Implementation of the FSMA Produce Safety Rule in Alaska and Considerations for Farmers’ Markets

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Don Stoeckel, PSA
Dena Cologgi, Alaska DEC
Topics

- FSMA and the Produce Safety Rule
- Keep focus: Safe produce is the outcome
- Some Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) behind food safety audits and the Produce Safety Rule
- Overview: The big things farms should be doing
- A role for farmers’ markets
- ADEC programs
The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)

• FSMA includes:
  – **Produce Safety Rule**
  – Preventive Controls for Human Food
  – Preventive Controls for Animal Food
  – Foreign Supplier Verification Programs
  – Accreditation of Third-Party Auditors/Certification Bodies
  – Sanitary Transportation of Human and Animal Food
  – Prevention of Intentional Contamination/Adulteration

• Focused on prevention of food safety issues and encompasses the entire food system
Is FSMA Produce Safety Rule new to you?

Surprise! We hope not.

• Compliance for most provisions began on 26 Jan 2018
  – Only farms selling more than $500K in produce
  – Smaller farms have more years to comply

Some good news for Alaska’s farms that are covered

• 2019 inspections are educational not inspectional
• Some parts, like the water requirements, are not enforced while FDA considers the science behind the requirements
• The new rule brings awareness and momentum for produce safety
Opportunity for Alaska Farms

• Step up for safe produce as Alaskan Grown share increases
• Federal support for inventory, outreach, and compliance
• Federal money helps support related organization
  – Department of Environmental Conservation program
  – University of Alaska Extension outreach program
  – FDA Produce Safety Network
  – Western Regional FSMA Center
  – Other organizations!
Good Agricultural Practices – Why?

• **Healthy People.** People eat more fruit and veggies, and the produce is often consumed raw.

• **Protect Public Health.** Foodborne illness outbreaks in the U.S. continue to happen.

• **Protect the farm and reputation,** and the local food system including local markets.

• **Make business better.** Good for overall farm efficiency and profitability.
Biological Hazards

• Microbial contamination on produce is extremely difficult to remove once present. **POOP CAN’T BE TOTALLY WASHED OFF**
  – Natural openings, stem scars, bruises, cuts
  – Rough surfaces, folds, netting

• Bacteria can even multiply on produce surfaces and in fruit wounds, if the right conditions are present
What a farm SHOULD do

• Use Good Agricultural Practices
• Grow and sell produce that is safe
• GAPs are for everybody.
• DNR Division of Ag Audit Program

Guidance for Industry

Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards For Fresh Fruits And Vegetables

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Produce Safety Alliance
What a farm NEEDS TO do

• **Keep Market Access:** The farm has to sell produce

• Some buyers require a third-party audit from private auditors or a State agency (e.g., DNR Division of Ag)
  – Government and industry audit standards include
    • Harmonized GAP,
    • GLOBALG.A.P.,
    • Primus SQF

• The audit standards, for the most part, are AT LEAST as strict as the FSMA Produce Safety Rule

• An audit validates, but the GAPs are always helpful
What a ‘covered’ farm MUST do

• **Regulatory Compliance**: If a farm is covered by the FSMA Produce Safety Rule, it must follow the Rule.

• Administered by Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

• Coverage, Exemptions and Exclusions are part of in the FSMA Produce Safety Rule
  – All of our growers yesterday were pro-active, not covered

• Produce safety training is available from the Alaska training team
  – Dena will discuss the schedule
Produce Safety Rule Exclusions and Exemptions

- Your Alaska outreach team (DEC, Extension, others) can help a farm walk through coverage status
  - How much produce you sell
  - If the product is on the Rarely Consumed Raw list
  - If the produce is sold for canning, juice, or other processing
  - If the produce is sold locally
- Ask us if you want to talk about coverage status
What should markets look for in their farm vendors?

Some basic ideas to help keep produce safe for markets, vendors, and consumers
A Farm Food Safety Plan

• Motivates farms to think about practices
• Keeps farms organized, focus time and resources on priorities
• Acts as a plan to follow, gets everyone involved
• Documents practices and progress
• Useful for buyers, inspectors, and auditors
  – Shows buyers the farm’s commitment
• Templates are available; just ask
Produce Safety Culture

- A Farm Food Safety Plan is a solid indicator that the farm values produce safety
  - Good agricultural practices (small letters) are important for all farms, and the inspection or audit confirm application
  - Not to beat a dead horse, but sick consumers are bad for EVERYBODY
GAPs: Key Requirements

- Worker Training and Health and Hygiene
- Proper Use of Soil Amendments
- Control of Risk from Domesticated Animals, Wildlife
- Agricultural Water Quality
- Sanitation of Equipment, Tools and Buildings
Suggestions to markets

• Understand what it means to you if you take ownership of the produce
• DO help the farm maintain a sanitary environment for holding the produce that they are trying to sell
• DO provide toilet and hand washing facilities for market customers, farm vendors, and staff
Market Motivators

• Markets can establish expectations for farmer vendors

• Market managers can observe vendor practices
  – Condition of delivery vehicle
  – Sanitary condition of packaging
  – Clean booth, especially the sales table and hands that contact produce

• Take advantage of courses and other information
  – Know about produce safety, from GAPs and regulations
  – Minimize your exposure by paying attention to safety
Recap

• Nobody wants to see sick consumers
• Education, audits and inspections help motivate produce safety
  – Farms can be excluded or exempt from the FSMA Produce Safety Rule, and food safety audits are voluntary
• Farmers’ Markets can understand whether a farm pays attention to produce safety and make enrollment decisions
  
• Use your outstanding resources in the form of outreach from Alaska DEC, DNR, Extension and MANY other organizations
ADEC OSV Programs

• Representatives for the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) Office of the State Veterinarian (OSV) will discuss details of the ongoing implementation of the new Federal-State partnership program, which provides oversight, education, and assistance to produce growers throughout Alaska, including grower training classes and voluntary on-farm readiness reviews.

• Additionally, an overview and update will be given regarding other programs housed in the ADEC OSV.