

Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) Curriculum Training for Pistachio Growers

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INTRODUCTION

The Produce Safety Rule of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) requires that at least one supervisor or responsible party from a farm, subject to the rule, must successfully have completed food safety training that is at least equivalent to that received under standardized curriculum recognized as adequate (§ 112.22(c)). At this time, the Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) Grower Training Course is the only course that is recognized as adequate. The course materials can be delivered in an eight-hour period, but it is generally accepted that attempting to offer the course in a single day does not provide enough opportunity for participants to understand the materials and have adequate opportunity to respond to questions. Recognized trainers receive a complete slide set that must be used in the delivery of the course. While those slides must be presented, trainers have flexibility to exchange photos or examples, in the slides, and may add additional crop-specific slides to enhance the materials.

The objectives of this project were to:

1. Modify the PSA Grower Training slide set to incorporate photographs and examples relevant to California pistachio production practices.
2. Deliver three two-day PSA Grower Training courses to pistachio growers or representatives from affiliated industries.
3. Conduct a needs-analysis for the development of targeted pistachio grower supplemental materials, including a review of the current (2009) pistachio grower's good agricultural practices document and grower self-assessment questionnaire.
4. Develop, as appropriate, key supplemental materials identified in the needs assessment (Objective 3).

RESULTS

Objective 1: The PSA Grower Training slide set was modified to incorporate a significant number of photographs of California pistachio production practices. Additional slides were developed that expanded upon the concepts illustrated in each section of the training program and that focused on pistachio-specific practices or data. These slides were used at a July 2017 workshop.

Objective 2: One two-day PSA Grower Training course was offered July 25-26, 2017 at the Fresno County Farm Bureau. A total of 48 people registered for the course; 46 received certificates of attendance for the course. Thirty-eight different pistachio growers or harvesting companies were represented along with one farm advisor from Fresno County Cooperative Extension. The training was well received, although it was very clear that pistachio farming, harvesting, and postharvest handling do not fall neatly into the examples provided in the standardized curriculum. The modified slides were useful,

but the addition of supplementary slides was not as well received. We have addressed this issue by modifying our presentation approach for the second and third workshops. At this time, there are a number of guidance documents that have yet to be published by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). At the time of the training, there was significant uncertainty regarding the production agricultural water testing requirements. Since that time, the FDA has published documents that provide some clarification, and they have extended the deadline for compliance with this part of the rule. The attendees of the workshop were alerted to these changes and links to the supporting documents posted on the website (see below).

A second two-day PA Grower Training course was scheduled for November 28-29, 2017 in Bakersfield. However, this course was cancelled due to low enrollment (16). The next two workshops will be scheduled in the spring, when we believe attendance will be higher.

Objective 3: An evaluation was provided at the July training that included questions on needed support materials. A more formal needs assessment will be administered at the second and third training sessions planned for early 2018 (dates not yet confirmed).

Objective 4: We have established a website (http://ucfoodsafety.ucdavis.edu/Pre-_-_Post-harvest_Produce/Pistachio_Grower_Resources/) where we have begun to gather resources that have been identified as potentially useful to pistachio growers as they establish a farm food safety plan and work to meet the Produce Safety Rule. Larger growers will need to comply with parts of the rule beginning January 2018. The website has links to important documents on Compliance Dates, Agricultural Water, and Farm Food Safety Plan Resources as well as links from the training manual. Under development is a fact sheet on commercial harvesters and their roles and responsibilities, according to the Produce Safety Rule. We have begun a review of the pistachio grower's "Good Agricultural Practices" document and the "Grower Self-Assessment" questionnaire.

CONCLUSION AND APPLICATIONS

This project is roughly 30 percent complete. We expect to complete the objectives by June 2018.