

Innovative Concepts in Light of the Ever Changing Landscape

Samantha T. Kilgore

Director of Communications & Marketing

Eastern Cantaloupe Growers Association



The Landscape Was Grim

- After food-bourne listeria outbreaks in 2011...
 - Overall demand for cantaloupes was down
 - Consumer confidence in food safety and farming processes was low.



Getting ECGA Off the Ground

- Began with expressed concerns from a group of Growers regarding the cantaloupe industry.
- Determined food safety was one of the keys to enhancing confidence.
- Reviewed a number of alternative organizing solutions.
- Settled on Trade Association with **CERTIFICATION** program.



Organizing Process

Established a Technical Working Group (TWG)

- Reviewed and studied the National Cantaloupe Guidance as the basis for the food safety standards.
- Identified additional protocols and procedures the TWG felt were important to include in the ECGA standards.
- Issued a DRAFT document in December 2012.
- Reviewed with growers/packers in January and published a FINAL DRAFT on January 22, 2013.



ECGA™ Certified Grower Criteria

1. GFSI benchmarked audit
2. ECGA Rider 'over and above' criteria
3. Unannounced audit during the harvest season.



ECGA™ Certified Grower Criteria

I. GFSI benchmarked audit

- Third party certification from any GFSI benchmarked audit standard for the field/ranch, harvest crew, and packing operations.



ECGA™ Certified Grower Criteria

2. ECGA™ Rider 'Above and Beyond' Criteria

- Require packing facility environmental testing for Listeria and salmonella.
- Prohibit the use of porous materials such as carpet or wood in field trailers, harvest wagons, deceleration pads, or on any equipment that could come in contact with the fruit.
- Require testing of all water sources, including packing facility and field irrigation, prior to use in production and harvesting and monthly testing thereafter until harvest is completed.
- Require a two year waiting period to plant cantaloupe in any field in which non-composted manure is applied.
- Establish a matrix in the event of flooding where pathogen contamination is possible.
- Prohibit the reuse of product containers made of corrugated or other porous materials due to risk of cross-contamination.
- Require harvest tools to be stored in appropriate containers with sanitizing solution when not in use.
- Prohibit unaudited harvest crews access to any cantaloupe field.



ECGA™ Certified Grower Criteria

3. Agree to an Unannounced Audit

- Unannounced third party audit (34 items), both in the field and in the packing facility, primarily related to the ECGA Rider. The audit must be conducted during the grower's packing season.



ECGA™ Food Safety Criteria

ENVIRONMENTAL TESTING

- ... Operations shall have a documents environmental microbial testing program for Listeria and Salmonella with testing targeted to areas where moisture, soil, or debris may accumulate.



ECGA™ Food Safety Criteria

FLOODING

- ... flowing or overflowing of a field with water outside of a grower's control that is reasonably likely to contain pathogens and/or other contaminants – pooled water from irrigation is not likely to contain pathogens and/or other contaminants.



ECGA™ Food Safety Criteria

IRRIGATION WATER

- ...All water sources tested prior to first use at the beginning of production
- ...All production water sources shall be tested monthly



ECGA™ Food Safety Criteria

SOIL AMENDMENTS

- ... Use of any composed or treated soil amendments require documentation and certification - records maintained for 2 yrs.
- ... If raw manure is applied to a field, no cantaloupes can be grown in that field for at least two years.



ECGA™ Food Safety Criteria

USE OF CARPET, WOOD or OTHER NON-POROUS MATERIALS

- ... Cantaloupe contact with carpet, wood or other non-porous material is strictly prohibited!



ECGA™ Food Safety Criteria

HARVEST TOOLS SANITIZATION

- ...When harvest tools that come in contact with the fruit that are not in use, they must be stored in an appropriate container with sanitizing solution.



ECGA™ Food Safety Criteria

RE-USE OF CORRUGATED CONTAINERS - PROHIBITED

- ... reuse of product containers made of corrugated or other porous materials is not allowed due to risk of cross-contamination.



ECGA™ Food Safety Criteria

SHOULD to SHALL

- ... In many places ECGA guidelines changed the word 'should' that was in the National Guidance Document to 'shall'. This was not done universally but was changed in guidance that the TWG felt it was important to make the practice required.



ECGA “Certified” Member





**D. STAHL FARMS
STAHL FARM & GREENHOUSE**

WILLIAMS PRODUCE



**OAKTOWN PRODUCE DEPOT
WONNING MELON FARMS**



**DOCIA FARMS
SPRING HILL PRODUCE, LLC
QUALITY PRODUCE
JOHN MOBLEY & SONS
STEVE SUMNER FARMS**



**FORRESTER
PRODUCE**



**ASTIN STRAWBERRY EXCHANGE
GRIMES PRODUCE COMPANY, LLC.**

- 1. Astin Strawberry Exchange
- 2. D. Stahl Farms
- 3. Docia Farms
- 4. Forrester Produce
- 5. Frey Farms
- 6. J&J Farming
- 7. Grimes Produce Company LLC
- 8. Jackson Farming Co.
- 9. John Mobley & Sons
- 10. Kamman's Farms, Inc.
- 11. L&M Farms
- 12. Melon Acres, Inc.
- 13. Oaktown Produce Depot
- 14. Quality Produce
- 15. Spring Hill Produce, LLC
- 16. Stahl Farm & Greenhouse
- 17. Steve Sumner Farms
- 18. Sweet Dixie Melon Co.
- 19. Sweet Life Farms, LLC
- 20. Williams Produce
- 21. Wonning Melon Farms, Inc.

Certified Farms

ECGA™ Certified Members

**Representing more than
4,500 acres of
cantaloupes**



Non-Profit Trade Association

- **Member Categories**

- **Certified Members** – can use logo, stamp, listed on website. Have passed annual audits.
- **Provisional Members** – intending to amend any practices to become certified in the next 12 months.
- **Honorary Members** – extension, research, industry member
- **Associate Members** – Individual or company invested in the cantaloupe industry, but not a grower/packer.



Marketing & Awareness

- Social Media/Website
- Branding on packaging and cantaloupes for certified members.
- Promotional programs for consumers:

Safe Handling Tips
from ECGA



Outlook for 2015

- Expand membership
- Continue promotion efforts and consumer awareness campaigns



Questions?

Thanks again for your time!

Contact info:

skilgore@asginfo.net

www.ecga-usa.org

706-845-8200

