

THE NCDA&CS PRODUCE SAFETY PROGRAM

Ensuring North Carolina produce farms are in compliance with the FDA's Produce Safety Rule for the health of consumers through continuous outreach and education before and while we regulate

The NCDA&CS Produce Safety Program enforces the produce safety regulations set forth within the Produce Safety Rule. The Produce Safety Rule is a regulation that serves to implement the Food Safety and Modernization Act by establishing science based minimum standards for the safe growing, harvesting, packing, and holding of produce for human consumption. The Produce Safety Rule regulations developed a "farm to fork" approach to food safety with a focus on preventing the spread of foodborne illness causing pathogens in fresh fruit and vegetable agriculture. Food safety topics within the Produce Safety Rule include: worker health and hygiene, worker training, sanitary harvest practices, use of soil amendments, signs of wildlife on the farm, domesticated animal use on the farm, adjacent land use, water system analysis, cleaning and sanitation of harvest equipment, cleaning and sanitation in on-farm packinghouses, and much more. So, farms that grow fresh fruits and vegetables commonly consumed raw, or not cooked or processed with a pathogen "kill step", may be subject to regulatory inspection. However, farms may be ineligible for inspection due to farm size based on produce sales on a three year average, if they are selling over 50% of their produce directly to a "qualified end user", or if 100% of the produce grown is intended for commercial processing that adequately reduces pathogens. So, the Produce Safety Program is here to help farms determine their coverage under the Produce Safety Rule and to prepare produce farms who are eligible for inspection to comply with the farm food safety information found within the Produce Safety Rule. Two of the ways we help produce growers to become familiar with the Produce Safety Rule regulations is through Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training Courses that we offer in collaboration with NC State Extension. This is a one-day course that will teach you the importance of produce safety, as well as the skills needed to implement those practices on your farm. Then, after completing the course, you can request a free, confidential, and educational On-Farm Readiness Review where one person from our Produce Safety Program and one person from NC State Extension will plan a visit with you to your farm where they will walk through your farm food safety practices. We have many more resources and educational opportunities so please reach out to the Produce Safety Program at any time.

Contact the Produce Safety Program Outreach Coordinator:

Sarah Cope
Sarah.Cope@ncagr.gov
919-219-4716

