



June 2022

Dear Farmer:

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 along with mushrooms and herbs sold in the United States. The PSR establishes a set of practices that farmers must follow that are designed to minimize the potential of foodborne illnesses. Resulting from a 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. Thus, CDFA launched the Produce Safety Program (PSP) in 2016. The PSP has funded grower trainings and collaborated with County Agricultural Commissioners, state and local industry associations, and many commodity-specific industry groups to inform and educate.

As farmers, like you, prepare for the possibility of a regulatory food safety inspection for the first time, it is important to understand the goals and objectives of the PSP and the resource capabilities of the program. Our 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, actual on-farm inspections will not be conducted on all farms in any given year; the actual frequency will vary.

To identify farms that are most likely required to comply with the PSR, we obtained limited public information, including from the CalAg Permits system used by each county to collect Pesticide Use Reports and issue application permits. This information is sometimes limited to a business name and address and commodity categories grown. Therefore, we need more specific information regarding your farm.

We have included a questionnaire for you to complete to confirm your farm information and to provide more detailed information on sales and specific commodities your farm grows. While we have information regarding the types of products you grow, in many cases that information is broadly categorized (i.e., "Fruiting Vegetable," which may be summer squash to tomato, or "Leaf/Stem Vegetable," which could be broccoli to kale). To assist us in narrowing those categories, please indicate the commodities grown on your farm.



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Farm size categories are identified according to the average annual gross produce sales within the last three years as: large (over \$500,000), small (\$250,000-\$500,000), and very small (\$25,000-\$250,000). In some cases, you may qualify as exempt or not covered by the PSR. If you think you may be exempt, please read further information provided by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) at <https://www.fda.gov/media/94332/download>. Please note, your farm may be subject to a regulatory inspection, and you should be prepared to validate your exemption status through a records review.

We strongly encourage you to visit our website <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/producesafety>. You may access the link for the farm questionnaire through the website. Questionnaires may be returned by email at producesafety@cdfa.ca.gov, or mailed to CDFA Produce Safety Program, Inspection Services Division, 1220 N Street, Sacramento, CA 95814.

On-farm readiness reviews (OFRRs) are available, especially for small and very small farms. OFRRs are designed to give farmers a better understanding of what they can expect from a routine Produce Safety Inspection. For more information, visit <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/producesafety/educate.html>. If you would like to schedule an OFRR, please contact our office at producesafety@cdfa.ca.gov.

Thank you for your time in reading this letter and returning your completed questionnaire. It is very important that you complete the questionnaire as completely and accurately as possible. Please note, when our program does not have complete information regarding your farm you may face increased likelihood of a farm inspection.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Geetika Joshi, Ph.D.
Manager, Produce Safety Program
Inspection Services Division
California Department of Food and Agriculture