



South Carolina DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Produce Safety Inspections to Begin – Spring 2019

COLUMBIA – The South Carolina Department of Agriculture will begin routine inspections of Large Produce Farms¹ to verify compliance with the requirements of the Produce Safety Rule in late spring of this year. The requirements of the Produce Safety Rule were established by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) in 2011.

South Carolina adopted the Produce Safety Rule as the South Carolina Produce Safety Act in 2017. The Act is codified as law in S.C. Code Ann. § 39-26-10 *et seq.* By adopting this law as our own, it allows our Department to regulate farms at the state level as opposed to federal regulation.

The Produce Safety Rule focuses on setting the first-ever federal regulatory standards for the production, harvest, and handling of fruits and vegetables, in an effort to prevent microbial contamination and reduce foodborne illnesses associated with fresh produce.

Growers can expect that, within a reasonable time frame, inspections will be announced and scheduled with the owner or person in charge. The first inspection, on each individual farm, will take the approach of “educating while we regulate.” Inspectors will make the education of our South Carolina farmers a top priority during their inspections on potential microbial hazards.

To help growers prepare for inspections, the South Carolina Department of Agriculture, along with Clemson Extension, is offering Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) training courses around the state. The PSA Grower Training Course is a requirement of the Produce Safety Rule. Inspections will verify if a grower has completed this course.

The next step after completing the Produce Safety course is a voluntary and free On-Farm Readiness Review. On-Farm Readiness Reviews are an educational opportunity intended to walk growers through what an inspection on their farm may look like. These reviews provide one-on-one assistance to help assess how prepared an individual farm is. These reviews are completely confidential. Any notes taken will be left on the farm, strictly for the farmer’s review.

For more information on PSA Grower Trainings, On-Farm Readiness Reviews, and inspections please visit our website www.scproucesafety.com. We hope that produce farmers in our state will take advantage of all the assistance our Department is offering to help them get prepared for these upcoming inspections!

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¹ A Large Produce Farm is defined as a farm or farm mixed-type facility with an average annual monetary value of produce (as “produce” is defined in 112.3(c)) sold during the previous 3-year period of more than \$500,000 (on a rolling basis).