

DoAg Fruit & Vegetable Inspection Program Overview:

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture has begun to register and inspect farms growing, harvesting, packing and holding of fresh fruits and vegetables intended for human consumption. This activity is a direct result of the Food Safety Modernization Act – Produce Safety Rule (PSR). This legislation will significantly affect how fruit and vegetable farms operate in 2019 and beyond.

DoAg recognized the significance of this legislation many years ago and has developed a strategy to ensure the adaptation by the industry in Connecticut and assist in mitigating potential negative effects of these new laws. With a focus on ensuring a knowledgeable and educated industry, DoAg believes this will provide the foundation for long term success. DoAg is in the process of sharing its efforts and vision with farmers, produce buyers, and public health partners. Collaboration among these groups is key to the understanding and integration of these new laws to ensure the viability of fruit and vegetable growers.

DoAg adopted the PSR in 2017 under CGS Sec. 22-39g and has proposed regulations to further specify how the program will operate. With a cooperative agreement in place with the Food and Drug Administration, DoAg has leveraged federal funding to develop its program, expand food safety education opportunities with UConn Extension, and prepare the states industry for a produce safety inspection program. This program will be amended as the federal rule provides clarification and as the states proposed regulations are finalized.

The Produce Safety Rule requires produce farms to be inspected based on average income beginning in 2019:

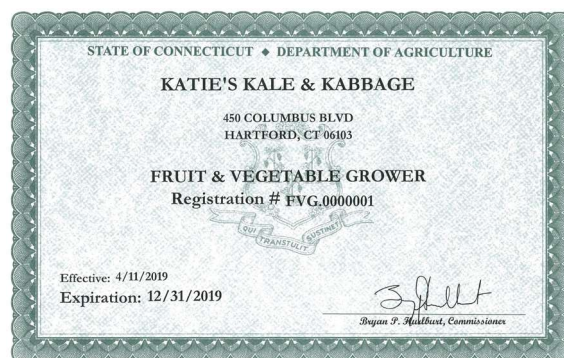
Inspection Schedule:

Farms with over \$500K in Produce Sales: 2019

Farms with between \$250K - \$500K in Produce Sales: 2020

Farms with between \$25K - \$250K in Produce Sales: 2021

All fruit and vegetable growers that sell over \$25,000 in produce sales are covered by the Produce Safety Rule. These farms need to register with the DoAg annually. Registered farms will receive a registration card from DoAg.



Qualified Exemption for Farms Covered by the Produce Safety Rule:

There are modified requirements for growers that claim a qualified exemption from the Produce Safety Rule. This exemption is in place for farms with less than \$500,000 in total food sales that sell the majority of their produce directly to a qualified end user. These farms are required to submit a declaration to the DoAg which will allow them to avoid routine compliance (inspections) activities.

Farms with sales under \$25,000:

Farms with less than \$25,000 in produce sales are not required to register or be inspected. These farms are encouraged to submit a declaration to avoid routine compliance activities. All farms regardless of size are subject to for cause inspections such as outbreak and complaint investigations.

Connecticut Department of Agriculture
Produce Safety Program

Qualified Exemption / Not Covered Farm Declaration

State and federal law contain provisions that allow for some produce growers to not be included in routine produce safety inspection activities. Connecticut Produce Farms that are not covered in the Federal Food Safety Inspection Act Produce Safety Rule (Part 112) or those that meet the Qualified Exemption specified in Part 112 can submit a signed affidavit to the Connecticut Department of Agriculture per Stat. 22-309-2(c) acknowledging this and avoid routine compliance verification activities.

By checking this box and completing the information below:

- I am declaring over a three-year period, the rolling average sales of produce from my farm are less than \$25,000 (adjusted annually for inflation).
- I am declaring the Qualified Exemption. My produce sales exceed \$25,000, my total food sales are less than \$500,000 and over 50% of my sales are to qualified end users that include the consumer of the food, and restaurants or retail food establishments, located in the same state or not more than 25 miles from my farm.
- I am declaring that all produce sold by me receives a commercial processing that adequately reduces the presence of microorganisms of public health significance.

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture encourages all produce farms meeting the above requirements to submit this declaration annually. This does not preclude the possibility of inspection of the farm under Connecticut law.

Farm/Business Name: _____
Farm/Business Address (street, city/town): _____
Printed Name: _____
Signature: _____

By affixing my signature to this document, I certify that the submitted information is true and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that a false statement in the submitted information may be punishable as a criminal offense under Section 54-2a of the Connecticut General Statutes.

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TW@. ProduceSafetyof.org

CGAP / Market Access Program:

A large driver of on-farm food safety programs is the produce buying community. Beginning over a decade ago, produce buyers began asking their farms to participate in Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Audits to verify on-farm food safety activities aimed at reducing the risk of microbial contamination. Over the past decade, the produce growing community has seen an increase in requests from produce buyers for GAP audits to gain market access. Prior to the adoption of the Produce Safety Rule, DoAg offered USDA GAP audits. This service has been discontinued in 2019 and replaced with a state specific GAP program called Connecticut Good Agricultural Practices (CGAP) on-farm food safety program. CGAP is founded on the PSR with common GAP principles incorporated to support the program. This program is very similar to Massachusetts Commonwealth Quality Program that has provided a state specific audit to Massachusetts's growers for many years and has also adopted the Produce Safety Rule provisions. CGAP is open to all CT produce growers regardless of size of sales. It focuses on the documents, records and training each farm provides in an effort to enhance the food safety culture and reduce the risk of microbial contamination on their farm. Work on this program has been done in collaboration with other

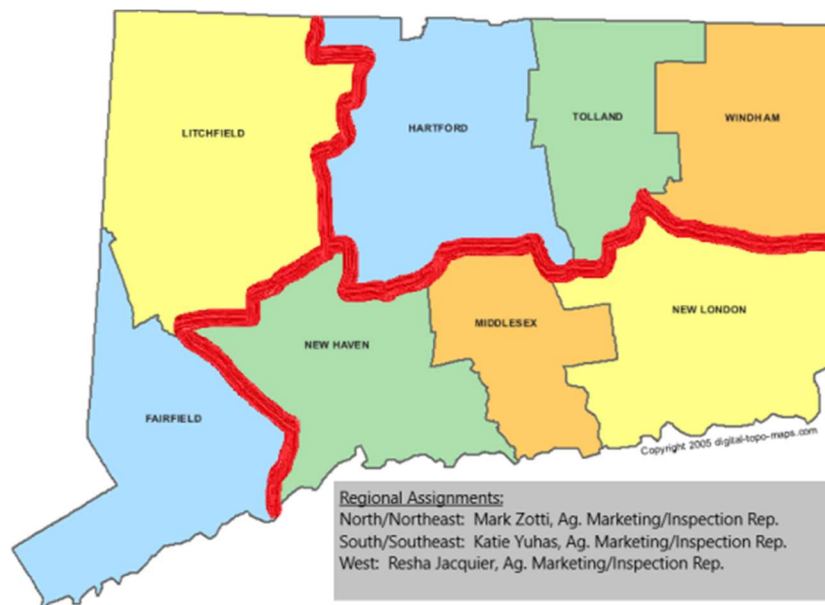
New England states with an overall goal to align each state program. Several produce buyers have expressed interest and support for this initiative. DoAg is encouraged by a shared vision from farmers, buyers, and regulators to enhance on-farm food safety and ensure access to markets for the states industry.

To best serve fruit and vegetable growers throughout the state, Ag. Marketing/Inspection Representatives are assigned to specific regions throughout the state. These representatives are the main points of contact for industry stakeholders and perform a vast array for functions including:

- Perform PSR inspections
- Perform CGAP reviews
- General Produce Safety Related Questions
- Primary points of contact for farmers, produce buyers, and local health officials for produce safety related questions

Some of the most common questions received include:

- Am I covered by the PSR?
- Do I need to register? Do I need to submit a declaration?
- Exemption vs. Not Covered?
- Traceability
- Water Testing
- Address questions related to the laws on growing, harvesting, holding, and packing of fruits and vegetables
- Market Access, GAP, CGAP



All those with questions are encouraged to contact:

ProduceSafety@ct.gov

(860)713-2522

www.ctgrown.gov/producesafety