



North Central Region

Center for FSMA Training, Extension
and Technical Assistance

[April 2026](#)

[NCR FSMA Annual Conference](#)



The NCR FSMA [Annual Conference](#) will be held May 5-6, in Des Moines, Iowa, with a virtual option. The in-person event will be held at the World Food Prize Hall of Laureates (pictured here). Registration for the in-person event costs \$75, which includes several meals. Registration for the virtual option is \$10. Use the same link to register for either option. Registration is open now until April 21.

All produce safety educators, regulators, and non-profit staff are invited to attend! We will be covering produce safety from both the grower and processor perspective. Confirmed speakers include Pratik Banerjee, Byron Chaves, Phil Tocco, Kristin Esch, Manreet Bhullar, Kantha Channah, Arlene Enderton, Nicole Baysal, and John Krzton-Presson. We'll also get presentations from lots of national organizations, like the PSA, FSPCA, IFAI, LSFC, NASDA, NECAFS, WRCEFS, and the Southern Center. Several FDA departments will be sharing about their work. We will be visiting Wilson's Orchard and Farm, to learn about their produce safety practices as they grow and process apples.

[Environmental Monitoring Course](#)

Environmental monitoring is used as a verification process to ensure the effective use of sanitation control measures in a food processing operation, when an environmental hazard, such as Salmonella or Listeria, is reasonably likely to be present. This course will provide tools to comply with regulatory requirements for implementation of effective sanitation practices. Dr. Byron Chaves, from Rutgers University, will lead the course.

[The EMP course](#) will be held at the Embassy Suites hotel (where the room block is for the annual conference). You must be present for the full eight hours to receive the certificate. The course costs \$20, which includes lunch and snacks.

Please register by April 21.

WHO WOULD BENEFIT: This course is designed for food safety and quality professionals working with ready-to-eat foods, including produce, dairy, and meat operations, as well as meat retail and deli environments. QA managers, food safety coordinators, sanitation leaders, plant supervisors, auditors, and technical staff responsible for sampling, verification, and corrective actions as well as consultants and extension professionals advising food businesses will benefit most. Participants will gain practical, decision-focused skills to design and strengthen EMP systems that effectively control environmental pathogen risks.

FSPCA Evaluation Tool

A group of FSPCA trainers are updating an evaluation tool, with the intent that it would be used across the country. Would you be interested in working on the tool? What metrics are your supervisors/funders asking for? Please let Ellen know if you are interested. Thanks.

FDA Updates

The FDA recently updated its [platform for analyzing adverse event reports](#). The new system is in place for reporting adverse effects of drugs, biologics, cosmetic products, color additives, vaccines, and animal food/drugs. In May, you will be able to report adverse effects for human food, dietary supplements, medical devices, and tobacco products.

FDA Commissioner Marty Makary, explained, "Starting today, the FDA will have a single, intuitive adverse event platform that will better serve agency scientists, researchers, and the public."

Versar Global Solutions (Versar), an independent FDA contractor, coordinated an [external, peer review](#) of the Risk Assessment of Foodborne Illness Associated with Pathogens from Produce Grown in Fields Amended with Untreated Biological Soil Amendments of Animal Origin (BSAAO). The peer review was conducted for FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN). An interactive version of the [FDA report](#) is available now, so you can compare several crops and risks.

The FDA recently released the annual report summarizing the [investigations of foodborne illness outbreaks](#) and adverse events from 2024. During the calendar year, vegetables were linked to illnesses most frequently. The FDA report covers roughly 80% of the American food supply that the agency oversees.

The FDA recently released the results of their [California Longitudinal Study](#). This study began in 2020 and is focused on the Central Coast of California, also known as the salad bowl of the world. More details will be shared at the International Association for Food Protection annual meeting in New Orleans, LA, in July 2026.

Grower Webinar



Educators from the University of Minnesota, Michigan State University, Iowa State University, and the University of Wisconsin will be leading a free webinar for growers. "[Updates to the FSMA Produce Safety Rule and Agricultural Water](#): what you need to know as a fruit or vegetable farmer" will be held April 15, 1:30 - 3:00 CST. *(This is the correct day. Unfortunately, I sent the wrong day in a previous email. Sorry! -Ellen)*

The FSMA Produce Safety Rule has new requirements related to the use of agricultural water when growing and handling fresh produce. Attend this webinar to refresh your knowledge about the FSMA Produce Safety Rule and hear important updates related to agricultural water. All are welcome, even if you have not attended a Produce Safety Rule training previously.

Please share the information with growers in your state.

PSA Train-the-Trainer Course

The Produce Safety Alliance is offering a [remote delivery Train-the-Trainer course](#) on April 13-16. Registration for the course closes April 5, or when course capacity is reached.

FSOP Webinar

Recipients of the USDA NIFA Food Safety Outreach Project grants will be presenting at a national webinar on June 10, from 1:00-2:30pm, Central time. Please save the date! Registration information will be shared soon for this free event. Everyone is invited to learn what is happening around the country and potentially connect with educators working on similar projects to yours.

Risk Assessment Article



A new article in Frontiers of Science, “[Balancing food safety and sustainability: trade-off risk assessments and predictive modeling](#)” posits that eliminating all risk from food is neither practical nor desirable. The authors advocate for better risk assessment tools.

You are invited to join the authors for a webinar on balancing food safety and sustainability on April 30.

Food Safety Summit

The [Food Safety Summit](#) will be held May 11-14, in Rosemont, IL. The agenda includes Certificate Courses, Workshops, Education Sessions, Exhibit Hall Education Presentations, including a podcast theater and a town hall panel.

IFSH Events

The Institute for Food Safety and Health is hosting a Whole Genome Sequence Analysis Workshop, on Monday, May 18. Join them for “Unlocking the Secrets of Bacterial Genomics,” an informative workshop that will equip you with the knowledge and practical skills to leverage the power of whole genome sequencing for enhanced understanding and decision-making in the field of food safety and bacterial research.

The following two days, you are invited to IFSH’s [High-Throughput Sequencing \(HTS\) Symposium](#). New Developments and Technology in Its Use in Food Safety Systems will be held May 19-20.

Juice HACCP Course Cancelled

Unfortunately, we did not have enough people register for the Juice HACCP course this spring. We hope to reschedule for the fall, so please let us know if you are interested.

[Produce Safety Training for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Growers](#)

Dojin Ryu's FSOP project, "Collaborative Food Safety Education and Training for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Farmers in the Pacific Northwest," is offering [free produce safety training](#) for Deaf and hard of hearing produce growers. The course will be taught in American Sign Language (ASL). Sign up to receive more information and to indicate where and when you'd prefer to attend the training.

[Additional NCR FSMA Funding Is Available](#)

Please apply for an NCR FSMA stipend if you need to fund travel; professional development expenses; or trainings for local growers/processors. You can use these funds to attend NCR FSMA events and other events.

There are a small number of stipends available for creating new resources and reviewing resources through the Clearinghouse. Please contact Ellen with questions about the stipends and [apply online](#).

[Toll-Free Hotline for the Ag Water Rules](#)

The NCR FSMA is starting a [toll-free hotline to answer people's questions about the agricultural water rules](#). Growers can call on Tuesdays and Thursdays, between the hours of 9 and 4pm, Eastern time. Someone will collect information and pass it along to an expert. The expert will return the caller's call within 48 hours. The service will open on April 15.

Is there a conference happening near you where we should promote this project (especially one that might include members of the Plain Community)? Please let Ellen know. We can also send you business cards to distribute.

[Highlighted FSOP Award](#)

The "Food Safety by Design" is a food safety education and outreach program with the objective to develop a comprehensive FSMA based education and training program designed for small and medium scale value added food processors selling primarily direct to consumers; develop an outreach program to support small and medium scale food processors food safety requirements such as process authority review; and communicate the project results to stakeholders across the North Central region, USDA and national partner networks.

This project is organized by Kantha Channaiah, Kelly Getty, and Karen Blakeslee. Kantha will be sharing more about this project at the NCR FSMA annual conference.

[New Resources on the Clearinghouse](#)

[CiderSure UV Validation Explained](#): What every Cider Producer Should know- Learn more about this device and how it must be regularly validated to ensure it effectively reduces harmful microorganisms.



[Produce Safety Alphabet Soup](#)- What Do All Those Acronyms Mean? This factsheet can help those new to the produce safety world define all the new acronyms, as well as determine which ones apply to them.

NCR FSMA Meetings

The next NCR FSMA webinar will meet April 16, at 2:00pm, Central time. Daniel Lee from Numanac will be speaking about AI assistance for record keeping. Come learn how growers could utilize a new technology.

Past Webinars- The webinar was on spring break in March, so there's no new recording, but you can find the recording of older meetings in the [NCR FSMA Box](#). Please let us know if you need access to the Box.

The state inspectors/regulators will meet next on Friday, May 1, at 9am, Central time.

The meeting for data/inventory/outreach staff will be Friday, May 15, at 9am, Central time.

The meeting for program managers will be Tuesday, April 14, at 10am, Central time.

Please let us know if you need the call information/link for any of these meetings.

Upcoming Trainings for Growers and Processors

Looking for a training for growers or processors? You can find the upcoming trainings on the [Produce Safety Alliance](#) or [Food Safety Preventive Controls Alliance](#) websites.

Follow us on [Facebook](#)

Visit our [website](#)

Thank you for your continued involvement with the NCR FSMA!

Sincerely,

NCR FSMA Project Team

Byron Chaves, Arlene Enderton, Phil Tocco, Ellen Johnsen, and Dan Fillius

This work is supported by the Food Safety Outreach Program [grant no. 2024-70020-42954] from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.



Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and should not be construed to represent any official USDA or U.S. Government determination or policy.

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach is an equal opportunity provider.

For the full non-discrimination statement or accommodation inquiries,

go to www.extension.iastate.edu/legal

If you'd like to be [removed from the NCR FSMA mailing list](#), please let us know.