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Proposed FSMA Standards for Produce Growers who would be *covered* by the Rule

On January 4, 2013, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) released a draft [Produce Safety Rule](#) as required under the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) of 2011. This *proposed* regulation would establish practices that farmers must take to prevent microbial contamination of fresh produce.

The FDA has proposed that farms that meet any of the following criteria be covered by the rules:

- Farms that have over \$25,000 in annual gross sales for all food (averaged over the previous three years), and have **crops that are sold mostly through wholesale outlets**, such as through distributors, warehouses, or fresh-cut processors
- Farms with **total gross food sales of over \$500,000** (averaged over the previous three years)
- Farms with total gross food sales between \$25,000 and \$500,000 would be exempt **if more than 50% of their gross total food sales are sold directly to consumers** (such as at a farmers market, farm stand, as a CSA), or delivered directly to a grocery store or restaurant **in the same state as the farm, or if out of state, no farther than 275 miles from the farm.**

Below are summarized highlights of some of the **Standards for Growing, Harvesting, Packing and Holding of Produce for Human Consumption** adapted from the proposed rule and from factsheets on the subparts of the rule available on the FSMA website at: <http://www.fda.gov/Food/FoodSafety/FSMA/ucm334114.htm>. The complete version of the standards are available on the FSMA website at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-01-16/html/2013-00123.htm>

Worker Health and Hygiene

- Farm workers who handle fresh produce must receive training on personal hygiene and health conditions that can increase the risk for food contamination.
- Growers would be required to show proof of training by keeping written records.
- Toilet facilities have to be readily accessible, reasonably clean, and supplied with toilet paper.
- Hand-washing stations must be close to toilet facilities and supplied with potable running water, hand soap, and clean single use towels.

Agricultural Water

- Growers must be able to demonstrate that the water they use for irrigation, pesticide preparation, cooling and washing, etc., is safe for its intended use.
- A maximum average of generic E. coli levels of 126 CFU per 100 mL (or 235 CFUs per 100 mL for a single sample) have been proposed for irrigation water that can contact the edible part of the crop.
- For water used for post-harvest operations water must be potable (no detectable levels of E.coli)

Proposed FSMA Standards for Produce Growers who would be covered by the Rule, continued

Equipment, Tools, and Buildings

- Equipment and tools need to be kept reasonably clean.
- Packsheds should have good water drainage, control of dripping condensation, a pest control program, and regular clean-up of trash. Partially-enclosed packing buildings are acceptable if the grower takes precautions to prevent birds and other pests from becoming established in the buildings.

Biological Soil Amendments

- At least a 9 month interval (270 days) would be required between application of raw animal manure to produce fields and harvesting of product if there is a possibility that the manure may contact the produce.
- Composted animal manures can be applied from 0 to 45 days before harvest depending on whether or not it can contact the crop.
- Growers, or commercial compost suppliers, must provide proof through laboratory testing that the composting process was adequate to make it safe to use.
- No human waste is allowed on fields except in the case of sewage biosolids that are treated according to regulations.

Domestic Animals

- Working animals, such as mules and horses, are allowed in produce fields if growers can demonstrate they have taken adequate measures to prevent contamination.
- If animals are allowed to graze in areas intended for produce growing, the waiting period specified for application of raw manure (270 days) would apply.

Wild Animals

- The FDA recognizes it is impossible to keep all wild animals out of produce fields. If there is a reasonable probability that wild animals can contaminate produce, growers would be required to monitor their fields for signs of animals and take some kind of preventative measure to keep them out or discourage them from entering.

To comment on the rule, go to: <http://www.regulations.gov> The official title of the proposed rule is "Standards for the Growing, Harvesting, Packing, and Holding of Produce for Human Consumption."

Information on this fact sheet was adapted from information at FSMA website and information created by Dr. Luke LaBorde, Associate Professor of Food Science, Penn State University, <http://extension.psu.edu/food-safety/farm>

For more information on UVM Extension's Produce Safety Program go to: <http://www.uvm.edu/~susagctr/?Page=gaphome.html>

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