Produce Safety Rules Take Effect Jan. 26 For Largest Fresh Market Growers

MADISON – New food safety regulations take effect Jan. 26 for Wisconsin's biggest growers of fresh market fruit and vegetables, but regulators will focus on educating farmers during the first year of regulation. Enforcement will not begin in earnest until 2019.

The new regulations, part of the sweeping federal Food Safety Modernization Act, take effect this month for growers with more than $500,000 in annual revenue from food sales. Smaller farms have another year or two years to comply, depending on their size. Growers should focus on meeting training requirements first, so that they understand the new requirements.

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection is working with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to implement the changes. FDA has emphasized that the 2018 focus is on outreach to farmers. A team from DATCP has been traveling throughout the state since last June to answer growers' questions at farm shows and conferences. The team will continue these efforts in 2018, and also work with outside organizations to provide mandatory training.

The mandatory training course, developed by the Produce Safety Alliance and Cornell University and approved by the FDA, covers the scope of the regulations and how growers can meet the requirements.

Regulatory inspections for large farms will begin in 2019. Before then, farms can request a "readiness review," a non-regulatory assessment by a team of state officials, extension agents and FDA produce experts to gauge a farm's readiness for inspection.

Growers, cooperatives, and other professional groups can get more information about the rule, training and readiness reviews at http://datcp.wi.gov, search for "produce safety". They can also email datcpproducesafety@wi.gov or call (608)224-4511.

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