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DATCP: To start inspecting produce farms this year

Posted on Tuesday, Jan 15, 2019

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MADISON – Through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) will begin inspecting produce farms for compliance with federal food safety regulations this year. The inspections are part of the FDA Food Safety and Modernization Act's Produce Safety Rule to better protect public health by focusing food safety efforts on prevention of foodborne illnesses.

"Implementing the Produce Safety Rule for Wisconsin has required additional resources, training, and education for our staff and the industry," said Shawn Bartholomew, DATCP Produce Safety Supervisor. "Starting these inspections will be a major milestone as Wisconsin's fresh fruit and vegetable industry align with nationwide food safety requirements."

While inspections for large produce farms will begin this year, inspections for smaller produce farms will start in 2020. The FDA defines the size of a produce farm based on the following annual food sales revenue:

- Large produce farm: More than $500,000
- Small produce farm: $250,000-$500,000
- Very small produce farm: $25,000-$250,000

Throughout the implementation, DATCP will continue to provide education and training to help produce growers implement nationally standardized food safety practices.

Education and Training for Produce Growers

In partnership with the University of Wisconsin-Extension, produce growers can prepare their farm for inspections by participating in produce safety training. The training is required for fresh produce growers who must meet the federal produce safety rules. More information about training dates and how to register is available at http://safeproduce.wi.gov.

Another resource produce growers can use to prepare for an inspection is to participate in an on-farm readiness review. A review is done by a team of state food safety officials and cooperative extension staff who provide an assessment of the farm's readiness to meet the new requirements. There is no charge to the grower, no regulatory paperwork, and feedback is provided through observation and discussion. More information about an on-farm readiness review and how to request one is available at http://safeproduce.wi.gov.

More Information

For more information about DATCP's Safe Wisconsin Produce program visithttp://safeproduce.wi.gov, call (608) 224-4511, or email safeproduce@wi.gov.

Wisconsin ranks 11th in the nation in number of produce farms, and second in number of organic produce farms. There are an estimated 1,100 Wisconsin farms that will need to meet the federal produce safety rules.