

ON-FARM READINESS REVIEWS



What is an On-Farm Readiness Review?

An On-Farm Readiness Review (OFRR) is a free, voluntary, in-person assessment of a farm personnel's understanding of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule. This is a chance for you to have a one-on-one conversation and farm walk-around with staff from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) Produce Safety Program and educators from the University of Minnesota (UMN) Extension to discuss how the Rule applies to your operation. Together, we'll evaluate pre-harvest, harvest, and post-harvest conditions and practices, assess what you are doing well, and identify areas for improvement in food safety practices on your farm.

How is an On-Farm Readiness Review different from an audit or regulatory inspection?

An On-Farm Readiness Review is not a regulatory visit. The OFRR is for your benefit and will consist of on-farm observation to identify areas for produce safety improvements, to help you prepare for a FSMA Produce Safety Rule inspection (if applicable), and to help you enhance produce safety practices on your farm. Reviewers are not there to conduct an audit, inspection, or any type of regulatory evaluation. All notes taken by the reviewers will be left with the farm at the end of the visit.

What should I do to prepare for an On-Farm Readiness Review?

At least one person from your farm needs to have attended a Produce Safety Rule Grower Training course before scheduling an OFRR. The Grower Training will provide you with essential background knowledge about the FSMA Produce Safety Rule and recommended produce safety practices that will help you to get the most

out of the OFRR. In addition, for farms that are covered by the Rule, this training satisfies the FSMA Produce Safety Rule requirement that “at least one supervisor or responsible party” completes “food safety training ... recognized as adequate” by FDA (21 C.F.R. §112.22(c)).

Before the OFRR, review the Grower Training Manual from the Grower Training course and your farm's food safety plan, if you have one. Write down any questions you have ahead of time.



What happens during an On-Farm Readiness Review?

It is important to schedule the OFRR during a time that routine farm processes and operations (such as washing, packing, and harvesting activities) are happening so reviewers can make accurate recommendations for produce safety improvements specific to your farm.

1. Reviewers will begin by asking a series of questions to better understand your farm's produce safety practices and farm procedures.
2. Reviewers will ask to view different areas of the farm to view harvesting, washing, and packing processes as well as storage or holding areas.
3. At the end of the visit, reviewers will provide feedback on observations and identify priority areas for improvement in produce safety practices on your farm.
4. UMN Extension staff can provide additional technical assistance based on the feedback from your On-Farm Readiness Review, which may involve follow up information sharing or additional farm visits.

What if a public health hazard is found during my On-Farm Readiness Review?

In the rare instance that we observe a serious condition that could be considered “egregious” (an imminent public health hazard is posed if a corrective action is not taken immediately), the condition will be immediately addressed on-site. If the product has not entered commerce and the issue can be immediately corrected, reviewers will not notify state or federal agencies, nor will a written record be made.

If my farm is not covered under the FSMA Produce Safety Rule can I still request an On-Farm Readiness Review?

Farms may request an On-Farm Readiness Review regardless of whether they are covered, qualified exempt, or excluded under the Rule, however, priority will be given

to those farms covered under the Rule since they are subject to inspection. Farms that are excluded or qualified exempt from the Rule are welcome to request an OFRR and we will fill these requests as scheduling permits.

How do I sign-up for an On-Farm Readiness Review?

If you've completed a Produce Safety Rule Grower Training course and are interested in an OFRR, contact the Produce Safety Program at (651) 539-3648 or email producesafety.mda@state.mn.us to sign-up. Staff will follow up with you to schedule your OFRR.

Where should I go for more information?

The resources listed below are great starting points for learning more about produce safety as well as what the Produce Safety Rule means for your operation. Feel free also to get in touch directly with the MDA Produce Safety Program with any questions you might have.

Minnesota Department of Agriculture – Produce Safety Program

www.mda.state.mn.us/food-feed/produce-safety-program

UMN Extension GAPs Education Program

extension.umn.edu/safety/growing-safe-food

Produce Safety Alliance

producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu/

FSMA Produce Safety Rule

www.fda.gov/food/guidanceregulation/fsma/ucm334114

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