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**VERMONT AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE ADVISES VERMONT FARMERS TO
FOLLOW FDA GUIDANCE FOR FLOOD DAMAGED PRODUCE, ALERTS
CONSUMERS**

Montpelier – The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) states that fresh fruits and vegetables that have been inundated by flood waters cannot be adequately cleaned and should be destroyed. Crops in which the edible portion has come in contact with flood waters are considered to be adulterated and should not to be offered for sale or consumed.

According to FDA all flood affected crops – fruits and vegetables, above and below ground – should not be available for sale. Due to the magnitude of the recent flooding and high possibility of contaminated waters, this new information does not coincide with recommendations for typical yearly flooding.

Vermont Secretary of Agriculture Chuck Ross is alerting farmers and consumers to the FDA instruction. “We understand this is a huge financial loss for our farmers, but in order to keep our food supply safe and ensure Vermont’s reputation for high quality, Vermont farmers are advised to follow this FDA guidance.”

To determine eligibility for federal farm program assistance, farmers should contact their county Farm Services Agency (FSA) office or the State FSA office at 802-658-2803. In addition, the Vermont Economic Development Authority (VEDA) has allocated up to \$10 million in low-interest loans that will be made available to businesses and farms hurt by Tropical Storm Irene, contact VEDA at 802-828-5627.

The FDA advises farmers to prevent cross-contamination by keeping produce impacted by flood waters completely separate. When using equipment in the fields do not drive from flood-contaminated areas into non-contaminated areas and do not use farm implements in a non-contaminated field after using in a contaminated field without cleaning and sanitizing first. Workers should wear protective clothing such as rubber boots and rubber gloves while working in fields that were flooded.

Crops near flooded areas or those that were flooded without the edible part of the plant coming in contact with flood water should be evaluated for food safety risk. Crops in which the edible portion develops after flood waters recede are also not automatically deemed adulterated.

The Agency of Agriculture works to facilitate, support and encourage the growth and viability of Vermont agriculture while protecting the working landscape, human, animal and plant health and the environment. Visit vermontagriculture.com for updates and information on the tropical storm Irene recovery efforts for farmers.

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