

PRODUCE SAFETY minute

(575) 646-1809
producesafety@nmda.nmsu.edu

WELCOME TO OUR FIRST PRODUCE SAFETY MINUTE!

This update provides New Mexico produce growers with important updates and reminders from the Produce Safety Program.

Below is a summary of the FSMA Produce Safety Final Rule on pre-harvest agricultural water and what it means for produce growers.

PRE-HARVEST AGRICULTURAL WATER REQUIREMENTS FOR COVERED PRODUCE

WHAT DO THESE CHANGES MEAN TO ME?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued a final rule that revises certain pre-harvest agricultural water requirements for covered produce (other than sprouts) in Subpart E of the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule. These revisions establish requirements for systems-based pre-harvest agricultural water assessments, which covered farms use to identify hazards and inform risk management decisions.



EVENTS

Join us for an Agricultural Water Update via Zoom
Tuesday, May 12 @ 2pm
Mountain Time

Attend this FREE update to learn about pre-harvest agricultural water regulations within the Produce Safety Rule and how they apply to your produce farming operation.

Scan QR code to register



UPCOMING GROWER TRAININGS

May 13 – 14, 2026
8 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. (both days)
*Registration Deadline:
May 1st at 5 p.m.*

June 16 – 17, 2026
8 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. (both days)
*Registration Deadline:
June 1st at 5 p.m.*

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

ALL AGRICULTURAL WATER

As part of the rule, growers must inspect the entire water system under their control (pre-harvest, harvest, and post-harvest) at the beginning of the season. This includes the water source, the extent of the grower's control, and how each source is protected. For surface water sources, growers must consider whether use of adjacent or nearby land could introduce food safety hazards into the water before it reaches the farm.

PRE-HARVEST AGRICULTURAL WATER

As part of the new assessment, farms must evaluate and document specific factors to identify conditions that are reasonably likely to introduce known or reasonably foreseeable hazards onto produce or food-contact surfaces. Farms are required to perform a written agricultural water assessment at least once annually, or whenever a significant change occurs. Based on the outcomes of a covered farm's assessment, the farm may be required to implement corrective or mitigation measures to reduce the potential for contamination of covered produce or food contact surfaces as a result of the use of pre-harvest agricultural water. The Final Rule requires supervisory review of the written pre-harvest agricultural water assessment, including determinations made based on the assessment's findings.

WHAT IS AGRICULTURAL WATER?

Agricultural water refers to water used during covered activities on covered produce when the water is intended to, or is likely to, come into contact with covered produce or food-contact surfaces.

This includes water used during growing, harvesting, packing, and holding activities.

- Harvest and Post-Harvest Water: Used for activities like washing, cooling, making ice, transport, or hand washing after harvest.
- Pre-Harvest Water: Used during growing, e.g., for irrigation or pesticide application.



DOES THE FINAL RULE APPLY TO YOU?

Very small farms have until April 5, 2027, to come into compliance. Note: The compliance dates for large farms and small farms have already passed.

Any covered farm that uses agricultural water in a way that contacts covered produce or food contact surfaces must comply with Subpart E.

There are some exemptions to this rule, including if your pre-harvest water is from a tested and compliant municipal system.

* *The FSMA Final Rule does not change harvest/post-harvest water requirements.*

FUN FACT



Onions ranked 5th
in the nation
at 4.2 million cwt
in 2024.

RESOURCES

- [FSMA Final Rule on Pre-harvest Agricultural Water Fact Sheet](#)
- [FSMA Final Rule on Pre-harvest Agricultural Water: Factors for Agricultural Water Assessment to Consider](#)
- [FSMA Final Rule on Pre-Harvest Agricultural Water](#)
- [Annual Agricultural Water Assessments and Risk-Based Outcomes](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions: Agricultural Water Requirements under the FSMA Produce Safety Rule](#)
- [FSMA Final Rule on Pre-harvest Agricultural Water: Corrective and Mitigation Measures for Pre-harvest Agricultural Water for Non-Sprout Covered Produce](#)

This program is supported by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award U2FFD007432. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by FDA/HHS, or the U.S. Government.