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California

Don't wait to comply with FSMA requirements, expert warns

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

ORLAND, Calif. — Growers and other agricultural businesses shouldn't wait until next year's deadlines to begin complying with the Food Safety Modernization Act's requirements, an industry expert advises.

Federal officials are already inspecting large processing facilities for preventive controls for human food and animal feed, whose deadlines were in September, warned Roger Isom, president and chief executive officer of the Western Agricultural Processors Association.

Under those requirements, facilities must implement a written food safety plan that includes an analysis of hazards and risk-based preventive controls, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

The next compliance dates are March 31 for sanitary transportation measures and April 31 for a foreign supplier verification program. The big one for most conventional farmers — the produce safety rule — must be implemented by Dec. 31, 2017.

"FSMA is here," Isom told growers, processors and educators Nov. 16 at the North State Precision Ag Expo and Farm Business Forum in Orland. "If you thought this was something you could plan for next year ... no. You need to be doing it now."

Isom said he knows of nine facilities in California that have been visited by FDA officials since the human and animal food regulations took effect, signaling there will likely be little wiggle room for compliance once the other deadlines pass.

"Do not wait," Isom said. "You need to be doing this stuff now."

FDA spokeswoman Jennifer Dooren said she isn't aware of any FSMA-related inspections, although she cautioned that doesn't mean they didn't happen. She said FSMA compliance may have been in-



Tim Hearden/Capital Press

William Ludwig, left, of The Zenith Agribusiness Solutions talks with Roger Isom of the Western Agricultural Processors Association at a conference Nov. 16 in Orland, Calif. They warn that Food Safety Modernization Act inspections are already underway and growers should be following the rules.

cluded in previously planned inspections of large mixed-use facilities that were already subject to FDA regulation.

She said the preventive controls rules merely codify "what a lot of them have already been doing," such as hazard analyses.

"Our main goal is to really work with the industries and help them understand the rules," Dooren said, "and to work with them to beef up their food safety plans as needed."

The push comes as the largest farms and businesses are ramping up their food-safety measures in preparation for FSMA, which the FDA calls the most sweeping reform of food safety laws in more than 70 years. Isom told producers and processors the law "is going to change every aspect of what you do," from how bathroom breaks are handled to voluminous record-keeping and analyzing supplied materials such as boxes.

Employers will have to show they're verifying that employees are following requirements, such as keeping equipment clean, he said.

The biggest impact on farms will be from the wide-ranging produce safety rule, which was finalized in 2015. It establishes minimum standards for safety in growing, harvesting, packing and holding fruits and vegetables for human consumption.

State agriculture departments will receive millions of dollars in grants from FDA to educate farmers about the rule. The California Department of Food and Agriculture, which is receiving \$11.7 million over five years, will contract with outside organizations to provide training next year, spokesman Steve Lyle said.

"The plan is to provide growers the necessary tools to comply with the rule prior to beginning inspections," Lyle said in an email.

While the deadline for most farms to comply is the end of next year, businesses that sell less than \$500,000 in produce annually will have until the end of 2018 to follow the produce rule, while the smallest businesses — those with annual produce sales between \$25,000 and \$250,000 — will have until the end of 2019.



Tim Hearden/Capital Press

State Sen. Jim Nielsen, left, discusses the Sites Reservoir proposal during a meeting in Maxwell, Calif., in October as Colusa County Supervisor Kim Vann listens. Sites proponents will be applying for Proposition 1 bond funds next year.

Panel taking comments on how it will judge Prop 1 projects

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

SACRAMENTO — A state commission is taking another round of comments on its plans for judging large water storage projects that will apply next year for Proposition 1 bond funds.

The California Water Commission has issued a third draft of its regulations related to the \$2.7 billion for reservoirs and other storage projects set aside in the \$7.5 billion ballot measure voters passed in 2014.

People will have until Dec. 7 to comment on the latest documents, which describe what is required of project applicants and how the commission will compare the public benefits of proposed projects.

A final draft will be presented to the commission at its Dec. 14 meeting, spokesman Chris Orrock said.

"We're looking mainly at

Online

To read and comment on the draft regulation, visit <http://bit.ly/2fSpQFB>.

what the public benefit ratio is of the project," Orrock said. "Speaking in general terms, if a project cost \$100 and \$50 of that were to create new public benefits ... that would be a great public benefit ratio."

Proposition 1 defines public benefits as ecosystem improvements, water quality improvements, flood control benefits, emergency response and recreational purposes.

"This program is very specific," Orrock said. "Each of the projects that are applying will have to show a measurable improvement to the (Sacramento-San Joaquin River) Delta. You don't see that a lot out there."

Projects can benefit the Delta by providing more cold water that would aid the salm-

on run while flushing out pollutants and intruding saltwater, he said.

Proposition 1 would fund no more than half the cost of a project, and at least half of that funding would need to go toward ecosystem improvements directly related to the Delta, he said.

The comment period comes as project proponents are gearing up for their applications. Backers of the proposed \$3.6 billion Sites Reservoir near Maxwell have lined up 34 agency participants, and supporters of the proposed \$2.5 billion Temperance Flat Reservoir near Fresno have formed the San Joaquin Valley Water Infrastructure Authority to plan its application.

Other suitors could include sponsors of the planned expansion of the Los Vaqueros Reservoir in Contra Costa County as well as groundwater improvement projects near Delta tributaries.

Columbia-Snake River Irrigators Association Policy Memorandum

November 21, 2016

TO: Transition Team Leadership, President-Elect Donald J. Trump

FROM: Ron Reimann, President, CSRIA
Darryll Olsen, Ph.D., Board Representative, CSRIA

CC: Mr. David Ponganis, SES, Director Programs,
Federal Columbia River Operations EIS (info@crso.info)
Br. Gen. Scott Spellmon, Division Commander, USACE
Mr. Elliot Mainzer, BPA Administrator
Ms. Lorri Lee, Regional Director, USBR
U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell, WA
U.S. Rep. Dan Newhouse

SUBJECT: CSRIA Response to the Federal Agencies' Columbia River System Operations (CRSO), Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

The very justification for the current Federal Agencies' Columbia River Operations EIS is flawed natural resources policy, and it should be corrected by invoking an Action Agencies' (Biological Opinion) "re-consultation," with the new Administration's Secretary of Interior convening the Endangered Species Act Committee ("God Squad" Committee).

This renewed EIS process emanates from Oregon Federal Judge Michael Simon's incomprehensible decision ignoring two decades of federal agency work to improve Columbia-Snake River fish runs, about \$15 billion of rate payer funding, actual fish run survival through the hydro system, and factors outside the Columbia-Snake River System that overshadow fish production. Further disregarded are extensive technical analyses, and the tens-of-millions of dollars rate payers' spent on them, that have already evaluated the destructive measures outlined in Judge Simon's BiOp Remand Order.

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) was not framed as an instrument for endless public funding for a self-serving "salmon recovery industry" nor as a platform for brandishing judicial bias. Actions under the ESA have limits—the ESA Committee can and should set the responsible boundaries for hydro system operations. Those boundaries should reflect competent resources management, not empty gesture environmentalism.

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Farm Bureaus recognized nationally for promoting unity in ag

SACRAMENTO — Farm Bureau offices in three California counties are being recognized nationally for teaming to host an event to foster unity in the agriculture community.

The Stanislaus, Tuolumne and Butte County Farm Bureaus were among 34 local offices nationwide to win the American Farm Bureau Federation's County Activities of Excellence Award.

They will display their ideas at the AFBF Annual Convention and IDEAg Trade Show on Jan. 6-11 in Phoenix.

The three offices won recognition for an Ag Unite event held in Modesto in May, which drew more than 800 people and stressed the need for unity among farmers, ranchers and agricultural organizations in responding to challenges they face.

The rally generated new Farm Bureau memberships and donations to the FARM PAC political action committee and to the Ag Unite Legal Defense Fund, which was created after the original Ag Unite event in Butte County in 2013, according to a news release.

Another national winner was the Fresno County Farm Bureau, which was selected for its TV program "Valley Gold."

The PBS program has begun its fourth season highlighting the crops, commodities and agricultural products grown in the San Joaquin Valley.