



The Fresh Citrus Traveling Road Show

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The Treasure Coast's citrus industry contributes \$1.4 billion annually to the local economy, employing 11% of the workforce. Eighty percent of the region's fresh grapefruit are shipped to export markets in Europe and the Far East. Domestic and international trade communities have developed standards on quality and safety aspects of the production and processing of fresh fruits and vegetables. Third party food safety audits, to insure standards compliance, require annual training of production, harvesting, and packinghouse employees in pesticide application safety, personal and workplace hygiene, disease identification, and workplace sanitation practices.

A team of University of Florida Extension and REC faculty responded to this need by providing programming (English and Spanish) and documentation to citrus growers/harvesters/producers for critical "must have" standards. This programming was provided at a number of venues, including the Indian River Research and Education Center and packinghouses in St. Lucie, Indian River, and Polk counties. Certificates of attendance are generated for attendees of the training, which provide the required documentation of such training required by the audits.

Delivery methods incorporated lectures with visual and media presentations, interactive discussion and questions, and demonstrations with hands-on/experiential activities. In 2011, programs resulted in 7,740 educational contacts. These trainings fulfilled a significant educational need for employers to meet food safety program requirements and audit criteria. This educational programming satisfies a regional need for fresh citrus exporters that is unique to the Treasure Coast at this time. However, the national food safety initiative that is gaining momentum is likely to result in similar training needs for fresh citrus packers that target the domestic U.S. markets. There might also be an opportunity for

Extension to provide similar required training for other fruit and vegetable producers and packers in Florida. County Extension faculty who get involved in such programming in the future would have to develop appropriate training presentations and perhaps dedicate a significant portion of their time to such an effort. Programming in Spanish needs to be provided to the significant Hispanic portion of the agricultural work force.



Fig. 1. Extension agents provide the necessary training to help growers, harvesters, and processors meet food safety guidelines and pass third-party audits.

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