

Food safety workshops offered across the state in February and March will help producers meet requirements of new federal legislation.

In early January, President Obama signed the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act into law. The law requires producers to evaluate potential hazards to their products, create measures to prevent contamination and to develop written food safety plans.

The two-day workshops, offered by University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension, in partnership with the University of Nebraska Rural Initiative and the Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society, will be from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. in Lincoln, Grand Island, Auburn and North Platte.

UNL Extension educators will teach the workshops. Workshops will help fresh produce growers complete the Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) training.

At the end of the workshops, participating producers will understand GAPs and have parts of their own farm food safety plans developed.

The topics covered will help producers enhance worker sanitation, harvesting, handling, packaging, storage and transportation standards of fresh produce from the farm operation to markets, schools, restaurants and retail stores.

By completing a farm food safety plan, producers can differentiate themselves in the marketplace and appeal to many consumers who perceive this training as an added benefit.

All educational materials and costs of the workshops are provided through a Rural Business Enterprise Grant from USDA Rural Development that was received by the Nebraska Sustainable Ag Society in partnership with the University of Nebraska Rural Initiative.

Reservations are required to participate in the training workshops. To register, contact the University of Nebraska Rural Initiative by e-mailing gaps@unl.edu or calling (402) 472-2940. Online registration is also available at <http://ruralinitiative.nebraska.edu> by clicking on the GAPs Training link under Announcements and following instructions on the page.

Training dates, reservation deadlines and locations include:

- Feb. 16 and 25, RSVP by Feb. 9, Lancaster County Extension Office, 444 Cherrycreek Rd., Suite A, Lincoln.
- March 2 and 9, RSVP by Feb. 23, Hall County Extension Office, College Park, 3180 West U.S. Highway 34, Grand Island.
- March 10 and 17, RSVP by March 3, 4-H Building, Nemaha County Fairgrounds, Ninth and J streets, Auburn.
- March 18 and 25, RSVP by March 11, West Central Research and Extension Center, 402 W. State Farm Rd., North Platte.

UNL Extension is in the university's Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.