

For Immediate Release

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**Now is the Time for Farmers and Concerned Consumers to
Comment on Massive New Food Safety Regulations**

Washington, DC, October 3, 2013 – Today, the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) launched a campaign to improve deeply flawed federal food safety regulations that will have a huge impact on farmers and the availability of high-quality local food products. The NSAC campaign provides farmers, concerned consumers, and farm, food, and public health organizations with information and resources to be able to effectively comment on the proposed regulations.

The deadline for public comments to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on the proposed rules is November 15 – just over six weeks away.

The regulations are part of the implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) passed by Congress in 2010. The regulations set new standards for produce farms and new requirements for food facilities – including farms – that handle or process food for human consumption. FDA is proposing standards that undermine sustainable and organic production practices, subject many farms to regulations designed for industrial facilities, and may well prove too costly for farmers to implement and stay in business. Given the magnitude of the problems with the rules, NSAC is calling on FDA to issue a new, heavily revised set of proposed rules for both produce farms and preventive controls in facilities.

“FDA’s food safety regulations will impact the agricultural landscape for decades to come,” said Brian Snyder, Executive Director of NSAC member-organization Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture and co-chair of NSAC’s Food System Integrity Committee. “At stake in these regulations is nothing less than the ability of family farmers and local food businesses to supply burgeoning consumer demand for fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as value-added products like artisan cheese and other preserved farm products.”

Information about the proposed regulations, who is affected, and what the top issues are, as well as instructions for how to submit comments to FDA are available at [NSAC’s FSMA Action Center](http://sustainableagriculture.net/fsma) (<http://sustainableagriculture.net/fsma>).

“Wading through hundreds of pages of detailed and complex regulations can be intimidating, and understanding how the rules will affect farmers can be very confusing,” noted Sarah Hackney, NSAC’s Grassroots Director. “To help, we are sharing resources that explain the regulations in plain language and highlight top issues for farmers and consumers so that everyone can weigh in with FDA during this critical time.”

FDA released the proposed regulations in January of this year and has extended the public

comment deadline twice. The deadline for public comments on the proposed regulations for produce safety and for food facilities is November 15, 2013. FDA must respond to all public comments properly submitted by the deadline.

“FDA is actively seeking input from farmers about how to improve the regulations before the agency makes them final,” explained Dave Runsten, Policy Director with NSAC member-group Community Alliance with Family Farmers and the other co-chair of NSAC’s Food System Integrity Committee. “It is paramount that farmers and people who care about how and where their food is grown comment on the draft rules by the November 15 deadline.”

“The agency needs to listen carefully to the concerns of farmers and fix the regulations so that they allow farmers to use sustainable farming practices, ensure that local food and farms can grow and thrive, and provide options that treat family farmers fairly,” said Ariane Lotti, NSAC’s Assistant Policy Director. “Given the substantial problems in the proposed regulations and the lasting impacts these regulations will have, we join the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture and the United Fresh Produce Association in urging FDA to issue a set of second proposed rules so the public can meaningfully comment on what we hope will be a major overhaul of their initial drafts.”

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The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition is a grassroots alliance that advocates for federal policy reform supporting the long-term social, economic, and environmental sustainability of agriculture, natural resources, and rural communities.