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# California

## Expert: Cleanliness, good hygiene key to food safety

By **TIM HEARDEN**  
Capital Press

REDDING, Calif. — Some 30 growers sat at tables as food safety expert Jennifer Sowerwine led them through a mock hand-washing exercise just before lunch.

At her urging, they sang their “ABCs” or “Happy Birthday” to themselves to time how long they should wash. Then she sent everyone to a sink to wash their hands for real.

“I’ve always washed my hands,” said Johanna Trenerry, who grows artichokes, berries and other produce in Happy Valley, Calif. “They say if you do your ABCs you can get your

hands clean. Now I just say a prayer.”

Thorough hand-washing and other basic hygiene and cleanliness are key to growers as food-safety regulations loom, Sowerwine stressed to growers during a March 5 workshop sponsored by the University of California Cooperative Extension.

Sowerwine, a specialist in metropolitan agriculture and food systems at UC-Berkeley, told growers that keeping hoses, bins and other equipment clean and keeping animals away from the crop are important to any farm’s food safety plan.

Food safety plans should address measures the farm takes

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with regard to water, animals, soil, surfaces and hygiene, she said, adding that growers should keep good records of their efforts.

Frequent hand washing is crucial, and growers with U-pick operations should require that visitors wash their hands, she said. Using soap and water is best, as hand sanitizers don’t kill viruses that can get into food, she said.

“You don’t want to handle



Tim Hearden/Capital Press  
Jennifer Sowerwine, a Cooperative Extension specialist in metropolitan agriculture and food systems, speaks March 5 on food safety.

produce with dirty hands,” she said.

Sowerwine’s advice came in an all-day event geared to small growers in which she showed them how to fill out forms and create their own plans to meet requirements under the Food Safety Modernization Act.

The meeting in Redding was one of several that Sowerwine has held for growers around the state. She said coaching small farms on compliance is important because many large operations can afford to hire someone to develop a food safety plan, yet small farms must do it themselves.

“I think there’s big concern about what the implications are for their own farm,” Sow-

erwine said in an interview. “People are concerned about potentially losing access to markets if they’re not able to comply with some of the rules. They’re concerned about having to add extra work.”

Growers were grateful to have the expert advice.

“I’m definitely interested in learning and doing everything that’s required,” said Mary Ocasion, who grows artichokes just south of Redding.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is set to finalize rules for food manufacturing and produce safety this year, marking the second phase of its implementation of the 2011 food safety law.

## Advisers honored as pioneers of rangeland water quality

By **TIM HEARDEN**  
Capital Press

SANTA ROSA, Calif. — Some 20 years ago, Step-

hanie Larson-Praplan and John Harper were pioneers in rangeland water quality management.

The two University of Cal-

ifornia Cooperative Extension farm advisers helped ranchers along the state’s northern coast keep track of measures to protect water quality, such as having cattle drink from a trough rather than from creeks.

Now they hope ranchers’ voluntary efforts can serve as an example as the state considers adopting regulations to manage water quality near where livestock graze and roam.

Protecting water quality “is one of those things that ranchers do in general for the benefit of their animals,” Larson-Praplan said. “What we did was help them document those efforts ... to show the regulators that these guys can, on their own, take voluntary compliance (measures).”

For their efforts, Sonoma County’s Larson-Praplan and Mendocino County’s Harper were recently given lifetime achievement awards from the Society for Range Management, which promotes the sustainable use of rangelands.

“John and Stephanie have been valued colleagues and friends for more than 20 years,” Melvin George, a re-

tired UCCE specialist who nominated Larson-Praplan, said in an email. “Both were instrumental, beginning in the early ’90s, in helping to start the rangeland water quality program that conducted education programs for ranchers so that they could address water quality issues related to grazing and ranching.”

A livestock, range and natural resources adviser in Sonoma and Marin counties since the early 1980s, Larson-Praplan developed a water quality education program to help rangeland owners comply with total maximum daily load (TMDL) regulations and initiated a system that documents water quality and best management practices, according to an award nomination document.

Her “Notice of Intent” system has been adopted by the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board and lat-

er extended to the Napa and Sonoma Creek watersheds, enabling landowners in those areas comply with clean water regulations.

Harper, a livestock and natural resources adviser, helped more than 150 landowners representing over 100,000 acres in Lake and Mendocino counties prepare water quality plans, inventory sediment sources and implement practices to maintain clean water, according to his nomination papers.

As a result of his efforts, more than 1,000 ranches statewide have developed water quality plans and seven watershed groups were formed in Lake and Mendocino counties.

Their efforts come as the State Water Resources Control Board is set to propose rules later this year under its Grazing Regulatory Action Project, which it asserts would enhance the environ-

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mental benefits from grazing while addressing its impacts on water quality.

The north coast regional board — which has heavily scrutinized rangeland practices since the late 1990s to protect various endangered species — has touted the ranchers’ voluntary efforts as an example, Larson-Praplan said.

“My regional board has reached out to me in recognition of all the work that’s been done with voluntary compliance, ranch planning and all the steps we’ve taken with the ranchers,” she said. “They recognize this is the best way to achieve success.”

Larson-Praplan said she was honored to receive the rangeland group’s award.

“This is a job I do out of love, and I was quite proud that the people who nominated me have not only been collaborators but mentors, supporters and friends,” she said.

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	3 Air Induction Extended Range (AIXR)	Single	Coarse <b>C</b> to Very Coarse <b>VC</b>	2,4-D/Roundup®/Dicamba
	4 Air Induction (AI/AIC)	Single	Very Coarse <b>VC</b> to Extremely Coarse <b>XC</b>	2,4-D/Roundup®/Dicamba
	5 Air Induction Turbo TwinJet (AITTJ60)	Twin	Very Coarse <b>VC</b> to Extremely Coarse <b>XC</b>	Roundup®/Dicamba
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