

Cut to the Taste: Draft Guidance for Fresh-Cut Produce Processors Subject to FSMA

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The challenges of keeping fresh and fresh-cut produce safe from farm to grocery store have always been at the forefront of the produce industry.

And hopefully, some new draft guidance from the Food & Drug Administration issued Friday will help farmers and fresh-cut produce processors comply with obligations established under the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA).

The first draft guidance document is ["Standards for Growing Harvesting, Packing and Holding of Produce for Human Consumption: Guidance for Industry."](#) The "At-A-Glance" overview of this lengthy document, broken down into digestible chapters, can also be accessed from that page. These documents are intended to aid farmers and fresh-cut produce processors understand the minimum standards for covered farms and facilities.

The FDA also released a ["Guide to Minimize Food Safety Hazards of Fresh-cut Produce."](#) Producers subject to Current Good Manufacturing Practice, Hazard Analysis, and Risk Based Preventative Controls for Human Food under FSMA will find this draft guidance helpful.

Fresh and fresh-cut produce presents unique food safety challenges for farmers, processors, distributors, retailers and consumers. Recall - pardon the pun - the recent Romaine lettuce scare, a nationwide issue that prompted many consumers to consider avoiding salads. The produce and fresh-cut produce industry faces many unique challenges, including the outdoor-exposed growing environment, lack of employee understanding of proper sanitary measures and the absence of a "kill-step" before the product reaches the consumer. The FDA acknowledges many of these challenges through its implementation of FSMA, but only farmers and processors truly know the essentials to running their operations.

The drafts of the guidance documents are open for industry comment prior to the issuance of the final version of guidance document. Farmers and processors should review these documents and consider submitting comments if they have concerns.

If any farmers or fresh-cut produce processors have any questions about how this guidance will implement FSMA and affect them, or if they would like assistance submitting comments on the draft guidance, they can [contact me](#) or anyone in [Barley Snyder's Food & Agribusiness Industry Group](#).

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