FOOD SAFETY MODERNIZATION ACT

Penn State Extension is helping produce growers, food processors, and food manufacturers prepare for new regulatory standards required under the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) of 2011.

The Zone Concept

The produce safety rule requires the inspection, maintenance, cleaning and, when necessary and appropriate, sanitization of all food contact surfaces on equipment and tools used during pre- and post-harvest farm activities to protect against contamination of produce intended or likely to be eaten raw covered under the rule.

Non-food contact surface tools and equipment must also be maintained and cleaned, when necessary, to prevent contamination of produce.

The "Zone Concept" is a term used in the food industry to divide food packing and processing operations into four zones based on the level of risk of contamination that each is exposed to.

The Zone Concept

Food contact surfaces, called Zone 1 surfaces, are at the highest risk for product contamination while non-food-contact surfaces that are furthest from the product are designated Zone 4.

The use of the Zone Concept is highly recommended in order to better target cleaning and sanitation efforts in the packinghouse according to the risk they represent.

Let's take a look at each zone that can be found in a packinghouse environment.

Zone 1: Zone 1 surfaces includes all food contact surfaces and utensils. These surfaces have contact or are exposed to produce during the farm's normal operations. Cleaning and sanitizing practices in Zone 1 surfaces should be a priority in order to reduce the risk of cross contamination. Examples of Zone 1 areas in a farm include:

- Conveyors belts
- Rollers
- Brushes
- Table tops where produce is handled
- Workers' hands
- Reusable plastic containers
- and storage bins
- Sinks
- Knives
- Bucket elevators

For more information, please follow us at extension.psu.edu/food-safety.

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