

**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, TRADE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION (DATCP)  
PRODUCE SAFETY ADVISORY COUNCIL (PSAC) MEETING**

**MINUTES**

**Date:** March 10, 2026

**Time:** 9 AM – 11 AM

**Location:** Microsoft Teams Webinar

**DATCP Division:** Food and Recreational Safety

**Welcome and Introductions**

**Call to order:** Steve Louis called the meeting to order at 9:04 AM

**Open meeting notice:** This meeting is a public meeting subject to public records requests, and information was posted inviting public comments. No public comments were received.

**Introduction of voting members**

**Present:** Steve Louis, Oakwood Fruit Farm; Hsing-Yi Hsieh, Festival Foods; Josh Rimmert, Alsum Produce; Mike Klemp-North, Hsu Ginseng Farms and Hsu's Ginseng Enterprises Inc; Jeff Mears, WI Tribal Conservation Advisory Council; Lavern Zeist, Lavern Zeist Farm and Plain Communities and Cultures Representative; Corey Miller, Organic Valley and Cropp Cooperative; Dan Corneillus, Intertribal Agriculture Council; Sara Ecker, Ecker's Apples; Wayne Geist, Bushel and a Peck Market; Jay Ellingson, Kwik Trip.

**Not present:** Susan Quam, WI Restaurant Association.

**Introduction of ex-officio (non-voting) members**

**Present:** Krystal Martin, DATCP (DFRS); Nichole Kirk, DATCP (DFRS-Produce); Troy Sprecker, DATCP (DFRS); Karl Doyle, DATCP (DTCP); Ryan Bennett, DATCP (DFRS).

**Not present:** Kobby Antwi, DATCP (DFRS); Adam Brock, DATCP (DFRS); Eric Scheftgen, DATCP (DTCP).

**Introduction of guests**

Michele Brunlinger, Hydrite Chemical Manufacturing.

**Quorum:** Steve verified that a majority of members are present to establish a quorum.

**Approval of the agenda as presented:** Steve called for a motion. Mike made a motion, and Corey seconded it. With none opposed, the motion carried.

**Approval of the minutes of the November 19, 2025 meeting:** Steve called for a motion. Corey made a motion, and Josh seconded it. With none opposed, the motion carried.

### Overview of Advisory Body Final Report

Krystal shared information about the development of a final Advisory Body Report for the PSAC. This group was organized to explore what a produce program could look like in Wisconsin, with input from various produce industry representatives. PSAC provided insight into how DATCP could be valuable and explored the possibility of a state rule. While the state rule didn't gain traction, which is similar to about 1/3 of other US states, we still established a successful produce program with inspections and outreach. We also built resources based on guidance from this group. Now with an established program, we're left asking about the purpose of PSAC moving forward. Without a state rule, or the traction to have a state rule in the future, we're butting up against the scope of our federal agreement, which we almost entirely operate under.

We followed the steps under the policy for closing out a council, by drafting a final advisory body report, sharing it with the council for feedback, and submitting it to the Secretary. The Office of the Secretary has accepted the final report and supports the decision to close this council, which actually operates as a committee.

*Any questions or comments from members?*

Jay Ellingson commented that our responsibility doesn't end with the end of the council. We are all in the business of produce safety and our number one goal is to manage risk in the industry. Whether the council is here or not, it is our responsibility to protect public health and Wisconsin agriculture. Jay thanked everyone on the council and at DATCP.

### Approval to share roster and maintain modified webpage

Krystal shared that DATCP currently maintains a roster and term tracker for PSAC membership. There is a desire from council leadership to share member contact information with all members. Krystal called for a motion and vote to share contact information with the group.

Hsing-Yi made a motion to share council information, Jay seconded it, and with none opposed, the motion carried.

Krystal shared that DATCP also has a public-facing webpage for the produce program that lists all PSAC members. Krystal would like to maintain the webpage in some capacity.

*Does anyone have thoughts on how we should maintain the page?*

Hsing-Yi brought up the question of how the webpage will be maintained and updated over time. Steve added that things change, especially contact information and business associations.

Krystal answered that website accuracy is important to DATCP, and it is possible to maintain a list of PSAC members without specific contact information.

Nichole added that maintaining the webpage with PSAC member names only is useful. If an individual needs to contact a former PSAC member, a quick google search can locate contact information.

Hsing-Yi suggested that the webpage include a history of the council, with the sentiment of: “Wisconsin had a produce safety council that reached significant milestones.”

Lavern shared that if the council goes away, we don’t want to mislead people in thinking that the rule is going away.

With no other comments, Krystal shared that we will continue this discussion and follow up on this. Whatever idea or plan we have, we’ll make sure we clear it with members.

## **Agency Reports**

### **Update on Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)**

Krystal shared that we are currently in a 5-year cooperative agreement, which ends on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026. The state has not yet received the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the next cycle. We are hoping to receive it by April 1<sup>st</sup>. The NOFO tells us how we can operate our produce program, usually in 3- or 5-year agreement lengths. The FDA doesn’t share much information in advance regarding NOFOs, so they’re difficult to prepare for. When the next NOFO is released, DATCP will likely apply for the funding, as DATCP would like to maintain our produce program. We anticipate that inventory and inspections will stay the same. There is some indication that outreach will be included but may be significantly reduced. Outreach is likely to transition to technical assistance, which would focus on covered farms. However, DATCP has a certain commitment to outreach, as it’s part of our mission to educate before and while we regulate. We will continue our PSA trainings, management of our mailbox and our newsletter at a minimum.

In this next cooperative agreement, we anticipate an emphasis on documenting our processes for the purpose of sustainability and consistency.

## **Member Updates and Issues/Further Discussion**

### **Council Celebrations!**

Krystal highlighted her appreciation for council relationships with one of her greatest celebrations being grower trainings. Many council members have spearheaded successful training events. Sara and Steve helped organize a recurring training opportunity at Growing Wisconsin. Just two weeks ago, Krystal trained alongside Lavern and had a wonderful turn-out in the plain community, and Josh helped set up a separate training at Alsum, which was also open to the public. This group has truly helped connect with hundreds of growers. We plan to continue offering grower trainings, because we see value in them. We’ve seen people show up to trainings multiple times because there is always something new to learn. Our trainings aren’t just a box to check, but a place to continue learning.

Krystal shared that the Council is important, but it is even more important when DATCP can show up to an event with several hundred growers. Those are the types of opportunities we’d like to continue.

Krystal posed several questions to the group: *How can we continue to connect? What are some ways to meet with each other intentionally? What is the greatest celebration? What are some wins? What things do we need to do moving forward?*

Troy shared that he appreciates how this group has continued to come together and find ways to work together, even as we continue to evolve. He appreciates the commitment, care and concern to public health and produce safety, as produce safety is the right and ethical thing to do for Wisconsin. Troy is happy to see the group's steadfastness in prioritizing the sustainability of the produce program, exemplified by supporting the transition of the manufactured foods group taking on produce work. This group's mindset to carry-on is incredible, due to the commitment to produce safety. Thank you!

Steve shared that he is most proud of grower trainings and how trainings connect to a wide variety of people. Trainings have allowed us to educate many people across the state. He also appreciates the decision to move the produce program under the manufactured foods umbrella, allowing for stability of inspectors. On a personal note, Steve has thoroughly enjoyed getting to know everyone and participating in interesting discussions. Participating in discussions and hearing different perspectives has allowed Steve to look at things differently on his own operation. He's gained so much knowledge from collaborating with everyone.

Jeff shared that he is looking forward to future trainings and opportunities to collaborate. He really enjoyed the joint trainings with PSA and WTCAPT for tribal members, as previous participants have shared positive take-aways. Jeff would also like to celebrate the Tribal Elder Food Box and he looks forward to ways to collaborate in the future.

Dan shared that he also values the collaboration on trainings, especially for small and medium food businesses, and he wants to continue this work. He's enjoyed the collaboration with the Food Finance Institute. Collaboration and staying connected is so important, especially with current funding setbacks, such as the loss of funding for the regional business center.

Hsing-Yi shared the saying, "when it feels like something is falling apart, maybe the pieces are falling in place." Even as the council dissolves, this feels like the beginning of maintaining relationships. The relationships have already been established, and we don't need a formal council to maintain them. As industry members, we're also willing to share our opinions about the state of the industry. Hsing-Yi believes that we've advanced produce safety and it's in a better place now than it was 8 years ago.

Lavern thanked everyone who's been involved and engaged. When this group started, we didn't know where it was going or what was required. Food safety awareness in Wisconsin has grown and we've learned a lot. All of our PSAC meetings were very important and provided a place to discuss questions from his community and get answers. Lavern shared a highlight of acting as a liaison between the plain community and DATCP, mentioning that many members of plain communities were unsure and fearful of DATCP inspectors. Lavern was able to meet with these people and discuss inspections, alleviating some uncertainty. He would like to applaud DATCP inspectors, who educated and encouraged growers to ask questions. Lavern has learned that we're all human beings, and DATCP is full of human beings. Lavern wants to maintain relationships and open communication, as he deeply appreciates the understanding of different cultures, religions, and farming styles. There is a need to keep connected in some shape or form. Lavern is open to phone calls or farm visits, so please reach out. Krystal shared that she has learned so much from Lavern, because he creates a safe space and welcoming platform to ask questions.

Corey mentioned that plain communities are not using technology and websites, so it will be important to keep printed information flowing, especially if there are any changes to the rule or specific standards. Information is not static, and there are always going to be new people, or people that want a refresher. So, it will be important to keep providing trainings. Corey appreciates the partnership with the FDA, allowing inspections to be completed in Wisconsin. Farmers are a lot more comfortable when it's a state agency doing inspections, instead of disconnected federal inspectors.

Mike shared his experience with the PSAC, noting that he joined this group later in its journey. He appreciates DATCP's open door and proactive approach. He hopes that DATCP can continue to facilitate gatherings and discussions, and he looks forward to informal way to stay connected, including a PSAC reunion opportunity.

Josh shared that he believes grower trainings to be the best form of outreach. He also shared that no matter the size of a growing operation, the risks are the same and one recall impacts the whole industry. As professionals focused on produce safety, we are here to get information out to everybody. We must protect Wisconsin as an agricultural state the best we can.

Sara shared that she really appreciates the previously-utilized On-Farm Readiness Review practice. She found it an effective way to get industry together on the farm. Sara also shared that she is thankful for DATCP's dedication to transparency and keeping industry partners in the loop. She would love to keep getting updates on future meetings or information moving forward.

Krystal shared that this isn't the end and we can now move forward with more intentionality. We will continue to be proactive in our relationships, which have proven to be critical in making decisions that are right for Wisconsin. We would like to stay connected and can hopefully continue to play an important role in education and outreach. We are in the process of reconnecting with UW-Extension, to hopefully partner and build back produce safety at the Extension level.

Jay shared that in reflecting on the reason for the PSAC, he has recognized that we all work in the business of public health protection and want to advance produce safety. He appreciates the constant and open communication, which has built trust into these council relationships. Jay has the utmost respect for everyone on the Council. Communication, trust, and respect have allowed us to be successful and will allow us to continue connecting with each other.

Krystal would like to thank everyone on the council and the PPA team that serves behind the scenes. Joanna was critical in building council framework in the beginning. The Council has been difficult at times, with heated discussions and technology updates. But the Council has also been incredibly successful and feels like a family. We will stay in touch.

Lavern would like to plan a reunion to talk and socialize in the fall, after the height of this coming growing season, offering his farm as a meeting place.

## **Adjourn**