



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF
FOOD & AGRICULTURE

Karen Ross, Secretary

February 11, 2019

Dear Farmer,

As you are likely aware, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), pursuant to the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), developed the Produce Safety Rule (PSR) to regulate the production of nearly all fruits, nuts, and vegetables. The PSR establishes a set of practices that farmers must follow that are designed to minimize the potential of foodborne illnesses. Resulting from a very collaborative process, the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) has partnered with the FDA to conduct the on-farm inspections required by the PSR. CDFA has secured federal funding to carry out this function. Accordingly, CDFA launched the Produce Safety Program (PSP) in 2016. Since then, the PSP has funded grower trainings throughout the state and collaborated with County Agricultural Commissioners, state and local industry associations, and many commodity specific industry groups to inform and educate.

Implementation of the PSR is being phased in with large farms (average annual sales >\$500,000) required to be compliant beginning in January 2018 and inspections on large farms beginning in the spring of 2019. Small farms (>\$250,000 and <\$500,000 annual sales) and very small farms (>\$25,000 and <\$250,000 annual sales) are required to be compliant in January 2019 and January 2020, respectively.

To identify farms that are most likely required to comply with the PSR, we obtained limited public information from the CalAg Permits system, maintained by the California Agricultural Commissioners and Sealers Association (CACASA), and used by each county to collect Pesticide Use Reports and issue application permits. This information is limited to a business name and address and commodities and/or commodity categories grown. Based upon this information, you are receiving this letter because we have identified your operation (farm) as a large farm.

As we prepare to commence inspections this spring, and farmers, like you, prepare for the possibility of a regulatory food safety inspection for the first time ever, it is important to understand the goals and objectives of the PSP and the resource capacities of the Program. First, our core value is to educate, then regulate. The PSP's role is to educate California produce farmers on how to comply with the requirements of the PSR and then regulate farms to ensure that they are compliant. Our vision is safe produce through 100% compliance with the law. With over 25,000 farms producing crops that are covered by the PSR, of which more than 12,000 are identified as large farms, actual on-farm inspections will be conducted on a very small percentage of farms in any given



year. As such, these inspections are to verify that farms are accurately following the PSR.

To provide efficiency and consistency, the FDA has provided states with a "*Prioritization Tool*." The tool weights certain information, either known or unknown, about a farm. Farm profiles with greater numerical totals may be given a higher priority for inspections. We have included a questionnaire for you to complete that seeks information to be used in this prioritization. It is very important that you complete the questionnaire as completely and accurately as possible. Please note, unknown data points are generally allocated the greatest numerical value, and thus increase the need for inspection of your farm.

Finally, if you have not already done so, we strongly encourage you to visit our website <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/producesafety/>. There you will find a great deal of information and assistance to better understand the program requirements, including Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), a blog page where we provide more in-depth information on specific topics, and a flow chart to best determine whether you are subject to this rule, or perhaps have a qualified exemption. We encourage you to sign up for the electronic newsletter where we issue updates directly to subscribers. You may also access the link for the farm questionnaire through the website. Questionnaires may be returned by email at producesafety@cdfa.ca.gov, or mailed to CDFCA, Produce Safety Program, 1220 N Street, Sacramento, CA 95814.

Thank you for your time in reading this letter and for returning your completed questionnaire by March 15, 2019.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michelle D. Phillips".

Michelle D. Phillips, M.S.
Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisor)
Produce Safety Program