



Growers adapt to new food, heat safety regulations

By PADMA NAGAPPAN
For the Capital Press

New food safety rules and heat illness standards are top-of-mind for farmers in California and elsewhere.

The food safety rules came into effect this January. In California, growers have been working to comply, with help from organizations such as the California Farm Bureau Federation, which offers training.

The Produce Safety Rule took effect on Jan. 26 for large farms with more than \$500,000 in annual sales over three years, representing the latest phase of the Food Safety Modernization Act, which

was passed in 2011.

It requires farms that grow produce that is consumed raw — fruits, vegetables and nuts — to have at least one trained employee familiar with regulations on issues such as worker training, health and hygiene; testing water quality for bacteria, parasites, and viruses; managing irrigation systems, equipment and tools; how soil amendments are handled; and knowing what to watch out for that consum-



ers might come into contact with from eating raw produce.

Similar regulations for monitoring and documentation also affect food processors, importers, transportation firms and others, under the Preventive Controls for Human Food rule, a different rule within the same act that took effect in 2016.

For produce safety, the California Department of Food and Agriculture will focus on training in 2018, but will begin enforcement in

2019. It has provided a grant to the CFBF to offer training at a discounted rate of \$60 per person. Enforcement begins with larger farms and will eventually filter down to smaller farms.

“This is relatively new, so we’ve been figuring out how to get everybody trained,” said Bryan Little, director for employment policy at CFBF. “There are thousands of people who will need to be trained. And training will be ongoing, as employee turn-over happens and farms need new people to be trained.”

The training takes about six to seven hours, is complex, and resources are limited given there are a lot of people to train.



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Indoor heat

The next major regulation to watch out for will be the indirect impact from indoor heat illness standards.

Most producers and processors have indoor processing facilities, and the California Occupational Safety and Health Administration — CAL-OSHA — is working on defining parameters for heat safety. Little said the CFBF has had a fair amount of input in writing up these regulations, and pointing out the practical problems and complexity of applying a one-size-fits-all rule to a wide range of situations.

“For outdoors, you provide shade for workers to cool off, but what do you do indoors where they’re already in shade?” Little pointed out. “And what about for those who work inside and outside for parts of the day?”

Some warehouses are air conditioned, while some are

not, so CAL-OSHA is working on drafting rules that will be applicable in different situations. The indoor heat illness rules will cover a wide range of industries, from farming to landscaping, and even offices for professionals.

“If the agency focused on specific industries and drafted rules that were specific to them, that would make sense, so we’ve tried to help them understand having a broad solution would not make sense in the real world,” he said.

Aside from this, the wildfires raging through the state sometimes occur near farm-

land, so Little said growers need to be aware of air quality and provide respiratory masks with filters for workers, if needed.

Summers in California have been pushing the needle on the thermometer, with daily highs reaching 90s and 100s this year, so the Farm Bureau has provided training and reminders to growers to always provide water, shade and rest.

“It’s the single hottest thing we have going on, pardon the pun, making sure everyone remembers what to keep in mind with hot weather,” he said.

A logo for the 2018 OACFA Safety & Stewardship Seminars, featuring a green and white shield with the year 2018 and the text "OACFA SAFETY & STEWARDSHIP SEMINARS".

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Seminars each day from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

More info at: www.oacfa.com/seminars.html
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SAFETY-1/106

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The Washington Trust Bank logo, featuring a stylized 'W' and 'T' inside a square.

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The SAIF logo, with the text "saif" in a bold, lowercase font and "Work. Life. Oregon." underneath.

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