



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Farmer to Farmer Trainings to Focus on Direct Marketing Food Safety

EAST LANSING, MICH – The Michigan Farmers Market Association (MIFMA) recently was awarded funding to host on-farm farmer to farmer training sessions and develop resources on food safety this summer tailored specifically to farmers selling to direct markets.

“With outbreaks and recalls dominating the news, food safety is a top priority issue today for all growers, large and small, selling to any kind of market,” said Dru Montri, MIFMA Director.

Many buyers, especially wholesale, retail and institutional, are requiring food safety plans and certifications. However, many of these certifications are not designed with smaller producers in mind who grow and sell many different products directly to consumers at farm stands or farmers markets.

In fact, direct market farmers in Michigan are producing a variety of crops, 16 different crops on average, including those identified to present some of the greatest food safety risks – tomatoes, leafy greens, scallions and melons – according to a direct market food safety needs assessment in 2010 conducted by MIFMA and Michigan Food and Farming Systems (MIFFS) in an effort to understand the needs of direct market farmers as they relate to food safety.

This project, which is funded by a Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) grant, was designed to meet the food safety needs of these direct market growers, according to the 2010 assessment. In addition to the on-farm, farmer to farmer training sessions, this project will develop complementary food safety educational materials for farmers and MDA agents that include information about proper licensing and practices for direct market food service establishments and provide food safety leadership capacity building for agents enforcing the Michigan Food Law and other industry leaders.

“The overall goal of the project is to improve food safety practices of Michigan’s direct market farmers,” said Montri. “We learned from our 2010 food safety needs assessment that farmers seek food safety information on specific topics, and we’re trying to get that information to them the way that works best for them – through farmer to farmer sessions.”



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Topics during the training session will include production practices, like irrigation and scale-appropriate preventative measures, post-harvest handling and packaging of fruits and vegetables, facility sanitation and transportation.

Dates and locations for these sessions will be set in April and will be available online at www.mifma.org.

For more information about this project, contact Dru Montri at (517) 432-0712 or dnmontri@msu.edu.

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MIFMA was developed in 2006 to promote and grow farmers markets across the state and increase their visibility to both producers and consumers. This membership-based organization offers information, sharing and resources to farmers markets, farmers and vendors and friends of Michigan food and agriculture.

The MIFMA mission is to advance farmers markets to create a thriving marketplace for local food and farm products and to place farmers markets at the forefront of the local food movement, working to ensure all residents have access to healthy, locally grown food and that Michigan farmers markets receive policy support. To learn more, please visit www.farmersmarkets.msu.edu or call (517) 432-3381.