Fact Sheet for the Food Safety Initiative for Wholesale Produce Farms in Indiana

Goal: This new initiative will assist agricultural operations that grow and distribute food for human consumption to make improvements via education, outreach, technical assistance and environmental assessment, resulting in a healthier and safer Indiana by reducing the number of produce-related illnesses originating from Indiana farm produce, and facilitate early identification of common source outbreaks.

Produce Safety Statistics:

- Produce outbreaks in the US doubled between 1998 (44) and 2004(98). According to the CDC, one third of all significant multistate outbreaks in 2011 involved raw produce.
- Between 1996-2010, 131 produce related outbreaks resulted in over 14,000 people sickened and 34 deaths.
- In 2012, Indiana had one outbreak that resulted in 261 persons sickened and 3 deaths.
- The economic cost is enormous, estimated at about $1.4 billion lost per year from produce related illnesses. This does not include cost to industry or government.
- While percentages (2%) of on-farm contamination remain relatively low, the produce industry must make strides to lower this to zero.

Indiana Objectives:

1. <u>Maintain a wholesale farm Registration through the Indiana State Food Protection office.</u> Registration can be fulfilled by completing the Registration Application for Wholesale Fruit and Vegetable Growers and Distributors. The Indiana Food, Drug, and Cosmetic act requires: " A manufacturer, processor, repackager, or wholesale distributor of food, drugs, or cosmetics who maintains a place of business in Indiana shall file with the state department, upon forms to be furnished by the state department, a written statement of the name and address of the owner, the character of the business, and the business address of each place of business in Indiana" (IC 16-42-1-6).

    - Indiana's Wholesale Food Establishment Sanitation Requirements consider you a wholesale food establishment if your farming operation processes, packages, stores, repackages, or transports ready to eat fruit and vegetable products for distribution to another entity for resale or redistribution. Processing includes activities such as washing and treating (410 IAC 7-21).

    - This does not include retail establishments or farmers only selling directly to consumers, such as at farmers markets. Corn, grain, and large tomato processors are also excluded from this program.

    - Farmers engaged solely in the harvesting, storage, or distribution of raw agricultural commodities that *are not* ordinarily cleaned, prepared, treated, and/or otherwise processed before being marketed to the consuming public are excluded from Wholesale Food Establishment Sanitation Requirements (410 IAC 7-21); however, they are not excluded from

the registration requirement. In addition, these farms are not exempt from IC 16-42-1, 2 and 5, which require basic sanitation to prevent adulteration of food products, including transportation, and prohibits misbranding.

Farmers included in this law should also submit copies of any current food safety certifications held along with their registration form. Section 37 of the Wholesale Food Establishment requires a designated current supervisor be trained in specific food safety techniques, and a food safety certification may satisfy this requirement (410 IAC 7-21).

Registration is free, and re-registration is only required when changes to ownership, character of business, or location of business take place.

2. Indiana Food Safety Farm Consultants will provide technical assistance to produce operations growing and selling produce that will be consumed raw.
   Indiana has hired two (2) Food Safety Farm Consultants to work with produce farmers. The Consultants, one assigned to Northern Indiana and one to Southern Indiana, will be available with a variety of resources to assist with food safety and can conduct food defense vulnerability assessments. They will also conduct environmental assessments and collect surveillance produce samples for testing. These specialists will engage in extensive outreach, as well as education to professional trade organizations.

3. Indiana Farms will embrace Good Agricultural Practices (GAPS)
   The GAPs program is a microbial food safety program related to on-farm practices that focuses on reduction of contamination in four areas: soil, water, employee health & hygiene, and contact surfaces.

   For farm operations that qualify as wholesale food establishments or distributors, a GAPs completion of training certificate from Purdue Extension (or another GAPs training program) can also be used to satisfy section 37 of the Wholesale Food Establishment Sanitation Requirements. However, any farmer that grows fruits or vegetables for raw consumption (cantaloupe, watermelon, herbs, mushrooms, celery, carrots, and more) is strongly encouraged to participate in a GAPs program. GAPs principals can be applied to farms of any size, and can assist you in providing safe products to your customers.

New Federal Guidelines:

FDA's Food Safety and Modernization Act of 2011 requires new rules, including a produce safety rule that is now available for public comment, and will be implemented at some point in the future.

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