

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
81R10326 TRH-F

H.B. 1908
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Agriculture & Rural Affairs
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

There is increased concern for the safety of the domestic food supply. It is important to educate and improve awareness among fresh fruit and vegetable producers on proper food handling procedures. Currently, there is no law requiring food inspections or regulations by the state.

H.B. 1908 requires the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA), as the lead agency, to assist the fresh fruit and vegetable industries with food safety issues and authorizes TDA to provide assistance to federal agencies in their implementation of voluntary guidelines relating to sound agricultural practices. This bill also requires TDA to coordinate, plan, and approve training and awareness programs for producers and packers of fresh fruits and vegetables.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Department of Agriculture in SECTION 2 (Section 91.009, Agriculture Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Sets forth legislative findings.

SECTION 2. Amends Subchapter A, Chapter 91, Agriculture Code, by adding Section 91.009, as follows:

Sec. 91.009. COORDINATION OF FOOD SAFETY. (a) Provides that the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) is the lead agency and requires TDA to assist the fresh fruit and vegetable industries with food safety issues and authorizes TDA to provide assistance to federal agencies in their implementation of voluntary guidelines relating to sound agricultural practices.

(b) Requires TDA to coordinate, plan, and approve training and awareness programs for producers and packers of fresh fruits and vegetables. Requires that a program under this subsection inform and educate producers and packers regarding sound agricultural practices, proper food handling procedures, the prevention of accidental or deliberately planned outbreaks of disease, and the enhancement of overall food safety.

(c) Requires TDA to coordinate the planning and implementation of programs required by Subsection (b) with colleges and universities in this state, the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Texas AgriLife Research, the Department of State Health Services (DSHS), and private industry.

(d) Authorizes TDA to adopt rules to implement this section. Requires TDA, in the development of rules for the certification of approved food safety curriculum or training, to consult and coordinate with DSHS.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2009.