



CALIFORNIA  
**Blueberry**  
COMMISSION

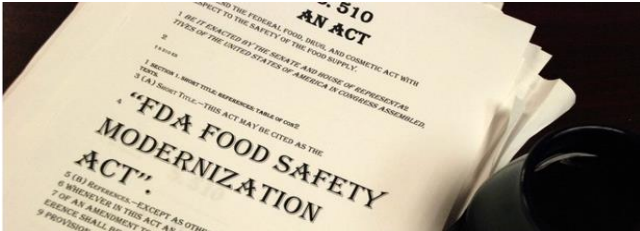
*Wishing you a Merry Christmas, and  
Happy New Year from the CBC!*

# NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 6

November/December 2015

## FDA PUBLISHES FINAL RULE ON FSMA STANDARDS FOR PRODUCE SAFETY



On November 27, 2015, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) published its final rule to implement the Standards for Produce Safety set forth in the Food Safety Modernization Act. The Produce Safety Final Rule establishes science-based minimum standards for the safe growing, harvesting, packing, and holding of produce grown for human consumption in addition to standards regarding other factors which include agricultural water. The Final Rule is effective January 26, 2016. Covered farms will typically have 2 years from the date of the Final Rule to comply (i.e. January 26, 2018). Small businesses (those with more than \$250,000 but no more than \$500,000 in average annual produce sales during the previous three-year period) must comply within 3 years of the Final Rule (i.e. January 26, 2019). Very small businesses (those with more than \$25,000 but no more than \$250,000 in average annual produce sales during the previous three-year period) must comply within 4 years of the final rule (i.e. January 26, 2020). Each of those categories of covered farms will have an additional two years to comply with certain agricultural water requirements. It should be noted that enforcement of the new regulations are still being discussed. The Commission continues to work with CDFA and FDA in order to get the latest information on the implementation of these new standards. Although industry members may have a food safety plan, many of these plans are not compliant with the new FSMA regulations. Growers should contact their food safety consultants or staff to review the new FSMA regulations in order to ensure they are in compliance with the new federal orders. Commission staff will continue to update the industry as the regulations are implemented. For additional information or questions, please contact the Commission office, or for more information regarding the Final Rule and its implementation please visit:

<http://www.pma.com/content/articles/2015/12/summaries-of-fsma-final-rules-by-kh>

## COUNTRY OF ORIGIN LABELING RULE REPEALED FOR PORK AND BEEF

In December, Congress repealed the Country of Origin Labeling rule of beef and pork after the World Trade Organization (WTO) imposed \$1 billion in retaliatory import tariffs against the United States by Canada and Mexico, which represent two large export markets for blueberries. Should this repeal not have been part of the omnibus spending bill

signed by President Obama in mid-December, the blueberry industry would have been responsible for those import tariffs. For more information, please visit: <http://www.foodsafetynews.com/>

## CDFA TO HOST FSMA INFORMATIONAL SESSIONS IN JANUARY

The California Department of Food and Agriculture will host informational sessions on the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Final Rules for Produce Safety and Preventive Controls for Animal Food. The Produce Safety Rule will be presented on Wednesday, January 13 beginning at 8:30AM at the International Agri-Center in Tulare, CA, and both the Preventive Controls for Animal Food Rule and the Produce Safety Rule will be presented on Thursday, January 14 beginning at 8:00AM in Seaside, CA at the Embassy Suites Hotel. Invited speakers for these sessions include: Jim Houston, Undersecretary, California Department of Food and Agriculture; and Jeff Farrar, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs and Partnerships, Office of Foods and Veterinary Medicine, Food and Drug Administration. For more information about the FSMA informational sessions, including directions, agenda, and registration, visit: [www.cdfa.ca.gov/is/fsma](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/is/fsma). Due to limited space it is asked that those who plan to attend pre-register through the website provided. Additionally, the CBC will be represented at the Tulare FSMA session by Research Coordinator, Carrie Schellenberg.

## PHOSPHONATE REQUIREMENTS UPDATED FOR BLUEBERRIES EXPORTED TO THE EU

The U.S. Highbush Council has released an update regarding the phosphonate levels for blueberries exported to the EU. As of January 1, 2016, the EU will require any imported blueberries to have an MRL level at 2ppm or lower for Phosphonate (also referred to as Phosphite). This is a significant reduction from the original MRL level at 75ppm. It is important that any growers planning to export to the EU test their fruit to ensure that it will not be rejected for importation. Currently, the USHBC is working with the IR4 to test specific products in order to document MRL levels. USHBC will also be submitting a grant request to the USDA TASC (Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops) in hopes of obtaining grant funding for this testing. For more information, please contact the Commission office.

## SPECIALTY CROP TAX INCENTIVES INCLUDED IN OMNIBUS SPENDING BILL

Several federal tax provisions of importance to the specialty crop investments are included in the omnibus spending bill that was passed this December. The tax provision will make Section 179 expensing permanent and will extend bonus depreciation until 2020. In addition, there is a new specialty crop tax provision for fruit trees and vines. For the first time, 50 percent depreciation can be claimed by farmers for any fruit tree or vine that is planted. Fruit trees and vines which are

planted after December 31, 2017 will be permitted 40 percent depreciation in 2018 and 25 percent depreciation in 2019; with the incentive lasting until January 1, 2020. Lastly, charitable contributions to agricultural research organizations will be encouraged by new improved tax language. To review the new tax provisions of the omnibus bill, please visit <http://waysandmeans.house.gov/>

### EL NINO DISASTEROUS FOR BLUEBERRIES IN ARGENTINA AND CHILE

There has been a combination of factors affecting the South American blueberry markets throughout the past year. El Niño, rough weather in Argentina, as well as a delay in the supply from Chile; have all had adverse effects on the blueberry market. In addition, Argentinian blueberries were of lower quality this year and experienced production totals that were sixteen percent less than last year. The main reason for this reduction has been the excess rain and a cold spring, factors that can be attributed to El Niño. Chile, on the other hand, has experienced a delayed season due to the bad weather. In several export markets, the first containers are expected by the end of the year. At the moment, Chilean crops are suffering the impact of *Aegorhinus nodipennis*, which attacks the roots of the plant and can cause its death. The Andes mountain range forms a natural barrier that could prevent this problem from spreading to other countries. The first shipment by sea from Chile is expected for early December; until then, blueberries will arrive by air. For more information regarding these markets please visit: <http://www.freshplaza.com/>

### USDA DESIGNATES 12 CALIFORNIA COUNTIES AS PRIMARY NATURAL DISASTER AREAS

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has designated 12 counties in California as primary natural disaster areas due to damages and losses caused by the ongoing drought. These counties are: Fresno, Madera, Santa Barbara, Trinity, Kern, Marin, Santa Clara, Tulare, Kings, San Benito, Sonoma, and Ventura. All counties listed were designated natural disaster areas on Dec. 23, 2015, deeming all qualified farm operators in the designated areas eligible for low interest emergency (EM) loans from USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), should they meet eligibility requirements. Farmers in eligible counties have eight months from the date of the declaration to apply for loans to help cover part of their actual losses. FSA will consider each loan application on its own merits, taking into account the extent of losses,

security available and repayment ability. FSA has a variety of programs, in addition to the EM loan program, to help eligible farmers recover from adversity. For more information regarding these programs, please visit: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/>

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### BLUEBERRY BITES

#### Blueberry Biscotti

- |                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 3 cups unbleached all-purpose flour | 1-1/2 sticks unsalted butter, slightly softened, cut into 20 pieces |
| 1/2 cup sugar                       | 2 teaspoons finely grated lemon zest                                |
| 1 teaspoon baking powder            | 1-1/4 cups dried California blueberries                             |
| 1/2 teaspoon salt                   | 3 large eggs, lightly beaten  |
| 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon        |   |

*Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper; set aside. In the bowl of a stand mixer, combine flour, sugar, baking powder, salt and cinnamon. Mixing on lowest speed, add the butter a few pieces at a time just until absorbed. Add lemon zest, blueberries and eggs; continue to mix on lowest speed until dough masses around the beater. Scrape dough to a floured work surface and gently knead into a smooth cylinder. Cut the dough in half and roll each to a cylinder about 15 inches long. Arrange the dough on the pan, gently flatten. Bake until golden and firm, about 30 minutes. Cool thoroughly; slice each loaf diagonally into 1/2-inch biscotti. Arrange on the cookie sheet and return to the oven to toast briefly to a light golden. Recipe courtesy of: <http://www.blueberrycouncil.org>.*

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- **CDFA FSMA Informational Session**  
-Date: January 13, 2016  
-Location: Tulare, CA
- **Board of Directors Meeting**  
-Date: January 2016  
-Location: Conference Call
- **Fruit Logistica**  
-Date: February 3-5, 2016  
-Location: Berlin, Germany
- **USHBC Meeting**  
-Date: March 2-4, 2016  
-Location: Arlington, TX



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