Food Safety In the Time of Covid-19

From Frank Yiannas deputy commissioner for food policy and response at the FDA, 3/25/20

…the U.S. food supply remains safe for both people and animals. There is no evidence of human or animal food or food packaging being associated with transmission of the coronavirus that causes COVID-19.

...we have postponed routine surveillance inspections of domestic human and animal food facilities and farms out of concern for the health and well-being of FDA investigators and state inspectors and to respect industry safety concerns about visitors. We will, however, continue to inspect “for cause” when a potential threat to public health (human or animal) is identified.

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...gastrointestinal viruses like norovirus and hepatitis A ... make people ill through contaminated food, SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19, is a virus that causes respiratory illness. This virus is thought to spread mainly from person to person. Foodborne exposure to this virus is not known to be a route of transmission.

For these reasons, we do not anticipate that food products would need to be recalled or withdrawn from the market for reasons related to the outbreak, even if a person who works in a human or animal food facility (e.g. a food packager) is confirmed to be positive for the COVID-19 virus.
...workers in the food and agriculture sector – including those working in agricultural production and food processing of both human and animal food, distribution, retail and food service, and allied industries – are named as essential critical infrastructure workers who are vital to community continuity and resilience.

The FDA is also working with our partners to address reported challenges associated with quarantines and travel restrictions that may be impeding food workers’ ability to continue to work and transport product. This includes working with local, state and federal officials, and industry, to help ensure that food workers can get to and from their jobs in communities where curfews and shelter-in-place directives are enforced.
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From Deanna Baldwin, Program Manager, Food Quality Assurance MDA, 3/25/20

Right now we are postponing (MGAP) unless a grower has a buyer that will not accept their produce without an updated certificate. For USDA GAP we are doing the audit, because USDA doesn't have the capability yet of extending a certificate. For MDA GAP we are extending existing certificates (if there was something wrong on their previous audit that needed to be fixed before their next audit, we are requesting submission of records or other documentation that they took corrective actions before extending a certificate). I've been in contact with several buyers who have made the decision to extend acceptance of an outdated certificate rather than require them to have an audit during this emergency. The general rule of thumb for all of our activities is if any type of agricultural product needs audit/inspection/certification to be able to move in commerce we will consider it essential.

Produce safety rule inspections are not required to conducted at a set frequency and are not required prior to produce entering commerce. All of us are considering cause inspections (i.e. report of egregious conditions and/or food borne illness outbreak implication) as essential and are fully prepared to conduct those.
Take Food Safety Seriously

FOOD SAFETY IS EVERYONE’S RESPONSIBILITY

All of us involved in this operation knows and understands that food safety is serious business.

We are doing all we can to keep our family, workers, and customers safe and healthy.
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North Carolina SU has created a suite of really helpful and succinct fact sheets: Find them at: https://foodsafety.ces.ncsu.edu/covid-19-resources/

FARMER ADVISORIES
• Handling COVID-19 at Farmers’ Markets
• Handling COVID-19 at U-Pick Farms
• Handling COVID-19 at Community Gardens

GENERAL INFO
• Hand Hygiene
• Homemade Hand Sanitizer – Small scale recipe from World Health Organization formulation
• Coronavirus Defense

CONSUMER CONCERNS
• Is COVID-19 a Food Safety Issue?
• Is Coronavirus a Concern with Fresh Produce?
• Is Coronavirus an Issue in Produce Production?
• Is Coronavirus a Concern with Takeout?
• Is Coronavirus a Concern at the Grocery Store?

And many more - you can post these at point of sale and share digitally
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Food Safety In the Time of Covid-19

BEST PRACTICES FOR FARMERS MARKETS AND ON FARM SALES

• Sampling should be suspended.
• Personnel should practice hand hygiene, and social distancing
• Employees should wash hands or hand-sanitize after every transaction.
• Wear long sleeves
• Use gloves when
  • handling payment (encourage exact change, card use, or prepayment),
  • handling and packaging items for customers.
• Limit customer volume by promoting pre-ordering, alternate pickup locations, or delivery.
• Postpone any large events or gatherings

https://www.futureharvestcasa.org/resources/covid-19-resources-farmers
Food Safety In the Time of Covid-19

BEST PRACTICES FOR FARMERS MARKETS AND ON FARM SALES

CLEAN YOUR HANDS OFTEN

The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. Washing your hands is easy, and it’s one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

**HANDWASHING STEPS**

1. Wet your hands with clean, running water
2. Apply soap
3. Lather and scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds
4. Rinse your hands well under clean, running water
5. Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them

**WHEN TO WASH HANDS**

- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- Before and after caring for someone that is sick
- After going to the bathroom
- Before and after preparing food
- During food preparation as needed
- Before eating food

**HAND SANITIZER**

If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry.
Do Not Put On Clean Gloves With Dirty Hands!!!

Glove Use SOP

1. Wash or sanitize your hands before putting on gloves.
   a. Hand sanitizer does not usually substitute for handwashing except in the current crisis.

2. Remove gloves before doing anything that would require you to wash your hands (using a toilet, using a handkerchief/tissue, handling contaminated material, smoking, eating or drinking, touching animals or waste, etc.) and put on new gloves before returning to work.

3. Remove and replace with clean gloves if they are torn, damaged or contaminated.

4. Store gloves in a dry, safe place

Clean hands are safer than mishandled gloves.
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BEST PRACTICES FOR FARMERS MARKETS AND ON FARM SALES

• Provide fully stocked handwashing stations and/or hand sanitizer at entrances, exits and restrooms.
• Masks are not necessary, as they are not protective to healthy people, but prevent the spread of the virus from sick people.
• What are you touching with your hands?
  • Clean and disinfect surfaces like cutting tools, tongs, tote handles, railings, doorknobs, tables, car door handles and steering wheels, etc on a regular basis
• Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces on cold storage units and food transport vehicles
• Bleach may be used to disinfect surfaces, but the concentration is higher for COVID-19 than for everyday sanitation: 5 tablespoons bleach per gallon of water
• Use non-porous metal or plastic tables that can be easily disinfected if possible.
• Think about touch points throughout the market or pick up area. Eliminate them or disinfect between uses.
Educate and Track Visitors to your Property

VISITOR HEALTH AND HYGIENE POLICIES

Welcome to our farm!
Food safety is a priority. If you are in food production, storage or handling areas, please read and follow the policies below.

1. Even if you have access to the food production, packing and storage areas, we respectfully ask you not to handle any of the product.
2. If you are ill, please come back another day to visit us. If you have diarrhea, jaundice, fever, sore throat, or are vomiting, you will not be allowed to enter the farm or packinghouse.
3. Please remove all jewelry and place in pocket. If this is not possible, let your host know so an alternative safe storage spot can be provided.
4. Please wash your hands at the beginning of your visit as well as after using the restroom, eating, or touching animals.
5. Eating is permitted only in designated areas. If you have any questions about the location of these areas, please ask your host.
6. Smoking is not allowed on our farm.
7. If required, please wear all protective gear provided for you.
8. If you are injured, tell your host immediately. Please let your host know if blood or bodily fluid has come in contact with any surfaces or fresh produce so we can clean the area properly and dispose of contaminated products.
9. You may not bring pets on the farm, unless it is a service animal. To reduce risks, service animals may have limited access to areas where fruit and vegetable production, handling or packing occurs.

Add Covid-19 specific policies to the sign. Add phone and email to the visitor log
Food Safety In the Time of Covid-19

In case a customer asks:

There is no evidence that the virus that causes COVID-19 is spread by eating food that might inadvertently contain small amounts of virus. Produce has not been identified as a risk factor in the transmission of other respiratory virus outbreaks.

• Washing produce before consumption is always a good practice.
• It is not recommended to wash produce with dish soap or any detergent.
• It is not recommended to treat produce with chemical disinfectants at home.
TRAIN YOUR WORKERS

Lots of Training Tools Available
Cornell Coop Extension Food Safety Training Video
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_fQTk14VE_o

Penn State FS Training Flip Chart
http://extension.psu.edu/publications/agrs-129/view

Carolina Farm Stewardship Association Food Safety Videos
https://www.carolinafarmstewards.org/food-safety-videos/

Umass Coop Extension videos
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WBynfFM0fVo
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTu_Q_kmRgM
MAKE IT EASY TO DO THE RIGHT THING

CLEAN UP AND GET ORGANIZED!!
Mid-Atlantic Food Safety Project
Building a Culture of Produce Safety

• On-farm food safety workshops:
  • Land use, animals, soil amendments
  • Agricultural water
  • Worker training, Sanitation, Post harvest handling

• Webinars and video tutorials

• One-on-one GAP plan writing and implementation

• Toolkit and templates for Food Safety plans, records and SOP’s

• One-on-one guidance on compliance with FSMA or GAP certification

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