

It seems like food safety is in the news daily. What information does UC Cooperative Extension have to help me with some of my questions?

You are absolutely right, food safety is a topic that is in the news a lot these days. And it is important for all of us to be informed about it too. UC Cooperative Extension has a number of resources to help you with your questions.

First, it is important to understand that food safety can be thought about in a number of ways, and depends on your perspective. For example if you are farming, food safety will include thinking about, and having the most up-to-date information for, your on-farm agricultural practices and operations. If you are a consumer, you will want to be informed about safe food purchases, storage, and preparation. If you are an educator, you will want to have information that is appropriate for the groups you are working with, for example, children or adults.

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have identified several priorities with respect to food safety, which illustrate the difference perspectives that make up this broad topic. The priorities are:

1. Microbiological contamination
2. Nutritional imbalance
3. Environmental contamination
4. Naturally occurring toxins
5. Pesticide residues
6. Food additives

For farmers, our local contact for food safety questions is Steve Koike, UC Cooperative Extension Plant Pathology Farm Advisor. He is based in our Salinas/Monterey County office, and also works in Santa Cruz County. His contact information is stkoike@ucdavis.edu and telephone is (831) 759-7350. Another UC Cooperative Extension contact is Trevor Suslow, who has expertise in Postharvest Pathology and Microbial Food Safety. Websites with more information on these topics are <http://ucgaps.ucdavis.edu> and <http://ucfoodsafety.ucdavis.edu>. And another UC Cooperative Extension contact is Carl Winter, who is a Food Toxicologist and Director of the Food Safe Program at UC Davis. He works with different groups to extend information on food safety. Perhaps the most unique way in which he provides this information is through his use of music. He has written numerous songs using familiar tunes to help us all understand the importance of food safety. His website is <http://foodsafety.ucdavis.edu>. There you can find animated videos and concert footage with some of his 'greatest hits'. It is well worth the visit!

The take home message is that all of us – including farmers, consumers, and educators – need to be informed, vigilant, and mindful about food safety, and that there are resources to help you. Please let us know if you have other questions that we can assist you with.