

NH Department of Agriculture
Produce Safety Program Update-Covid-19
April 1, 2020

Hello NH Produce Farmers,

This past week, FDA issued a “Partial Stop Work Order” to all states and territories whose work involves federally funded (via grants) produce safety work as governed by the Food Safety Modernization Act’s Produce Safety Rule, Title 21 CFR Part 112. This stop work order restricts all activities that involve face-to-face interaction under our federal grant due to the Coronavirus/Covid-19 pandemic. This applies to inspections, on-farm readiness reviews (OFRR), on-farm educational or technical assistance activities, and any in-person education & outreach activities-including in-person trainings. This restriction will be in effect until further notice.

The stop work order also includes any produce safety program work by any sub-awardee under our grant. As UNH Cooperative Extension Service is a sub-awardee, their FSMA related work is restricted as well. Below is a statement issued by Extension:

“Due to the public health concern caused by the COVID-19 virus, UNH administration made the decision to cancel all UNH Cooperative Extension events, programs, and noncredit classes through April 5th. As such, UNHCE will not be participating in any in-person On-Farm Readiness Reviews, PSA Trainings, or other FSMA related programs until further notice. Decisions about in-person programming, not related to FSMA programming, will be updated weekly after April 5th. The health and safety of our staff and the many members of our NH communities that participate in our programs is most important. We appreciate your understanding and patience during this uncertain time. Our staff have all transitioned to working remotely and can be reached by email.”

NH farmers, whose produce operations are covered under the Produce Safety Rule (PSR) Section 112.5, must still comply with the PSR relevant to their production regardless of the stop work order. If your farm had an “initial inspection” last season, you must implement the suggested changes, upgrades, added recordkeeping, etc. discussed during the inspection. If your farm had an “On Farm Readiness Review” visit, we expect that you have begun to implement the recommendations given by the inspectors. The Department expects fully covered farms to continue to improve/upgrade/implement good farming practices in order to comply with the PSR. Farms who claim a “Qualified Exempt” (Q.E.) status must keep the required financial records, per PSR Section 112.5. More information on Q.E. is available on the FSMA webpage within the department’s website. (www.agriculture.nh.gov)

If you have any questions, please contact the Program Planner via email or phone. Produce Safety Program updates will be posted as needed.

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