

Food Safety for Direct Sales A New Program in Oneida County for Farmers, Market Managers, etc.

Food-borne illnesses are in the news daily. The results of an outbreak can be devastating not only for the affected consumers but also for the producers, processors and retail venues who may be held responsible. Such incidents may result in fines, lawsuits, and potentially the loss of a farm or business. Even in the best case scenario, inadequate food safety precautions undermine consumer confidence in the products offered. As farmers and communities work to satisfy the increased demand for local foods, it's essential that everyone in the chain understand how to minimize the risks and deal with issues when they occur.

Recognizing the importance of this issue, the Farmers Market Federation of NY and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County have developed an extensive curriculum and a set of guidelines based on sound science and current food safety regulations, with ease of implementation also in mind. The materials cover: farmers markets; on-farm markets; Community Supported Agriculture (CSA); agritourism; and direct delivery models. The curriculum also includes a component on crisis communications for when something does go wrong.

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oneida County will be offering at least two sessions this winter based on these materials for farmers, market managers, and anyone else who is involved in direct sales of farm products.

If you would like to learn how to assess and manage the food safety risk in your direct sales activities, contact Jim Manning at (315) 736-3394 x129 or jpm277@cornell.edu. Details (dates, times, locations) will be announced in early January.