Free training for Kansas produce growers set for early 2022

Workshops can help growers meet federal requirements

MANHATTAN, Kan. – A series of online and in-person workshops scheduled for early 2022 will help Kansas growers sell safer produce while also opening new opportunities to sell their goods, said a Kansas State University food safety specialist.

Londa Nwadike, who holds a joint extension appointment with K-State and the University of Missouri, said some larger Kansas fruit, vegetable and herb growers have a regulatory requirement to attend training under the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA).

“However, any Kansas grower who is selling produce will benefit from attending these training sessions because they will be able to sell safer produce, which is in the best interest of the produce grower,” Nwadike said. “Growers will also have a chance to meet other growers and learn from each other.”

The workshops, she added, cover practical, risk-based assessments for growing safer produce.

The schedule of FSMA Produce Safety Grower Training sessions in Kansas include:

- Jan. 25 and 27 (1 p.m. to 5 p.m.) – online only. Registration is available online.
- Feb. 9 (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.) – Olathe. More information is available online.
- Feb. 18 (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.) – Wichita. More information is available online.

K-State and the University of Missouri also are offering FSMA Produce Safety annual supervisor training at the following times and locations:

- Jan. 18 (2 p.m. to 4 p.m.) – Olathe. Registration is available online.
- Jan. 21 (2 p.m. to 4 p.m.) – Online only. More information is available online.
- Feb. 17 (2 p.m. to 4 p.m.) – Wichita. More information is available online.
“Some produce buyers – grocery stores, distributors, schools and others – may require that the produce they purchase is certified according to Good Agricultural Practices (known as GAPs),” Nwadike said. “Therefore, if a grower wants to sell to those markets, which are usually more lucrative and stable, they will need to be GAP certified.”

K-State is offering online training to assist growers in getting GAP certified and to develop a food safety plan on Feb 14 from 2-4 p.m. More information and registration is available online. This training costs $5.

All other training sessions are free. More information is available online at https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/foodsafety/produce

K-State Research and Extension has been providing produce safety training in Kansas since 2017. “These trainings,” Nwadike said, “have enabled produce growers to comply with federal produce safety regulations. They have also enabled Kansas growers to sell safer produce, hopefully reducing the number of foodborne illnesses caused by Kansas-grown produce.”

In addition, Nwadike said K-State Research and Extension continues to provide Kansas produce growers free microbial water testing. Visit https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/foodsafety/produce/testing.html for details. This testing is provided by a grant from USDA.

The Kansas Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration are key partners in K-State’s produce safety outreach, according to Nwadike, enabling the state’s extension service to hire a full time produce safety associate who provides technical assistance and on-farm visits.

The Kansas Farmers Union also provides scholarships to cover the remaining costs of training. Those interested in cost-share funding for GAP certification may contact Nwadike at lnwadike@ksu.edu for more information.

FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story
FSMA Produce Safety Grower Training (online), https://www.eventbrite.com/e/fsma-produce-safety-grower-training-remote-delivery-tickets-207991617527

Produce grower workshops (in-person), https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/foodsafety/produce

GAP certification (training), https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/foodsafety/produce/index.html

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