

The Processors' Food Safety Toolkit

a new tool for small and very small food processors

2023 AFDOSS Meeting

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NECAFS

The Northeast Center to
Advance Food Safety



This work is supported by the Food Safety Outreach Program grant no. 2021-70020-35497 and 2022-70020-37666 from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.



United States Department of Agriculture
National Institute of Food and Agriculture

Who we are

NECAFS

The Northeast Center to
Advance Food Safety



- One of four USDA funded regional centers
- Aims to advance food safety with the region's small and medium sized produce growers and processors
- Developed in response to FSMA PSR and PCHF Rule

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Who:

- University researchers, educators and extension specialists
- State regulatory and enforcement agency partners
- Local food and farming organizations, NFP's
- Consultants & Industry associations
- Small and medium sized producers, small processors, buyers
- Other regional centers and initiatives, national center, USDA/FDA

Goal:

Enhance produce safety and preventive controls training, education, and outreach among small and medium sized farms and small processors in the Northeast.

Objectives:

1. Establish Foundational Network Structure

2. Build Capacity, Competency, and Collaboration

3. Develop and Deliver Educational Programs

4. Evaluate and Assess Progress and Impact

5. Sustain Good Work

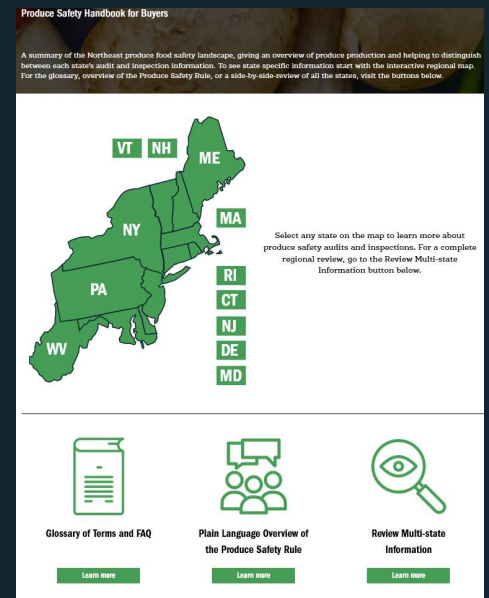


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Some of our projects

- Produce Safety in Hydroponic and Aquaponic Operations
- Food Safety Resource Clearinghouse
- Produce Safety Handbook for Buyers



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The Need

- Although there are an estimated 3,500 small and very small processors in the Northeast who meet the definition of a qualified facility, only 531 processors have filed attestations (Glen Bass, 2022; Freedom of Information Act, 2020)
- A needs assessment found that 65% of food safety professionals believe that the small and very small processors they work with have little or no awareness of the PCHF rule (publication forthcoming)
- 42% believe small and very small processors have little to no understanding of GMPs



How do small processors know what resources they need to find?



How do small processors know where to locate resources?



How do small processors know when they find resources if they are reliable?



How do small processors know who to ask for help?

- Develop a guided roadmap to direct small processors who are impacted by the FSMA PCHF rule to relevant resources
- Build a catalog of resources under defined categories specific to the needs of small processors
- Electronically publish and distribute the toolkit

The Team

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Site development team

- Elizabeth Demmings, PhD (she/her/hers)
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- Anne Fitzgerald, MLIS
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PCHF Working Group Members

- Elizabeth Demmings, PhD, IFS@CU Coordinator, Cornell University
- Anne Fitzgerald, MLIS, NECAFS Research Specialist, University of Vermont
- Andrea Gilbert-Eckman, Graduate Assistant, University of Maryland
- Amanda Kinchla, Extension Associate Professor, University of Massachusetts Amherst
- Luke LaBorde, PhD, Professor of Food Science, Penn State University
- Nicole Richard, Research Associate/Food Safety Education Specialist, University of Rhode Island
- Dave Seddon, MBA, RD, LD, Food Safety Specialist/Auditor, FoodReady.ai & Maine Farm and Sea Cooperative

PCHF Resources Subgroup Participants

- Jason Bolton, PhD, Extension Professor and Food Safety Specialist, Program Administrator for Aquaculture, Food, Innovation, and Nutrition, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Area Coordinator of the Innovation Program, University of Maine Business School
- Amanda Chin, former Student and Extension Outreach Researcher, University of Massachusetts Food Science Program
- Cathy Davies, CEO, Food Industry Employment Program
- Chelsea Matzen, former FSMA Project Director, National Farmers Union
- Billy Mitchell, former FSMA Training Coordinator, National Farmers Union
- Michele Pfannenstiel, CEO, Dirigo Food Safety
- Rohan Tikekar, PhD, Associate Professor and Extension Specialist, University of Maryland
- Christopher Von Achen, former Student and Extension Research Assistant, University of Massachusetts Food Science Program

NECAFS Leadership

- Elizabeth Newbold, NECAFS Assistant Director, University of Vermont
- Chris Callahan, PE, MBA, BSME, NECAFS Director, Extension Associate Professor, University of Vermont Extension Ag Engineering

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Processors' Food Safety Toolkit

[Home](#)[About Us](#)[Contact](#)[FAQs](#)[Resource Categories](#)

A resource collection to help very small and small processors get started with Preventive Controls for Human Food (PCHF) and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs)



This site is designed to help very small and small processors find and connect with resources that help and inform implementation of food safety practices. The resources collected on this site align with various food safety goals including personal commitment to produce safe food, market access, or regulatory compliance.

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Connect to Resources



A Beginner's Guide

Explore key resources available to help you meet requirements in



FAQs

Find answers to your questions about the Preventive Controls for



Talk to Someone

Find preventive controls educators, experts, and

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the FDA's Food Safety
Modernization Act Preventive
Controls for Human Food (PCHF)
rule.

[Find out more](#)

Human Food (PCHF) rule.

[Find out more](#)

specialists in your area.

[Find out more](#)



Resource Categories



Complying with the PCHF Rule

Tools for determining requirements under the Preventive Controls for Human Food (PCHF) rule and resources on how to comply with basic requirements.

[View resources](#)



Good Manufacturing Practices

Resources and trainings for developing good manufacturing practices.

[View resources](#)



Allergens

Resources for creating and implementing an allergen control program/plan.

[View resources](#)



- Complying with the PCHF Rule
- Good Manufacturing Practices
- Allergens
- Sanitation SOPs
- Developing a Food Safety Plan
- Validation Studies and Processes
- Production Specifications
- Environmental Monitoring Program
- State and Local Regulations
- Extension and Consulting Services and Resources
- Funding Opportunities
- Directory of Services

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Processors' Food Safety Toolkit

A resource collection to help very small and small processors get started with Preventive Controls for Human Food (PCHF) and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs)

[Home](#) [About Us](#) [Contact](#) [FAQs](#) [Resource Categories](#)



Allergens

Resources for creating and implementing an allergen control program/plan.

VIEW BY CATEGORY:

(or you can view by keyword)

[► What's this?](#)

General

Components of an Effective Allergen Control Plan: A Framework for Food Processors

A guide and FAQ about developing an allergen control plan in both english and spanish

KEYWORDS: FOOD ALLERGEN CONTROL PLAN, PRODUCT LABELING, SPANISH

Best Practice Standard Sanitation Operating Procedures for Allergen Control in Food Processing

An overview of sanitations procedures

Federal

A Food Labeling Guide: Guidance for Industry

An extensive guide through food labeling requirements

KEYWORDS: DOCUMENTATION, ALLERGENS, FEDERAL REGULATION

Food Allergies

An introduction to food allergies, including what the eight major allergens are, the need for labeling, other common allergens and allergenic substances, and consumer information regarding allergens.

Sesame

Draft Guidance for Industry: Voluntary Disclosure of Sesame as an Allergen

A guidance document from the FDA containing recommendations for labeling sesame as an allergen. Please not that this guidance was drafted prior to the FASTER Act, which will require sesame disclosure on foods.

KEYWORDS: ALLERGENS, SESAME, MAJOR ALLERGENS

New law puts sesame on fast track for allergen labeling requirements



Cooperative Extension: Food & Health

Food Safety

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Infotoons: Cross-Contact vs Cross-Contamination

Understanding the difference between cross-contact vs cross-contamination of different foods, and how each can make people sick.



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A Beginner's Guide

This guide is intended to provide you with key resources available to help you meet requirements in the FDA's Food Safety Modernization Act Preventive Controls for Human Food (PCHF) rule.

The guide is divided into twelve categories to provide resources tailored to the specific needs of small and very small processors who must comply with the PCHF rule.

You can find links to each of the twelve core topics listed below along with a general introduction and selected article that summarizes each topic.

Complying with the PCHF Rule



On [this page](#) of the PCHF site, you will find tools for determining requirements and guidance for the PCHF Rule and resources on how to comply with the rule. For a quick introduction to the topic, check out [this resource](#): "FSMA FAQs: What are the Basic Requirements of FSMA's Preventive Controls Rules for Human Food?".

[Find out more](#)

Good Manufacturing Practices



On [this page](#), you can find information and resources about Good Manufacturing Practices, also called current Good Manufacturing Practices or cGMPs. These are regulations to ensure that manufactured products are safe, clean, and effective. GMPs are a broad topic that include several of the major sections of this website, such as Environmental Monitoring Practices and Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures. For a quick introduction to GMPs, check out [this resource](#) from Cornell University.

[Find out more](#)

Allergens



Undeclared allergens are the biggest cause of food product recalls. [This section](#) on our website is

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FAQs

If your question isn't answered below, please [send us a message](#).

▾ 1. Am I covered by the Preventive Controls for Human Food (PCHF) Rule?

Most food businesses are covered at least partially by the Preventive Controls for Human Food (PCHF rule). Coverage depends on the size of your business, what types of foods you process, where you process foods, and whether or not you sell foods directly to consumers.

Not all businesses covered by the PCHF rule are subject to every part of the rule (21 CFR Sec. 117.5). To understand more about whether or not your food business is covered and what parts of the rule apply, please see [this resource](#) and visit the [Complying with the PCHF Rule section](#) to learn more.

Key Resources:

- [Complying with the PCHF Rule](#)
- [Key Facts about Preventive Controls for Human Food](#)
- [Exemptions to the Preventive Controls for Human Food Rule](#)

▸ 2. What parts of the PCHF rule are required?

▸ 3. How do I get started creating a food safety plan?

▸ 4. Where can I find forms that I need to fill out?

▸ 5. Where do I find sample plans?

▸ 6. Who can help me review a plan or answer my questions?

▸ 7. What is the difference between an third-party audit and an inspection?

Talk to Someone



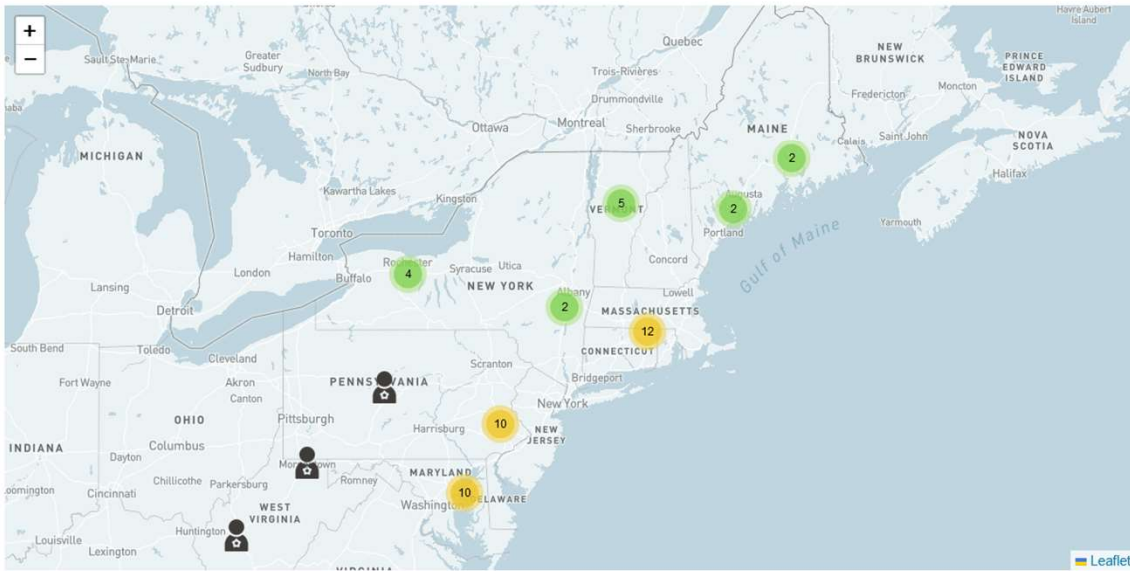
Contact information for state, extension, and consulting personnel or programs.

Filter by Group:

- Any -

Filter by State:

- Any -



Aardvark Associates

Dave French

Phone: 866-539-2771

Email: dave@processauthority.com

[Link to Website »](#)

Filter by Group:

Extension Departments & Educators

Filter by State:

Other States



Georgia Tech, GaMEP

Georgia Manufacturing Partnership (GaMEP)

Industry Manager for Food & Beverage

Phone: 831-594-5550

Email: Wwhite@gatech.edu

[Link to Website »](#)

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Feedback from small and very small processors

- 100% (n=17) said they would recommend the site to fellow processors
- Feedback incorporated:
 - Making the FAQ section more visible
 - Adding a broken link bot
 - Renaming sections to be more transparent
- Feedback for future updates:
 - Create a responsive user guide
 - Improve the search feature to search by any term, not just keywords


Connect to Resources



A Beginner's Guide

Explore key resources available to help you meet requirements in the FDA's Food Safety Modernization Act Preventive Controls for Human Food (PCHF) rule.


[Find out more](#)



FAQs

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[Find out more](#)



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Peer review



- A survey of food safety communicators (defined as those who provide food safety outreach, education, and technical assistance; n=12) found that the resources are good quality
- Recommendations for additional resources included:
 - Resources in other languages and formats (i.e., videos, interactive tools)
 - Resources specifically about one topic (i.e., supply chain controls)
- Suggestion to provide shorter introductions to each topic
- Some recommended simplifying the site to be a bare-bones introduction or creating a detailed guide to tell processors what to do

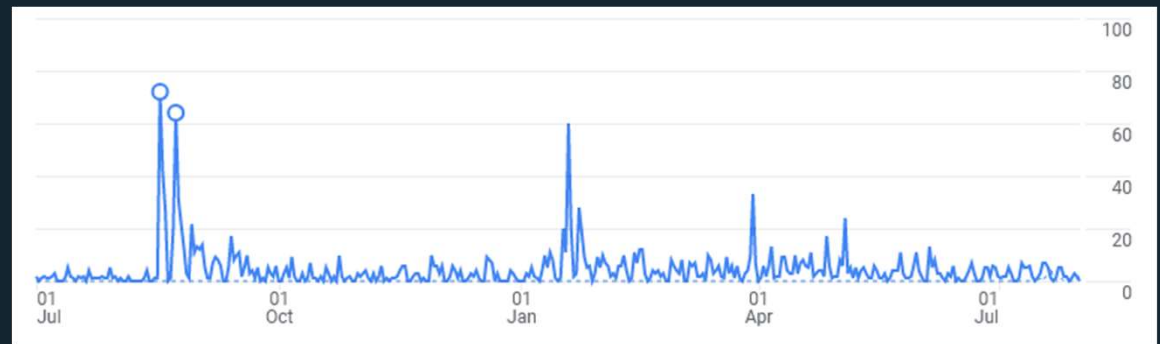
Initial results



Since its launch, 1,455 unique users visited the website and viewed 5,789 total pages for an average time of 1m 14s

- Top three resources:
 1. The 7 Steps of Effective Wet Sanitation by Commercial Food Sanitation
 2. Guidelines for the validation of food safety control measures by the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Program
 3. FSMA FAQs: What are the Basic Requirements of FSMA's Preventive Controls Rules for Human Food? by the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association
- Top three topic areas:
 1. Complying with the PCHF Rule
 2. Validation Studies and Processes
 3. Good Manufacturing Practices

Daily viewership since the Toolkit launch via Google Analytics



We need your help!

- We have free postcards to distribute to small and very small processors
- To provide feedback, use the “Contact” link at pchf.necafs.org
- Submit your contact info to the Specialists Map at pchf.necafs.org

Contact me: anne.fitzgerald@uvm.edu



A promotional graphic with a dark blue background. At the top, the text "IS YOUR BUSINESS READY FOR NEW FOOD REGULATIONS?" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font. Below this, in a smaller white font, it says "Learn about FSMA federal regulations and how they could affect your operations." The NECAFS logo is centered below the text. At the bottom, it says ">>> LEARN MORE" followed by the website address "pchf.necafs.org" in white. To the right of the text is a vertical collage of three images: the top one shows various food products like soups and canned goods; the middle one shows two people in white lab coats and hairnets in a kitchen setting; the bottom one shows several jars of pickled vegetables.