



California and Arizona Leafy Greens Marketing Agreements Update Metrics to Align with Produce Safety Rule

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Sacramento, CA -- Some six months before compliance with the new Food Safety Modernization Act's Produce Safety Rule is required on all U.S. produce farms, the California and Arizona Leafy Greens Marketing Agreements have updated their required food safety practices to align with the new law.

"With this action by both the California and Arizona LGMA Boards to adopt updated food safety metrics, 90 percent of the leafy greens produced in the U.S. and certified through the LGMA's system of mandatory government audits will be in full compliance with new laws under FSMA," said Scott Horsfall, CEO of the California Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement.

Teresa Lopez, Program Administrator for the Arizona LGMA, explained that updates to the existing LGMA food safety metrics are the result of a thorough review of the food safety practices required of produce farms under FSMA's Produce Safety Rule. Where necessary, LGMA's required practices were changed to make sure they comply with FSMA laws.

"The review was facilitated by Western Growers and vetted through an open and transparent process before being presented to the LGMA's Technical Committees in Arizona and California and ultimately to the full LGMA Board in both states," said Lopez. "The process took several months to complete."

"We can now say with confidence that LGMA certification is equal to FSMA compliance," emphasized Horsfall. "This is an important distinction LGMA members can make – not just because it will soon be the law of the land, but also because retail and foodservice buyers have made it clear they will be asking their suppliers to verify compliance with new food safety laws under FSMA."

"When the LGMA was launched in 2007, we were vocal and early supporters of the program because the LGMA metrics had the specificity and accountability needed for a robust food safety program," said Tim York, President of Markon, which purchases produce on behalf of foodservice distributors throughout the US and Canada. "Knowing that LGMA certification also means our leafy green suppliers are in full compliance with FSMA makes the LGMA certification status even more valuable. We applaud the LGMA for taking this action."

The LGMA programs will now work with the USDA and the Departments of Agriculture in both California and Arizona so the changes can be incorporated into audit checklists. It is expected that LGMA members will begin being inspected to these new standards in early 2018 when compliance with new laws under FSMA becomes mandatory.

What the Specific Changes Entail

“The LGMA metrics were already closely aligned with the Produce Safety Rule and, in many cases, exceeded requirements that are now part of FSMA,” said Hank Giclas, Vice Present of Western Growers, whose organization facilitated the process to update the LGMA metrics.

According to Giclas, no changes were needed in many sections of the LGMAs’ existing required food safety practices. LGMA metrics already meet or exceed the new federal laws with respect to requirements concerning: environmental assessments; climatic conditions; animal encroachment and soil fertility. In addition, no changes were made to practices concerning water use since the FDA is still considering what will be required under FSMA in this area. Giclas emphasized the LGMA metrics have always included science-based practices to ensure water used in the farming of leafy greens is safe and adequately tested.

Some of the key changes to the LGMA metrics include:

- New sections were added to cover additional training and documentation requirements. The updates are more prescriptive than what was previously required by the LGMA programs. In each case, the LGMAs have adopted language that closely mirrors what is in the Produce Safety Rule.
- New requirements were added to the section on soil amendments to make sure that certain products are shown to be treated in a way that kills listeria monocytogenes.
- Requirements were added for on-farm storage buildings and transporting leafy greens from the field to coolers.

According to the LGMA, organizations in both states will immediately begin an effort to educate the leafy greens community about the changes. Updated metrics will be posted on the LGMA websites as soon as possible.

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