

Preparing Produce Growers for Compliance with the Food Safety Modernization Act

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Citation to *this* Version: Melendez, Meredith, Kline, Wesley L. & Wolinski, Laurie. *Preparing Produce Growers for Compliance with the Food Safety Modernization Act*, 2017. Retrieved from [doi:10.7282/T3FF3W83](https://doi.org/10.7282/T3FF3W83).



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Produce Safety Rule, a team led by **Meredith Melendez of Rutgers Cooperative Extension** conducted a project that educated 1,063 farmers, primarily through workshops and short presentations. The programming focused on thresholds for compliance and compliance measures.

The Rutgers On-Farm Food Safety Team led six workshops for 167 participants, and shorter presentations were made at 30 regional meetings for an additional 896 participants. Sixty-four County Agricultural Agents were also provided education at a National Association Meeting. FDA and Rutgers FSMA-specific materials were made available, and 37 farm visits were conducted at the grower’s request following their attendance at one of the workshops. The formal presentations frequently prompted multiple side conversations, follow-up emails and phone calls in order to consult about the specific situations of individual growers.

As a result of their involvement with the project, participants are now better able to understand whether or not their farm operation will need to come into compliance with the FSMA Produce Safety Rule, and if so what that compliance will entail. The team indicated that they will continue with trainings beyond this grant project to ensure broad outreach to New Jersey farmers on the FSMA Produce Rule.

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"The presentation gave us a better understanding of FSMA. We have better record keeping and an awareness of what is expected of our farm."

– New Jersey Farmer

Preparing Produce Growers for Compliance with the Food Safety Modernization Act

Compliance with the Produce Safety Rule of the Food Modernization Safety Act (FSMA) will involve a number of changes for impacted farms including farm infrastructure, upgrading farm equipment, changing staffing, documenting sanitation steps, monitoring risk reduction activities, and making building upgrades and/or changes. Growers will need to assess their current operation’s ability to comply with the federal rule and begin implementing changes well in advance of the rule’s implementation in 2017. A survey of producers who attended five Rutgers farm food safety workshops during 2013 and 2014 showed that 74% of responders anticipate that they will need to comply with FSMA regulations. Farm operations not already complying with third party audit certifications will need additional assistance in FSMA compliance due to their lack of experience with food safety regulations.

In order to help **New Jersey** farmers understand and prepare for the compliance issues associated with the



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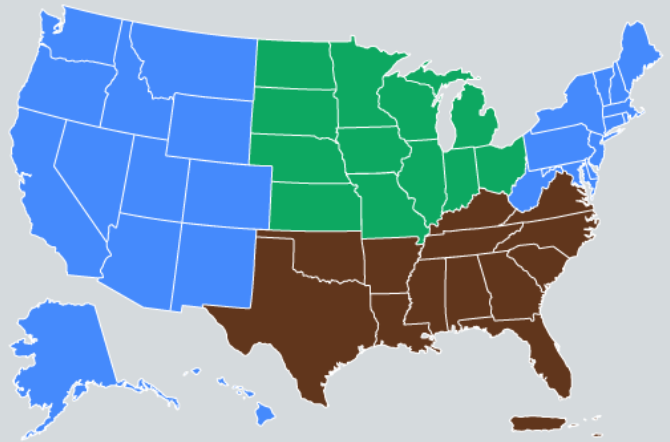
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