2008, voluntary, and scalable
2. Facilitates market access
3. Provides education, technical assistance, and grant support
4. Built upon 3 core areas

**ii. Structure of CQP**

1. Includes an environmental and sustainability component
  - a. Soil & water health
  - b. IPM and chemical applications
  - c. Plant and animal health
  - d. Nutrient management
2. Food Safety
  - a. GAPs Lite and commodity specific BMPs
3. Local definition
  - a. Chapter 94 99b (Native law)
  - b. Regional brand integration

**iii. Program Benefits**

1. Improve market channel access and support to diversify farms
2. Certificate issue and listing
3. GMP infrastructure modernization
4. Marketing and sales support
5. Prepared to comply with other audits/regulatory programs
6. Strengthening local food systems

**iv. Funding Support – MDAR CQP Program Deployment Methodology**

1. Education – winter school (4 day workshop)
2. Technical Assistance, especially pre-audit

3. Audit Support
4. Grant Funds
5. Follow-up Support

**v. Support for Program Participants**

1. One on one GAP-GHP-CQP trainings and farm food safety plan writing
2. Audit support
3. Cost share program
4. Collaboration with wholesale buyers

**vi. Roles of CQP staff –See Slide 33**

**vii. Lessons Learned**

1. Classroom training important as a first step.
2. Pre-audit and technical support crucial to uptake and change management.
3. Buyers creating confusion.
4. Grant funds crucial to assisting growers comply.
5. Creating market opportunity crucial to uptake.
6. Working with stakeholders to create and sustain trust, transparency and change management.

**viii. Future Needs and Plans for CQP**

1. Plan to integrate CQP with the FSMA Produce Rule MDAR – state qualified.
2. Educate while we regulate.

**d. Questions:**

**Q:** *Will there be conflict of interest with state departments?*

**A:** MA – inspectors educate as they regulate – potential conflict at federal level, but not at the state level. In addition, there is dialogue to line-up the USDA GAPs audit with the FSMA PSR. MDA keeps auditor/inspector roles separate from those that are the educators – MDA funds an educator at UMD. MDA will not tell the grower how to fix something, instead MDA will refer them to education assistance at UMD.

**Q:** *How are you incorporating FSMA Supplier Verification Requirements in your state's program when working with small farms so they can accommodate buyer needs?*

**A:** MD – taken the approach to incorporate both wholesale and retail buyers. MD does work with small farms and will continue to do so. Whether farms are qualified exempt from the Produce Safety Rule or not, they are UMD's audience and UMD will allow any sized farm to participate. MD is trying to work very hard to include and engage both exempt and non-exempt farms. MD plans to ramp up local Extension educator training to get local and state Extension folks



familiarized with the Produce Safety Rule requirements. MA – approach will vary from state to state.

**Q:** *The Maryland program seems to be a stepping stone process to more comprehensive audits (e.g., USDA/Primus), is the Massachusetts program designed the same way?*

**A:** MA established the program to be a stepping stone approach, but the majority of retailers in the area now accept the state program. The state program also is more comprehensive than the USDA GAPs audits, minus the paperwork burden.

- e. **Next Meeting:** Tentative Monday, October 24, 2016 – 2 PM EDT
  - i. Send any agenda items or topics for discussion to Gretchen at [glw53@cornell.edu](mailto:glw53@cornell.edu)
  - ii. Call in information will be sent closer to the date of the meeting