

# 2022 NCR FSMA Annual Impact Report

The North Central Region Center for FSMA Training, Extension, and Technical Assistance (NCR FSMA) formed in 2016. The purpose of the center is to equip produce safety educators, professionals, and regulators from 12 midwestern states to help small-scale farmers and food processors understand and comply with the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA).

In 2022, the NCR FSMA used 11 evaluation methods to measure its impacts. This report shares highlights of evaluation results of the NCR FSMA in 2022.

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**North Central Region**  
Center for FSMA Training, Extension  
and Technical Assistance

## NCR FSMA by the numbers:

**29** people on average attended monthly listening sessions

**22** NCR FSMA partners participated in an online Environmental Monitoring Program course sponsored by the NCR FSMA and taught by Dr. Byron Chaves

**94** people virtually attended the 2022 NCR FSMA Annual Conference

**76%** of growers who responded to the follow-up survey in the last five years made a change to food safety practice, infrastructure, or equipment since the training.

**64%** of growers who participated in an On-Farm Readiness Review improved food safety practices as a result.

*"Thank you again for teaching this course. I found it very intriguing, and I gained so much from it. I can't wait to recommend it to my colleagues."*

*~ Participant in the June EMP workshop*

## New Indiana Produce Growers Invite Educators and Regulators to Their Farm

Drew McCulley and his wife Stephanie had both worked in agriculture in their hometown in Indiana. He worked for an agricultural retailer, mostly selling seed and fertilizer. Stephanie had also worked for an agricultural retailer and as an Extension agent for Purdue University. The two of them had an opportunity to buy an existing farm, with all the ground, equipment, and even a home. Along with Stephanie's mother, Janie Shriver, they bought the whole operation and renamed it Valhalla Farms.

The original blueberry patch was planted in the 1950s and when the former owners retired, the community was worried what would happen to the farm. There was lots of community support when the three of them bought the farm and maintained the U-pick blueberry business.

Sixteen acres are in blueberry production, but they also grow strawberries, sweet corn, and assorted vegetables. The majority of their income results from the U-pick business. They have a small freezer beef business as well.

The previous owners helped them sign up for email newsletters from various groups that they had found helpful. With Stephanie's previous job with Purdue Extension, she connected with produce experts there. "We wanted to get people on our farm early on," Drew explained. They invited staff from Indiana Department of Health, Indiana State Department of Agriculture, and Purdue Extension onto their farm for an On-Farm Readiness Review. "Tari Gary was one of the people who visited the farm, and she was nice to work

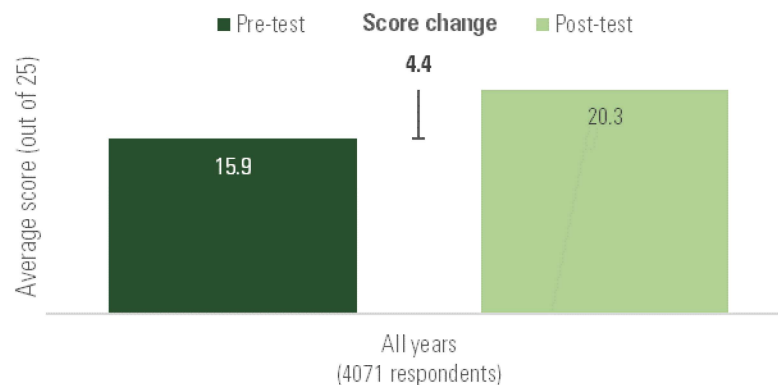
with.” It was a good opportunity for the new owners to learn.

While on their farm, the state employees found cleaning products that were previously approved but had been taken off the approved list just recently. The previous owners had left the extra supplies. For Drew and Stephanie, it was valuable to have outside experts who know the most recent regulations visit. “We wouldn’t have known that those regulations had changed.” They also learned more about record keeping and best practices for cleaning and sanitizing buckets for their U-pick operation. The McCulleys learned more about water testing and general care of the irrigation well, too.

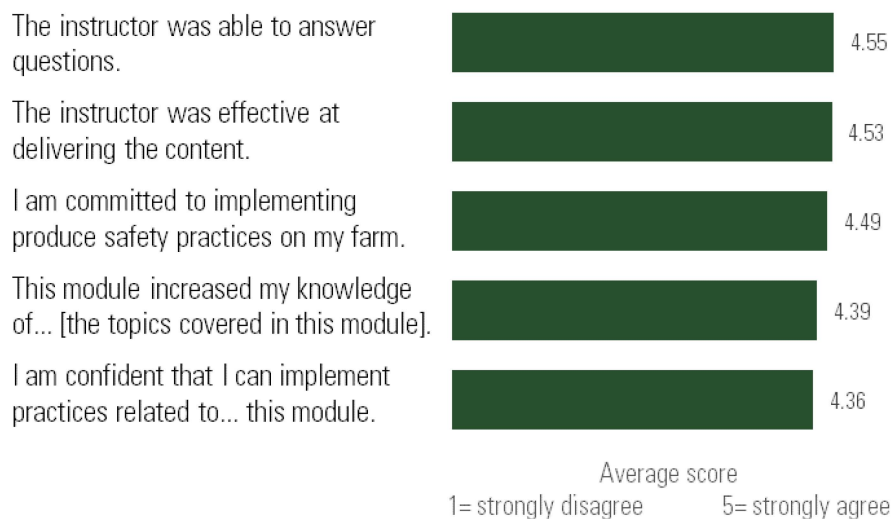
Drew and Stephanie hope to expand Valhalla Farms in the future and expand their season to longer than just blueberry season. They’d like to increase their sales of other produce and freezer beef. They are considering added fresh baked goods and know they’ll need to take additional courses, like ServeSafe, when they are ready for that.

Drew has found the OFRR and his relationships with educators and regulators quite valuable. He encourages all growers to request an OFRR before an inspection. He found the inspectors, “are looking out for my interests and every body’s else’s interests.”

For the final time in 2022, the NCR FSMA organized the knowledge change assessment that showed growers consistently increase knowledge about food safety and FSMA from Produce Safety Alliance Grower Trainings taught by NCR FSMA partners. On average, growers from all five years increased their knowledge assessment scores by 4.4 points from 15.9 on the pre-test to 20.3 on the post-test.



### Participants in the PSA training rated their instructors highly and agreed their knowledge increased.



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### Recommendations for 2023:

Facilitate discussion of how to serve those who do not fall under the FSMA Produce Safety Rule.

Continue discussions of what is needed to prepare growers for the new water rule.

Provide opportunities for partners to learn more about the FDA on-farm inspection data.

Share about financial or other supports available to help growers implement food safety plans.

Explore further the interplay between FSMA compliance and GAP certification and the need for FSMA versus GAP education.

Agree on a message for growers related to the implications of noncompliance and why they should care about FSMA.

Advise presenters at future listening sessions to include interactive components in their presentations.

Facilitate discussion on novel ways to help growers overcome the most common barriers to making food safety improvements: lack of time, lack of money, and difficulty accessing skilled labor.