

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fresh Produce Safety Trainings, July 24th and 25th

ASHEVILLE, NC (July 3, 2008) – Food safety is a growing concern, with the recent salmonella outbreak coming on the heels of outbreaks involving spinach and ongoing product recalls. In response, the retail and food service industry are beginning to utilize third party audits to verify that farms are producing vegetables and fruits in the safest manner possible and in compliance with “Good Agricultural Practices” (GAP) and “Good Handling Practices” (GHP). To help North Carolina Cooperative Extension agents and North Carolina growers prepare, the North Carolina Fresh Produce Safety Task Force, North Carolina Cooperative Extension, and Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project are offering fresh produce safety trainings on Thursday, July 24th and Friday, July 25th.

The training sessions will provide information on the general practices that growers, field workers, and packers of fresh fruits and vegetables should use to handle fresh produce safely, reduce the potential for outbreaks of food-borne illnesses, and address the risks associated with the movement of fresh produce into the marketplace. Food safety demonstration audits will be conducted on two farms and at a packing facility by a third party auditor with the Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association.

On July 24th at 1:30p.m., agents and farmers are invited to participate in a food safety demonstration audit at a Haywood County farm and nearby packing facility.

Prior to this demonstration, a session for agents only will also be offered at the Haywood County Extension Center from 9:00a.m. to 1:00p.m. Experts will focus on handling procedures for produce moving from farms to wholesale market outlets.

On July 25th at 9:00a.m., farmers and extension agents are invited to attend a training session at a Buncombe County farm that moves most of its produce through direct marketing channels. After a general information session on GAP and GHP, a demonstration audit will be conducted at that farm.

Farmers who want to attend should visit <http://asapconnections.org/special/2008/FoodSafety.htm> for more information and to register. Register early because space is limited for the audits.

Agents can register at the Extension intranet LMS website. For agents attending the Thursday session, Friday’s session is optional.

Instructional materials are drawn from fresh produce safety modules developed by the NC Fresh Produce Safety Task Force. Funding for this workshop is provided by the Risk Management Agency and the Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program.

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ABOUT THE APPALACHIAN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE PROJECT

The Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project is a nonprofit organization that supports farmers and rural communities in the mountains of Western North Carolina and the Southern Appalachians by providing education, mentoring, promotion, web resources, and community and policy development. ASAP's mission is to create and expand regional community-based and integrated food systems that are locally owned and controlled, environmentally sound, economically viable and health-promoting.

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