

NASDA and AFDO Launch Specialized Aseptic Sampling Course for State Produce Inspectors

The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, in collaboration with the Association of Food and Drug Officials, has developed a new training program to strengthen aseptic sampling skills among state Produce Safety inspectors. The inaugural **Aseptic Sampling for the Produce Inspector** course was held Aug. 26–27, 2025, at the NC State Mountain Horticultural Crops Research and Extension Center in Mills River, North Carolina.

Sixteen inspectors from nine state produce regulatory programs — **Maryland, Colorado, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Ohio, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Arizona** — participated in the pilot training. The course included a six-hour virtual session followed by two days of hands-on instruction delivered by AFDO experts.

This course was created in response to a growing need for state inspection staff to conduct both investigational and surveillance sampling under the Produce Safety Rule. In the early years of implementation, sampling activities were primarily conducted by the FDA, leaving state programs without specialized training tailored to produce environments. NASDA identified this gap and partnered with AFDO to design a course specifically for Produce Safety inspectors.

Course topics included the purpose of sampling, types of sampling activities, environmental zones, sampling team roles, required tools and materials, step-by-step sampling procedures, documentation practices, and post-analysis follow-through.

Two additional course deliveries are planned for the first half of 2026. Individuals interested in participating may contact **Jim Melvin** at jim.melvin@nasda.org.

