

Small Farm Food Safety Verification



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Small Farms – An Introduction



- The USDA classifies small farms as those that have <math>< \\$250,000</math> in sales per year.
- Small Farm Today® defines a small farm as a farm that is 179 acres or less in size, or earns $\leq \$50,000$ in gross income per year.
- A 2007 Census of Agriculture reveals “the number of farms in the United States has grown by 4% (75,810) to a total of 2,204,792...”



- The latest census figures also show a continuation in the trend towards more small and very large farms with fewer mid-sized operations.
- Between 2002 and 2007, the number of farms with sales less than \$2,500 increased by 74,000.

Small farms provide a large percentage of the fresh fruits and vegetables that are consumed by the general public



The Issue



With the increasing cost of fuel, and concerns over the safety of foreign grown produce, there is a tremendous push for retailers and foodservice operators to source fruits and vegetables from more “local” sources

The desire to source locally, usually from “small” farms, has created a *potential* double standard for food safety. Unlike their commercial farm counterparts, small farms don’t have:

- robust and comprehensive food safety programs in place
- the necessary resources to hire a consulting firm to develop customized food safety programs
- formally trained food safety personnel managing their operation

And yet retailers are being pressured to “buy local” without options to have a cost effective program that assures small farm food safety

The Small Farm Food Safety Program

As the demand for “locally sourced” produce continues to grow, so does the risk of foodborne illness. The program would give specifiers (retailers, distributors, brokers, foodservice):

- A risk-based, cost effective tiered approach to small farm produce safety
- A program that would maximize resources by utilizing U.S. government support (FDA, USDA), the academic community, farming cooperatives, a not-for-profit 3rd party food safety organization (NSF), and a well-recognized leader in global produce safety (GlobalG.A.P.)
- The ability to “customize” the program to meet the buyers needs to mitigate food safety risks in the supply chain



Level I

Providing Growers with the Knowledge & Demonstrated Competencies to Implement GAP

- Utilize FDA and USDA grants, academic institutions like the Michigan State Food Safety Knowledge Network, and private resources to develop small farm produce safety training materials
- Develop a low cost on-line course and testing to “certify” small farm operators
- Post a list of certified operators/farms on iCiX for buyers to readily access

Level II

(GlobalG.A.P. Pre-cert)

Small Farm GAP Verification Through Self-Evaluation and Qualified Technical Review

- NSF Davis Fresh offers Train-the Trainer Course for U.S. Universities and Cooperative Extension Services, Small Farm Organizations, Commodity Commissions, and other qualified agricultural professionals
- These “aggregators” provide low cost training preparing small growers for audit
- Local “certified” auditors provide field audits
- Audits submitted to NSF Davis Fresh for technical review
- Certified auditors complete a low cost technical review of audits/corrective actions and post audits to the iCiX website



Level III

GlobalG.A.P. Small Farm Certification

- Utilize the GlobalG.A.P. North American small farm audit and certification program
- All audits conducted by GlobalG.A.P. certified auditors
- Audit results posted on the iCiX website

Specifiers (retailers, foodservice, brokers, distribution companies) can.....

- Determine the level of certification required of their small farm suppliers based upon product risk and/or other criteria
- Establish the timeline for certification levels
- Easily access all key purchasing information via the iCiX website

The Results

- Decreased food safety risk with locally sourced fresh produce
- Restore consumer confidence via formal verification process
- Growers gain low cost access to formal food safety training programs and resources
- Grants local growers access to national...even *global* markets



Questions?



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