**2016- 2020 Plan of Work**

**Improving Food Safety through Ag Producers and Consumer Connections**

**Brief Summary of Program**

Cornell University’s food safety, research and education programs serves a broad constituency statewide including food producers, processors, distributors, retailers, commercial and institutional food service, retail establishments and consumers, both youth and adults. The purpose is to reduce the incidence of food borne illness and provide a safe food supply. In Wayne County the Lake Ontario Fruit Team and Cornell Vegetable Team work with Cornell faculty to train growers of produce on practices to maintain sound and food safe agricultural processes, put recommended practices in writing and then follow up with monitoring implementation of GAPs or Good Agricultural Practices Program. The GAP program provides fruit and vegetable growers and producers with information on microbiological contamination of raw produce during growing, harvesting and processing, including pest control, and assistance in implementing good practices to reduce the risk of these hazards. The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) has also been implemented in the U.S., and all farmers selling to an intermediary will be required to have a GAPs Plan.

Consumer education programs focus on safe food handling and preparation of foods, conveying important practices in preventing illness and avoiding food cross contamination. Eat Smart NY targets low-income adults and youth. Hand washing, safe handling of perishables, safe ways to defrost meat and poultry and proper food thermometer use are emphasized. Food preservation workshops are promoted widely and to all groups. Food safety tools and techniques are critical component of these educational programs.

**Situation and Priorities Statement**

The food supply must be safe to ensure a healthy, well nourished population. While the U.S. has one of the safest food supplies in the world, each year about 76 million illnesses occur, more than 300,000 persons are hospitalized and 5,000 die from food borne illness. Illnesses caused by bacteria such as E. coli and salmonella not only take a toll on American consumers’ health, they cost the US $152 billion annually in health care and other losses, according to a report funded by the Pew Charitable Trust. Food contamination also affects the viability of farms and processors in the food system. Recent outbreaks have resulted in large recalls of peanuts, spinach and peppers. With over 300 farms in Wayne County growing and producing fruits and vegetables, only about 80 have GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) plans in place.

Consumer education on proper food handling and preparation in the home is a vital component to ensuring food safety. Although food safety is no longer evaluated by the Eat Smart NY program, local extension education efforts will model safe food handling behavior. CCE Wayne will still offer food preservation resources and educational activities as requested.

**Goals:**

1. Improve food safety and food handling practices throughout the food system
2. Reduce the incidence of food-borne illnesses

**Goal A: Improve food safety and food handling practices throughout the food system.**

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| **Objective 1** | **Educational Strategies** | **Evaluation Indicator** |
| Each year, thirty growers will learn about and implement a GAPs plan. | Work with specialist teams in the preparation of GAPs (Good Agricultural Practices) training.  Help specialist teams to identify farms that still need to attend training, including smaller farms or newer farms in Wayne County. | Reports from teams and phone call and visits of growers.  Number of growers that have completed a plan. |
| **Objective 2** | **Educational Strategies** | **Evaluation Indicator** |
| Each year twenty growers will have employees attend training for safe handling of pesticides and field harvest practices. | Work with specialist teams to provide training in Wayne County. | Reports from teams and number of new pesticide applicators trained every other year and passing exam. |
| **Objective 3** | **Educational Strategies** | **Evaluation Indicator** |
| Each year five dairy/livestock farms will implement new phases of AEM plan (Ag Environmental Management). | Work with dairy team and WCSWCD (Soil and Water) to identify and work with farms to evaluate phase of plan and implementation. | Number of farms working with implementation as indicated by SWCD or team members. |

**Goal B: Reduce the incidence of food-borne illnesses**

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| **Objective 1** | **Educational Strategies** | **Evaluation Indicator** |
| 30% of nutrition workshop participants will learn safe food handling skills. | Nutrition educators will model safe food handling behavior in cooking demonstrations and interactive cooking lessons. | Participant evaluations and CCE educator observation of participants’ progress.  Number of workshops with food handling demonstrations. |