

**First Annual Report**  
**Food Safety Education for Maine Crop Distribution Systems**  
**Due February 1, 2016**  
**Advantage ME Ct # 01A 20150211 \* 2596**  
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**Project Summary**

This grant was written to insure the sharing of Food Safety information in a non-threatening way with regional distributors, food hubs, and other Maine food holding systems. The goal is that food handling businesses will learn about food safety, make informed food safety decisions in their operations and incorporate aspects of food safety into them, pass along this information to their suppliers and develop an expectation of food safety.

**Goals and Outcomes**

**Goals:**

- To educate food hubs, food holders, raw food transporters, and other produce distribution networks about food safety at their level of operations; to increase their awareness of best practices.
- To encourage these same operators to incorporate at least one aspect of food safety into their process.
- To maintain an awareness of food safety with food holders over time.
- To ultimately impact market eligibility by providing “safer” products for markets.

**Objectives:**

- Hold a minimum of 20 Food Safety meetings between January 14, 2015 and January 16, 2018 specifically directed at food hubs, food holders and transporters, and other distribution networks for produce to make them aware of food safety issues specific to their particular operation.
- Educate attendees so they will come away with the basics of Food Safety and a Food Safety Plan for their particular type of operation, and a direction and menu of items that they might prioritize and address over time.

Create a distribution list from attendee’s emails in order to send emails every other month to keep them up to date on food safety issues that may impact their businesses and to keep them thinking about food safety.

**\*A Minimum of twenty Food Safety Workshops will occur in Maine between the dates of January 14, 2015 and January 16, 2018. At least 150 people will attend. (In year one, we have worked with over 394 individuals)**

**Outcome:** A list of workshops and participants will be compiled. Certificates of attendance will be given out. Results will be compiled and shared in the annual and final reports of the grant. **(We have not given out certificates since most meetings are part of something else)**

**\*At least 130 people will make at least one change in their production system based on what they learned at this training.**

**Outcome:** Evaluation survey will ask attendee to identify at least one Food Safety based process they

plan to alter based on what was shared in the workshop. Results will be compiled and shared with participants via email and in the annual and final reports.

**\*At least 75 people will be able to identify more than one change they may make in their production system based on what they learned at this training.**

**Outcome:** Evaluation survey will ask attendee to identify another Food Safety based process they plan to alter based on what was shared in the workshop.

**\* At least ten businesses will be able to grow or retain their market as a result of this training.**

**Outcome:** Evaluation survey will ask this question so that we may document effectiveness of the grant on this aspect of marketing. This information will be compiled and share via email as well as reported in annual and final reports.

(Evaluations for these three outcomes will be sent out in year three of the grant to all attendees we can contact via email.)

**\*At least 100 food handlers will be networked via email to continue growing their awareness of food safety issues beyond the training.**

**Outcome:** A distribution list of attendees email addresses will be created and brief Food Safety updates will be shared with them every other month from January 2015 through December 2018. This will create a network that will be nurtured with food safety related updates so that the language of food safety becomes universal and implementation becomes a natural next step. Evaluation data from workshops will be shared with the distribution list in order to keep the conversation alive.

Final evaluation questions regarding the effectiveness of these emails will be emailed and results will be tabulated. This data will be compiled to show the impact of the grant.

(We currently network with 88 via email. We hope to increase this number in the next two years.)

#### **Outcomes:**

January 2015-January 2016

AgMatters LLC has collaborated and presented Food Safety talks with:

- Maine Farmland Trust (*Harvesting Maine's New Wholesale Opportunities* workshops in Lewiston, Machias, & Belfast) (75 attendees)
- Maine Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association (*Farmer to Farmer Conference* in Northport & at the ME AG Trade Show 2016 ) (24 attendees)
- Maine Vegetable & Small Fruit Growers Association (ME AG Trade Show 2016) (20 attendees)
- Maine Pomological Society (Annual Meeting) (23 attendees)
- Lambert-Coffin/Maine Chamber of Commerce/CLF Conference "*Managing Legal Risk While Scaling Up Your Farm or Food Production Business*" in Orono (50 attendees)
- Conservation Law Foundation (Participated in webinar and in ME AG Trade Show program for BFN) (26 attendees)
- Kennebec Valley Community College's Agricultural Program (Guest speaker) (16 attendees)
- Good Shepherd Foodbank (have met with and worked with) (3 attendees)
- The Good Food Council of Lewiston/Auburn (Wholesalers Meeting) (60 attendees)
- Farm to School Conference (Hinckley meeting) (8 attendees)

- Sam Cheeney (2 attendees)
- Belanger & Son's (4 attendees)
- Farm Fresh Connection (3 attendees)
- Maine Federation of Farmer's Markets Annual Conferences held in Hallowell in 2015 & 2016 (80 attendees)

AgMatters LLC has reached an audience of over 394 Maine growers, distributors, and holders of food in year one of the grant. The numbers included above reflect attendees. Much work is also done via phone and discussions.

AgMatters LLC has an email distribution list of 88 to which it has sent updates in Food Safety news during the year. Several individuals have asked to be added to the list in 2016.

These updates will increase in frequency in 2016 in order to keep groups updated about FSMA and its implementation. Our goal is to inform in small doses so that emails are read.

### **Next Steps**

This year has proven to us that groups are very interested in the topic of Food Safety and the Food Safety Modernization Act and once aware of what we can offer, utilize our services.

We have asked the Department of Agriculture to include our services on their web site, both for this grant and for the two Specialty Crop Grants that AgMatters LLC holds for Food Safety and GAP Preparation and for FSMA updates for growers.

AgMatters LLC will continue to learn what wholesalers/distributors need and want for information and will fill those needs.

AgMatters LLC will continue to keep updated on FSMA and food safety issues as they emerge and educate Maine's markets.

AgMatters LLC will continue to speak at food meetings to food distribution networks and are always available to do so.

AgMatters LLC will begin sending out monthly emails to our distribution list and focus on small bits and pieces that are easily digested and very pertinent to Maine's growers and markets. This is an increase over our original plan.

### **Lessons Learned**

AgMatters LLC had anticipated it would have to hold many meetings. Instead, we have been invited to participate in many large group meetings and done several follow-up smaller meetings as requested.

When there is a need to hold and organize our own, independent meetings, we will do so.

We believe we touch more people by agreeing to be part of someone else's presentations and following up with one to one meetings when requested to do so.