

Dept. of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection: to Resume modified produce safety inspections

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MADISON—Produce Safety staff at the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) will resume modified operations beginning the week of June 29. Routine compliance inspections were halted in March by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) partial stop work order issued in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The FDA lifted the stop work order on June 5, allowing states to resume inspections following the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and others. DATCP's Produce Safety team has developed a return-to-inspection work plan, based on best practices from the national Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO), with the goal of providing a safe and consistent approach for staff and produce growers.

Inspections will resume in three phases. During phase one, all staff will use appropriate personal protective equipment, including face coverings. Staff will maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet when possible, sanitize all equipment between inspections, and each staff member will only inspect one farm per day. Details of phases two and three will be released at a later date.

In 2019, DATCP began inspecting produce farms for compliance with federal produce safety regulations. The inspections are part of the federal Food Safety and Modernization Act's Produce Safety Rule, which aims to better protect public health by focusing on prevention of foodborne illnesses. In 2019, DATCP inspected large produce farms—those with average annual produce sales exceeding \$500,000. This year, small produce farms (average annual produce sales between \$250,000 and

\$500,000) are also subject to inspection.

DATCP is partnering with the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension to provide produce safety training and on-farm readiness reviews to educate produce growers. Both programs are currently available virtually.

Additional Resources

- FDA fact sheet: [What to expect of a regulatory inspection](#)
- Safe Wisconsin Produce: [Produce safety training/on-farm readiness review information](#)