

Safe food handling practices on the farm: Meeting the needs of foodservice operations

Abstract: Local food producers need to be aware and up-to-date on the ways to handle food safely. A pilot workshop was conducted and used as the basis for communicating food safety practices most efficiently.

This project raised awareness among Iowa farmers selling food crops to retail foodservices about the importance of documentation of on-farm food safety practices – such as GAPS, water quality assurance, and employee health and hygiene.



MARKETING

What was done and why?

Retail food service operations and consumers are aware of the need for safe food handling due to recent outbreaks of food-borne illnesses from fresh produce. ISU Extension developed a one-day pilot workshop to help local food producers interested in selling products to foodservice operations better understand the needs and concerns of potential buyers.

Objectives were:

1. Participating food producers will be able to identify best practices in product handling during harvest, post-harvest, transportation and delivery; explain the importance of operational policies related to employee hygiene and proper food handling; and understand the need to document safe handling practices.
2. Participating food producers will understand the steps necessary to avoid cross-contamination of food products, including proper cleaning and sanitizing procedures.
3. Participants will be able to communicate basic safe food handling messages to farm workers.
4. Participants will be able to address food safety and regulatory concerns of foodservice operations that purchase their products.

What did we learn?

Purchasing regulations need to be explained simply and clearly, and communicated consistently to producers and foodservice establishments. Consumers and foodservice operators know that microbial risks exist and in order to deal with these concerns, producers (sellers) need to:

- Establish procedures to minimize risks,
- Take preventative action steps,
- Document that steps have occurred,
- Communicate these actions to buyers, and
- Understand foodservice establishment buying regulations and constraints.

The challenge is helping producers understand the perspectives of various sectors of the foodservice market, and encouraging better negotiating and record-keeping skills. Use of a profitability calculator (developed as part of an earlier Leopold Center project) to show production input costs helps producers negotiate more effectively.

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[www.leopold.iastate.edu/
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M2007-36.pdf](http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/research/grants/2009-1/M2007-36.pdf)