Food Safety and Small Growers

FMI Future Connect Webinar
May 29, 2013

Dave Corsi

• Why is food safety so critical at small farms?
• Increase consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables
• Outbreaks dilute consumer confidence
• Need to protect our customers, our brand, and our suppliers
Bill Pool

• Provide an overview of what we’ve done over the past 7 years to help small, local growers understand why food safety is critical
• Some small growers may talk about exemption from FSMA...“Tester amendment”
• Regardless of size of farm....pathogens don’t differentiate small farm from large farm

Wegmans Requirements...

• We are requiring GAPs audits for all items by September 2013...this has been phased in
• Our approach is that one audit covers any item grown on their farm
• No need for multiple audits over the season; we recognize that multiple audits can be very expensive for our growers
Why did we get started...

• Concern about food safety and small growers led to working with Cornell University and the National GAPS Program
• Did first training sessions in **January 2005**
• Focus was on growers in NY state
• Wasn’t always received with open arms...

1998 FDA GAPs Guide

- Water
- Soil Amendments
- Worker Health
- Sanitary Facilities
- Field Sanitation
- Packing Facilities
- Transportation
- **VOLUNTARY**
The goal of this one-day workshop is to acquaint Wegmans growers with the importance of implementing Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) in reducing microbial risks during the production and distribution of fresh fruits and vegetables.

- Food Safety Begins on the Farm: an Overview
- Reducing Microbial Risks in Fresh Fruits and Vegetables with Good Agricultural Practices
- Worker Education and Training: A Vital Component of GAPs
- Manure and Compost
- The Importance of Water Quality
- Interactive Small Group Activities: Water Quality, Chlorination, and Hand-Washing
- Sanitation in the Field and Packing House
- Refreshment Break
- Assessing Food Safety Risks on Your Farm
- Developing a Crisis Management Plan

A Suggestion Became a Requirement

- In July 2006, Wegmans sent letter to our small, local growers informing them that GAPs would be required to do business with us
- In Winter of 2007, we collaborated with Rutgers University and the USDA, and expanded training to growers in New Jersey
- GAPs required for certain items in 2008
# Wegmans GAPs Produce Safety Workshop

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## Agenda

| Session 1: Registration and Coffee | Session 2: GAPs for the Farm and Packinghouse  
Bob Gravani, Director  
National GAPs Program at Cornell University  
National GAPs Program at Cornell University  
Cornell University, United States Department of Agriculture  |
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<td>Farm Products Division, New York State Department of Agriculture &amp; Markets</td>
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<td>Grower Perspective on Writing a Farm Food Safety Plan:</td>
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<td>Bob Gravani, National GAPs Program, Cornell University</td>
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Since then...

- In 2011, we worked with Penn State
- The University of Massachusetts and MA Dept. of Agriculture in December 2012
- The University of Maryland and MD Dept. of Agriculture...with local growers at Columbia
- Virginia Tech for GAPs meeting in March 2013

A review of topics....

- Importance of Water Quality... Manure/Compost... Personal Health and Hygiene
- How to write a farm food safety plan...
- Review of USDA GAPs audit findings...
- Get a grower to talk about GAPs...
- Available funding to help cover audit costs
Retailer as conduit:

- Taught by VA Tech
- Open to anyone
- Produce Wholesaler, but not a supplier to Wegmans
- We let our growers know about it
Wegmans Role

- We facilitate the meetings, and talk about the impact of outbreaks from our perspective
- Provide meeting site and food
- Provide training materials and handouts
- Have reimbursed growers $400 towards the cost of their audits...90 growers in 2012 and committed again this year

Our Collaborators

- Robert Gravani, Ph.D., Director of the National GAPs Program at Cornell University
- Wesley Kline, Ph.D., Agricultural Agent with Rutgers University Cooperative Extension
- Ken Petersen, Head, Audit Programs Section Specialty Crops Inspection Division, USDA
Cornell University

- Bob Gravani, Ph.D.
- The National GAPs program at Cornell
- The Produce Safety Alliance
- Education that is available for growers

GAPs Activities at Cornell

- 1998 First USDA grant to address GAPs in the NE
- 1999 National GAPS program first funded
- Development of a series of education materials
- Expansion of National GAPs program
- 2010 Produce Safety Alliance created
A Comprehensive Food Safety Program

• Grower’s Guide
• GAPs Pamphlet
• Farm Assessment
• Resource Manual
• Exhibit & Poster
• Educational materials for worker training
• GAPsNET: www.gaps.cornell.edu
• GAPS Online Produce Safety Course
Good Agricultural Practices Online Produce Safety Course Outline

Module One: Welcome
Module Two: Shared Responsibility in Food Safety
Module Three: Good Agricultural Practices
  3.1.0 Worker Training, Hygiene, and Health
  3.2.0 Water Use
  3.3.0 Postharvest Water Use
  3.4.0 Soil Amendments
  3.5.0 Cleaning and Sanitation
  3.6.0 Traceback and Recall
  3.7.0 Crisis Management
  3.8.0 Other Important Practices
Module Four: Implementing Change
  4.1.0 Education and Training in Food Safety
  4.2.0 Building the Plan
Module Five: Course Conclusion

Educational Materials for Workers

• Photonovel series
• Coloring Book
• Magnets
• Fruits, Vegetables, and Food Safety: Health and Hygiene on the Farm
• Field Hygiene Poster Series
One Educational Approach

- Cooperative agreement between Cornell University, FDA, and USDA
- Outreach and Education Program
- PSA Established on October 1, 2010
- Project length: 3 years
- Just granted a one year, no cost extension
Target Audiences

- Fresh produce growers, packers, and grower cooperatives with special emphasis on small and very small scale farms and packinghouses
  - Not to the exclusion of any farmer
- Regulatory personnel
- All others interested in produce food safety, GAPs, and co-management

Primary Goals

- Education and outreach to improve understanding and implementation of Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) and co-management strategies
- Developing a standardized education and training curriculum to assist with the implementation of FDA's produce safety regulation
Curriculum Development Process

1. Identify GAPs Challenges
2. Set Goals
3. Develop Objectives
4. Create Content

Visit Our Website
http://producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu
Rutgers Cooperative Extension

- Wes Kline, Ph.D.
- Role of extension in grower education
- Partnership with NJ Department of Agriculture and training at the NJ Vegetable Growers Annual Conference
Food Safety Partnership

Inform growers and the industry on food safety principals

- Presentations made at grower meetings, articles written for newsletters and displays manned at trade shows

History of Program

- A self audit checklist was developed for growers to assess their own operations (March 20, 2000)

- NJDA agreed to set up a third party food safety audit program to certify New Jersey growers and shippers

- NJDA staff and Rutgers Cooperative Extension staff compiled a third party audit checklist that was ready for the 2000 growing season.

- In 2002 the program started offering third party audits to growers, shippers and suppliers
Areas Included in the Self Audit

- Water
- Manure
- Worker Health and Hygiene
- Field Sanitation
- Packing Facility Practices
- Transportation
- Traceback

Training sessions are usually two to six hours

- Topics
  - Food Safety: A Supermarket Perspective
  - Pathogens and Produce: What You Should Know
  - Good Agricultural Practices for the Farm and Packinghouse
  - Problems Observed During Mock Third Party Audits
  - Preparing for a 3rd Party Audit
1999-2013 training sessions

- Food Safety Training  
  – 2,590
- Third Party Audit Training  
  – 1,213
- Number of Events  
  – 49
- Third Party Mock Audits  
  – 85
Bringing Food Safety to Local Growers

Produce Safety Task Force Formed
- NJDA
- NJAES
- NJ Department of Health
- NJ Processors Association
- NJ Grocers Association
- NJ Restaurant Association
- Grower representatives

Weekly question and answer column
Monthly question and answer column
Advanced Food Safety Workshop
Remember The First Step in Food Safety is Common Sense

Food Safety Begins on the Farm

Food Safety is Everyone’s Responsibility

Ken Petersen
Head, Audit Programs Section
Specialty Crops Inspection Division
USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service
Washington DC
USDA GAP&GHP Program

- Voluntary, User Fee funded program
- Audits conducted by either federal or state department of agriculture employees trained and licensed to perform audits
- Nationwide program, auditors located in 36 states; over 4,000 audits conducted in FY12
- Audits conducted in 48 states, Canada, Chile

USDA GAP&GHP Program

- Auditors are selected from existing pool of fruit and vegetable inspectors, thus they “know” fruit and vegetables
- Must undergo rigorous training and evaluation program
USDA GAP&GHP Program

- All audits are based on FDA Guidance Documents and industry best practices.
- Audit Types
  - Generic GAP&GHP
  - Harmonized GAP
  - Commodity Specific GAPs (tomato, leafy greens, mushrooms, cantaloupes)

USDA GAP&GHP Program

- Preparing for an audit
  - Must have developed and implemented a written food safety plan
  - Refer to specific audit checklist for required documentation
  - Perform a self audit
  - Audits need to be conducted while active harvesting activities are being performed
USDA GAP&GHP Program

• To schedule an audit:
  – Call local Inspection Office
  – Visit the USDA website for contact information
    • www.ams.usda.gov/gapghp

Key Points

• Need to protect our brand, our customers and our suppliers
• Collaborations/partnerships are critical to success
• Win-Win-Win...growers can access to markets and customers get freshest product possible
• We don’t charge growers for the training; we will pay expenses associated with training
• We schedule sessions in off-seasons to encourage participation
• Takes effort and commitment...won’t always be welcomed!
• A GAPs audit does not guarantee safety...but it does show if the grower has the right things in place...

Dave Corsi....Summary & Close

• Explains why small growers should not be excluded from following common food safety practices
• You’re not alone...
• A journey. It will take an investment of time to establish this requirement
Any Questions??

Contact information

- Bill Pool  Bill.Pool@Wegmans.com
- Bob Gravani  RBG2@Cornell.edu
- Wes Kline  WKline@AESOP.Rutgers.edu
- Ken Petersen  Ken.Petersen@ams.usda.gov

Resources to get started...

- Cooperative Extension offices and agents
- Land-grant universities...every state has one
- National GAPs Program  www.gaps.cornell.edu
- USDA GAPs Program  www.ams.usda.gov/gapghp
- State Departments of Agriculture
- Produce Safety Alliance (PSA)  www.producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu