



May 31, 2006

United States
Department of
Agriculture

NOTICE TO THE TRADE

Fruit and Vegetable Vendor Food Defense Audit for Fresh Commodities

Marketing and
Regulatory
Programs

Agricultural
Marketing
Service

Washington, DC
20250

This notice is to inform vendors of USDA's Fruit and Vegetable Commodity Procurement Program of the intent to require annual food defense audits for fresh products beginning July 1, 2007. This measure is in keeping with the Department's emphasis to add a level of safety to food going to the Federal feeding and nutrition programs. It is our understanding that some vendors have already added food defense plans to their operation to meet the requests of their other customers. However we are aware that there are vendors who have only considered implementing a plan, as well as some vendors who have not begun to consider it.

To assist vendors in preparing and implementing a plan for the audit, the Fresh Products Branch will be conducting audits on an **advisory basis** for the fruit and vegetable vendors currently doing business with USDA beginning July 1, 2006 through the end of the year. No contract action will be taken as a result of the audits performed during that period. The advisory results should assist vendors in identifying vulnerable areas that need corrective actions prior to the mandatory audits beginning July 1, 2007. The food defense audit will be conducted by the Fresh Products Branch in conjunction with the Good Agricultural Practices & Good Handling Practices audit. All services provided by the Fresh Products Branch are on a cost-recovery basis and fees will be charged at \$75/hour.

The audit tool is based on the Food and Drug Administration's Guidance for Industry, Food Processors, Processors, and Transporters: Food Security Preventative Measures Guidance. The guidance is available at <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/secguid6.html>. A copy of the USDA GAP/GHP and Food Security audit tool for fresh commodities is available at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/fv/fpbgapghp.htm>.

For more information about the food security audits contact Kathy Staley, Head of the Fresh Product Branch's Field Operation Section at 800-811-2373.

Sincerely,

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