

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION FOOD SAFETY EDUCATION PROGRAM

Department of Nutrition and Food Sciences, Ranger Hall, Kingston, RI 02881 USA

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February 15, 2010

TO: Rhode Island Growers

FROM: Karen Menezes

Ken Ayars, Division of Agriculture, RI DEM

Martha Patnod, URI Cooperative Extension Food Safety Education Program

Lori Pivarnik, URI Cooperative Extension Food Safety Education Program

RE: 2010 RI Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Certification Program for Rhode Island Growers Training and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) for the Farm Stand– Wednesday, March 17, 2010, 9am to 1:30 pm, Building 75, URI East Farm, Kingston

We would like to invite all growers, including GAP certified growers, to our March 17th Training Session. The first hour of the training will be a presentation by Peggy Siligato who will discuss Integrated Pest Management (IPM) for the Farm Stand. One hour of PAT credits will be awarded to those who attend this session. The second part of the training will focus on the voluntary RI GAP Certification Program.

The overall goal of the voluntary RI Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Certification Program is to integrate food safety practices into farm production of fruits and vegetables. The program is based on the 1998 FDA/USDA-issued guidelines for producers of fresh fruits and vegetables which are designed to minimize the hazards of microbial contamination in produce. Food safety issues associated with personal hygiene practices of workers, application of compost and manure, sanitation and water quality are addressed in the GAP Certification Program.

Food safety concerns related to produce continue to occur. In Rhode Island we are being proactive rather than reactive by continuing to offer the RI GAP Certification Program to Rhode Island growers. Since 2002, thirty (30) Rhode Island growers have participated in the program and are currently GAP certified. Recently, you may have heard about the Farm to School Program. This program emphasizes incorporation of locally grown produce into school lunch programs. However, the state's three major foodservice vendors that operate most RI school district lunch programs require food safety assurances prior to purchasing from local farms and accept the RIGAP certification as an on-farm food safety program.

How do I become a GAP Certified Grower?

- ✓ Participate in the March 17th GAP Training Session. Topics covered include the GAP practices related to: personal hygiene practices of workers including illness and handwashing, sanitation in the field and packinghouse, and water quality. Refreshments, including a light lunch will be served.
- ✓ Farm visit(s) by Karen Menezes. Karen will discuss how you will and/or have implemented GAP practices.

- ✓ Successful completion of an on-farm audit. Peter Susi, from the RIDEM/Division of Agriculture, will conduct an on-farm audit.
- ✓ Complete the required recertification. Yearly recertification is required and entails a farm visit/audit by RIDEM/Division of Agriculture.

After successful completion of the audit, you will receive GAP promotional materials which include: a Certificate of GAP Certification from DEM, signs and magnets and other promotional materials to use wherever you sell your produce.

If you have questions about the program and/or would like to attend the training session on March 17th, call Martha Patnoid at 874-2960 or email her at mpatnoid@uri.edu or complete the attached registration form and mail to: Martha Patnoid, CE Food Safety Education Program, 106 Ranger Hall, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI 02881

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**REGISTRATION FORM-2010 GAP TRAINING
Wednesday, March 17, 2010, 9am to 1:30 pm
Registration Deadline- March 10, 2010**

Name: _____
Farm: _____
Address: _____
Town/City: _____
Daytime Phone: _____
E-mail address: _____
Number of people attending _____

Please return to: Martha Patnoid, CE Food Safety Education Program, 106 Ranger Hall, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI 02881 by March 10, 2010