



April 10, 2013

Dear Growers,

In January 2011, Congress passed the **Food Safety Modernization Act** (FSMA) to reform the nation's food safety regulations. It will be implemented when the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Department of Agriculture (USDA) complete a review and develop specific regulations.

One provision is that all produce sold to the public must be traceable back through distributors and packers to the originating farm so that the origin of any contamination can be quickly found and neutralized. Another requirement is that each entity that handles the produce on its path to market (e.g., from those that grow it to those who pack the product) must adopt and follow a written Food Safety Plan (FSP) to ensure that the risks of produce contamination are minimized. ***This requirement is critical to you because in the relatively near future you'll not be able to sell your produce to a packing house unless you are in compliance with the regulations.***

The Tropical Fruit Growers of South Florida (TFGSF) along with Miami-Dade County Agricultural Manager's Office, and UF/IFAS Extension and TREC received a grant to assist local growers of both fruit and vegetables in understanding and complying with the Act's regulations. We will do so in two primary phases. First we will develop specific Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) and Good Handling Practices (GHPs) manuals for our tropical fruits and vegetables by modifying GAPs that have already been developed for other fruit and vegetable commodities across the nation with expert input from growers in our area. GAPs and GHPs are simply common sense procedures that reduce the likelihood that our crops will be contaminated, many of which we already practice as part of our routines.

In the second phase we will present public workshops to help you develop your own Food Safety Plans based on the GAPs and GHPs that are applicable to your individual operations. The example plans will be structured to be both compliant with the regulations and easy to for you to use. As part of this educational phase, we will also be explaining the records you will need to keep and help you set up a system that simplifies this documentation.

We will establish a website specific to this project that will keep you updated on developments. The new website will be available from links on TFGSF, TREC, and Extension sites. As we move forward, we welcome any input for modifications, improvements, or additions that you may offer.

Four, no cost informational meetings will be held at the UF/IFAS Miami-Dade County Extension for you to learn more about this new Food Safety law. There will be separate meetings for Tropical Fruits and for Vegetables, and there will be a separate meeting for each crop group presented in English and in Spanish.

The New Food Safety Law Will Affect Your Farm Business – An Overview

Tropical Fruits, in English	April 29, 2013, 9:00 am
Vegetables, in English	April 29, 2013, 11:00 am
Tropical Fruits, in Spanish	April 29, 2013, 1:00 pm
Vegetables, in Spanish	April 29, 2013, 3:00 pm

Location: Miami-Dade Cooperate Extension, 18710 SW 288 St., Homestead, FL

Sincerely,

Steven Green, Ph.D.
President, TFGSF