

Fresh produce safety website launched

January 17 2013

A website dedicated to all aspects of food safety for the fresh produce industries of Australian and New Zealand launches today.

Established by the University of Sydney's Faculty of Agriculture and Environment and PMA Australia-[New Zealand](#), the Australasian region's leading [fresh produce](#) trade association, it is part of a major project to identify a model and priorities for fresh produce [safety research](#) and to raise awareness of the [challenges](#) for fresh produce safety and the importance of enhancing current [safety practices](#).

The [Fresh Produce Safety - Australia & New Zealand \(FPS\) website](#) focuses on three objectives. First, to plan how the fresh produce industry will handle major [food safety](#) outbreaks in the region, particularly in crisis mitigation and management, and consumer communication.

Second, to identify research needs that are specific to the Australian and New Zealand fresh produce industry and to develop local or international collaborative partnerships in research, outreach and education to address these needs; and third, to translate relevant research outcomes from the Centre for Produce Safety at the University of California-Davis for application in the Australasian fresh produce industries.

"The 2006 spinach crisis in the US and the European sprout problems of 2011 demonstrate the importance of our industry working together from paddock to plate to ensure continued fresh food safety in Australia and New Zealand," said Associate Professor Robyn McConchie, head of the Plant and Food Sciences department of the Faculty of Agriculture and

Environment at the University of Sydney.

"We anticipate developing a research model where we will be utilising existing research and information, as well as bringing together international experts, representatives of government, industry associations, growers, packers and processors, wholesalers and retailers, food safety trainers and practitioners, all with a focus on filling the knowledge gaps on produce food safety in Australia and New Zealand, and protecting and enhancing food quality and safety in fresh produce," said Associate Professor McConchie.

A Food Safety Taskforce initiated by PMA Australia-New Zealand and comprising of representatives from all sectors of the supply chain, has also been appointed to assist in the project and work collaboratively with industry to facilitate communication and outreach.

"An outbreak of food-borne illness can be devastating, not only for those directly affected, but for an entire industry. As an industry, we have a responsibility to live up to the trust placed in us every day by consumers, by ensuring the safety and traceability of our fresh produce," said Fabian Carniel, Chair of the Food Safety Taskforce and Joint CEO of Mulgowie Farms.

The website uses voluntary funds from the University of Sydney and PMA Australia-New Zealand with matched funding from the Australian Government through Horticulture Australia Limited.

Provided by University of Sydney

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