



Spring 2022

Safe Wisconsin Produce

Helpful Resources for Wisconsin Produce Growers

New Tools for On-Farm Food Safety

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) and the Safe Wisconsin Produce (SWP) team announce the latest tools for produce growers to improve their on-farm food safety practices. In addition to technical assistance available by phone or email – and the personalized assistance provided by On-Farm Readiness Reviews – DATCP now offers [Safe Wisconsin Produce \(SWP\) Audits](#) and has launched the [SWP Farm Registry](#).

These resources were created in response to grower and industry voices expressing the need for documented food safety efforts for all. Wisconsin fresh produce growers are discovering that growing their food safety knowledge and having it documented are advantageous to improving market access. While some growers are able to utilize the Produce Safety Rule inspection report (i.e., 4056) and third-party audit results, those are not available to all. To assist, SWP has implemented an internal audit program that educates, documents, and promotes produce growers' food safety efforts. Audits are similar to PSR inspections and reflect documented versions of On-Farm Readiness Reviews.



Beyond the audit program, SWP has established a publicly searchable farm registry to improve buyer and consumer knowledge of on-farm food safety efforts. Buyers and consumers can search the registry for local growers to view a farm's PSR status and whether the farm has had a FDA produce inspection or SWP Audit.

Both services are offered at no cost. Complete the [2022 produce survey](#) and request to be added to the SWP Farm Registry, or request a SWP Audit. If you completed the survey and would like to participate, contact the SWP team.

Education about Proposed Changes to the Agricultural Water Rule

Grab a cup of coffee and [sit down for a video](#) summarizing the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) proposed changes to the agricultural water rule for produce growers. Other resources:

- Try out the FDA's new user-friendly online [Agricultural Water Assessment Builder](#).
- Read the [proposed agricultural water rule](#).
- Read the FDA [constituent update](#) reminding stakeholders that the agency will continue its intention to exercise enforcement discretion for all of the agricultural water requirements for covered produce (other than sprouts).



Workshops

Save the date for on-farm collaborative field days where SWP will offer demonstrations and training on produce safety in partnership with DATCP's Division of Agricultural Development, UW-Madison Division of Extension and local farms. Registration details will be posted at the [SWP events webpage](#) noting for each if Hmong or Spanish language presenters and/or translators will be available:

- **Wednesday, July 27, 3-6 p.m.**, at the Farley Center in Verona (Hmong translation will be available).

Grower Trainings

Contact the SWP team if you or your group are interested in attending a grower training. Many growers connect through boards and community associations specific to the produce they grow or certifications they hold (e.g., organic). We would love to host an FDA-recognized training or workshop for your group.

Additionally, SWP is excited to share an online form to register for on-demand grower trainings. This form collects names, emails, farm name, date and location preferences. As the roster fills, SWP attempt to schedule trainings that accommodate time and location preferences and send registration information with at least two weeks' notice. We anticipate that the trainings will be remote/virtual, but please provide flexibility in your responses in case we can offer in-person training.

DID YOU KNOW that your Produce Safety Alliance grower training certificate may be valid proof of training in other regulatory areas?

"The past week state inspectors visited our maple syrup operation and threw a new one at me, asking if I have any training in food safety. I have been in maple syrup production since 1999 and this was a first that I remember. The good word is they agreed that my produce training was good also for maple syrup production."

- Eli B. Hostetler, Scenic Maple Farm

Preliminary Findings from the 2022 Survey



Preliminary findings from the 2022 annual produce farm survey suggest that growers renting land for their operations may be overlooked in our state profile of farms. While not every tenant grows produce for human consumption, many do. These businesses can be unregistered, operate from another location, or be owned by a separate entity other than that of the landowner. Connecting those farms with SWP fosters food safety statewide and makes our program more efficient by eliminating errors and highlighting improvements in outreach and education. If you rent or know of a grower who rents land, please share this information.

Being included in SWP's produce farm survey helps DATCP identify trends and respond with tailored services. These services are available at no cost and are designed to provide growers minimum standards for growing, packing, harvesting and holding of produce for human consumption, and improve your on-farm food safety practices. Make the connection today and respond to the

[2022 Produce Questionnaire and Registry](#). Be sure to list all of your farm sites and business mailing addresses.

Email or call if you have questions or ideas to help improve our survey. Keep a lookout for our fall newsletter for a detailed summary of the 2022 survey.

Produce Safety Rule Inspections Taking Place

Warmer weather means more produce activity. DATCP staff have been busy connecting with farms to identify those that are required to undergo a produce safety inspection. Inspections can be scheduled for covered commodities during any production phase (e.g., growing, harvesting, packing, holding) from June until October.

Two primary factors affect whether a farm is chosen for inspection. First, the FDA sets priorities based on farm size and at-risk commodities including leafy greens, cucumbers, tomatoes, green peppers, cantaloupe, honeydew and bulb onions. Second is crop seasonality; for example, farms growing strawberries are inspected earlier in the season, while apple orchards are inspected later. Other factors may escalate a farm's inspection priority, such as a previous outbreak investigation, a consumer complaint, or at the farm's request.



Two of the most common noncompliance issues are missing records and failure to test sanitizer concentrations. Annual worker training records were the most common missing record, followed by annual water distribution system inspection records, and cleaning and sanitizing records. Many farms that used sanitizers during post-harvest use did not properly test concentration levels, or they failed to keep records of sanitizer use. If you are preparing for an anticipated inspection this year and would like to avoid these errors, you can find many resources at the [SWP webpage](#) or other online sources such as Produce Safety Alliance or the UW-Madison Division of Extension.

Farms selected for inspection will be contacted by phone, email or mail. Inspections will be scheduled based on your availability but will not be delayed. Inspectors must be joined by a farm representative familiar with farm food safety practices. Inspection reports are typically completed at the end of the inspection and printed on site.

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Precautions for Produce Farms

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) has been confirmed in Wisconsin. HPAI infects domestic poultry, such as chickens, turkeys, pheasants, quail, ducks, geese, and wild birds, particularly waterfowl. Direct contact with infected birds, contaminated objects or equipment, and aerosol (short distances) can spread the virus, which is found in feces, saliva, and respiratory secretions. Produce growers who own poultry are encouraged to increase their biosecurity and, if possible, move birds indoors to protect their flocks.

SWP is taking several precautions for Produce Safety Rule Inspections, SWP Audits, or other farm visits:

- When scheduling a visit, SWP staff will ask about your farm's biosecurity procedures. Next, we will ask if your farm has any poultry and, if so, how many and how they are housed.
- DATCP vehicles will be maintained (i.e., cleaned, sanitary) to prevent cross contamination.
- Upon arrival, SWP team members will change their footwear for boots, washing and sanitizing those boots before moving about the farm. If your farm has poultry, SWP team members will ask where poultry are kept and avoid those areas as much as possible.
- At the conclusion of any visit, SWP team members will again clean and sanitize their boots.

To learn more about HPAI and protecting your flock, visit [DATCP's avian influenza webpage](#).



Ask an Inspector: Commodity Exemptions for Processing

A farm pays a fee to a commercial processor to press its apples for cider/juice to sell at farm store. The processor is not selling the cider or apples. There is an invoice to the farm each time the apples are pressed.

<u>QUESTION</u>	<u>ANSWER</u>
Is this a case of apples intended for commercial processing that should provide accompanying documentation?	If the apples were <i>not</i> grown to “covered” PSR standards, accompanying documents must be provided to the processor. If the apples were grown to PSR “covered” standards, there is no need for accompanying documents, per the PSR, noting that processing firms may require various documents upon receiving items into their operation.
Does the farm only need to provide accompanying documentation if they do not want to be treated as a covered farm/apply for the commodity exemption, or is there a liability benefit to providing accompanying documentation even if exemption is not the goal?	If the farm wants to avoid PSR oversight, accompanying documents are mandatory. It is then up to the processors as to what documentation they require. Additionally, processors must ensure that the goods and services they provide in return for payment meet required processing regulations (e.g. ATCP 70, 21 CFR 117).
By meeting the documentation criteria, how should the farm document the sales from this cider under their sales records for the PSR?	While the growing, harvesting and packing of the apples may be exempt from PSR oversight due to meeting the documentation criteria and commercial processing steps, all on-site produce and food sales shall be documented. The apples in this instance are not sold, resulting in no produce sales; however, the cider would be considered a <i>food</i> sale and should be recorded.
Is the farmer responsible for the safety of the cider after it is returned? If not, who is responsible if someone gets sick?	Once the apples leave the farm, that grower no longer can vouch for their safe handling. We do not know if that processor is working exclusively for that farm; they could also be processing other farm’s apples, so there’s a risk of cross-contamination. But we can reasonably assume that the processor is licensed to produce juice and follows juice HACCP. The processor holding a processing license would hold the bulk of the responsibility. The farmer that is then selling it holds responsibility as a retailer. They also must provide apples that are unadulterated and of suitable quality for cider production.
What technical assistance or advice would you offer to a farm/processor who is a new business owner and trying to navigate the obligations for safety?	Growers and/or processors should contact DATCP’s licensing team at datcpdfrslicensing@wisconsin.gov or (608) 224-4923 for regulatory clarification, technical assistance and relevant resources.

A farm lets a small business use its land to grow and dehydrate flowers to make and sell tea. Some of the tea includes dehydrated apples from the farm.

Even though dehydrating flowers falls under the PSR, what jurisdiction does slicing fall under?	This is beyond the harvest cut and, therefore, a commercial process requiring licensing.
Is there a sales exemption that applies or does this producer need to obtain a processing license from the county or state authority, even if sales are small?	Anything that goes beyond the harvest cut requires a processing license, regardless of where the apples are sourced.

Safe WI Produce Returns to In-person Conferences

The lifting of COVID-19 restrictions allowed the Safe Wisconsin Produce (SWP) team to return to in-person conferences. Between January and March of 2022, SWP was able to bring the latest farm food safety news to nearly 2,000 Wisconsin produce growers and industry representatives at the following events:

In-person

- Wisconsin Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Conference
- Grower Education Conference & Industry Show by the Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association
- MOSES Organic Farming Conference
- Ginseng Board of Wisconsin spring grower meeting

Virtual

- Organic Vegetable Production Conference

Ginseng: Food from a Medicine Source?

Dr. Eric Vandenhouten

Wisconsin ginseng is a specialty crop and is the gold standard of American ginseng. The Ginseng Board of Wisconsin was established in 1986 as a nonprofit organization representing all Wisconsin ginseng growers. The Board is managed by an elected board of seven ginseng producers, and it functions under a marketing order managed by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

The Ginseng Board of Wisconsin's purpose is research, national and international marketing, new product development and education. The People's Republic of China (PR China) has a food from a medicine source list with more than 100 herbal medicines and, due to the current pilot program, we could see Wisconsin ginseng be included on that list. Oriental Medicine in PR China classifies American ginseng as a tonic herbal drug and could soon gain market access to the PR China food market.

There are nine herbs in the most recent round of the PR China pilot program known as food from a medicine source which happens to include American ginseng. This pilot program has taken place in many PR China provinces since November 2021 and will end in November 2022. At that time, the data from this



pilot program will be evaluated by the PR China National Health Commission and the State Administration for Market Regulation to determine if the herbs will be granted a place on the PR China food from a medicine source list.

What would be gained if Wisconsin ginseng is granted a place on the PR China food from a medicine source list and what would that mean for the Wisconsin ginseng industry? The PR China is the largest Wisconsin ginseng market in the world. Due to the PR China's regulations, Wisconsin ginseng can only be sold in the medical industry. If Wisconsin ginseng can enter the food industry, it would mean full market access to Wisconsin's ginseng industry and the state would benefit greatly after years of hard times and only partial market access.



A Sweet and Savory Spring

While many view the winter months as the longest of the year, the timeframe from snow-melt to garden abundance this year was equally long, if not more lingering. But just because tomatoes are not yet ripened doesn't mean that there aren't plenty of treats available.

The time of year when the temperature sits above freezing during the day and below freezing at night is ideal for tapping maple trees and collecting sap. While the dates vary, sap generally runs from early March to mid-April with 10-20 days of production. The amount of sap a tree produces on any given day depends greatly on the freeze-thaw cycle, barometric pressure, and the amount of thawed ground moisture. On average, one tap provides nearly 10 gallons of sap each season, which can be cooked into about 1 quart of syrup.

The optimal time for collecting morel mushrooms, asparagus and ramps/wild leeks is when daytime temperatures reach the 60s and overnight temperatures remain in the 40s. In Wisconsin, a common standard to follow is "Mother's Day to Memorial Day," while considering various factors like rainfall, sunshine and disturbances to the natural setting.

Individuals and families across the state participate in these activities for fun and as a means of enjoying the season. Some, like produce growers, have a close working relationship with DATCP, which provides them with technical assistance and regulatory oversight. If interested in expanding your business to include other value-added products, contact DATCP's licensing team at datcpdfrslicensing@wisconsin.gov or (608) 224-4923.

Posters for your Pack Shed

Pages 7 and 8 of this newsletter offer helpful posters you can tear out and post in your pack shed. Included are:

- **Page 7:** Guidelines for when to wash your hands
- **Page 8:** Hmong handwashing poster



List of Wisconsin-Approved Sanitizers

DATCP maintains an exhaustive list of sanitizers approved for use in Wisconsin. The [pesticide database search page](#) compiles a list of [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#) registered pesticides – including sanitizers meant for food contact surfaces and batch/wash water – that is searchable by company, product name, type, active ingredient and other criteria.

You can learn more about specific products, such as the EPA registration number, state-use expiration date, how to mix and apply the product, and where the product can be applied. You can even view and download complete product labels for your farm food safety plan.

Many lists of common products used for sanitizing food contact surfaces are available within our region. Note: Sanitizer resource lists are not inclusive of all options and are not intended to promote one product over any other. Instead, they seek to provide guidance to farms.

Other News & Announcements

Nominations are complete for the Produce Safety Advisory Council (PSAC). Learn about your newest underserved communities, at large, and consumer advocate representatives by visiting the [Produce Safety Advisory Council webpage](#).

Do you have a question for an inspector? You can contact your regional inspector by calling (608) 224-4511 or emailing safeproduce@wi.gov.

Contact us

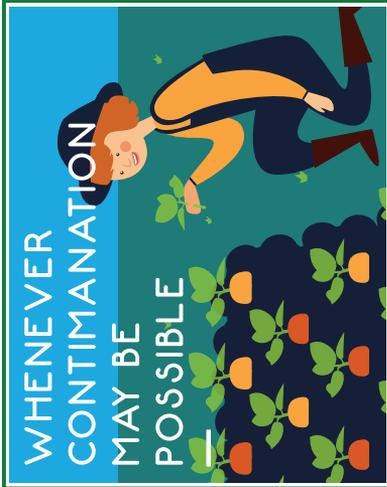
Do you have a produce-related success story? Were you able to use SWP resources to improve your food safety practices? Do you have recommendations about produce, tools, or equipment? Please send us a note at safeproduce@wi.gov.

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WHEN TO WASH YOUR HANDS



HELP PROTECT OUR PRODUCE FROM CONTAMINATION BY
WASHING YOUR HANDS



HOW TO WASH YOUR HANDS

STEP 1

PROPERLY WET HANDS

STEP 2

WASH FOR 20 SECONDS WITH SOAP

STEP 3

RINSE HANDS THOROUGHLY WITH CLEAN WATER

STEP 4

DRY USING PAPER TOWEL OR A HAND DRYER

STEP 5

THROW THE PAPER TOWEL IN THE TRASH

21 CFR 112.32 requires employees to wash hands.

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Do you need this publication in an alternate format? Contact WSDA at (360) 902-1976 or TTY Relay (800) 833-6888.

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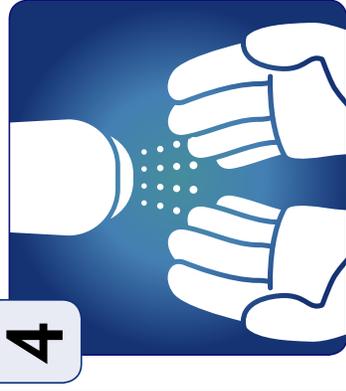
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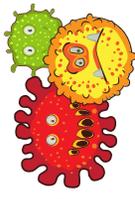
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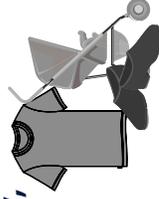
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