

# The Secretariat of Agriculture publishes a safety protocol for onion production in Chihuahua

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The National Agro-Alimentary Health, Safety and Quality Service (SENASICA) published the Protocol of Risk Reduction Systems for Onions in the State of Chihuahua. The Secretariat of Agriculture and Rural Development informed that the implementation of the protocol reduces the risks that onion crops are harmed by physical, chemical, or microbiological pollutants during the productive process.

Although the investigation of the Salmonella Oranienburg outbreak conducted by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) finished without scientific proof that demonstrated the origin of the contamination and without raising alarms against Mexican onions, the government of Chihuahua and producers collaborated to unify their criteria in a safety plan that will regulate the production of the crop in the state.

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The document establishes that the producers and companies that meet the guidelines will be enrolled in a list of reliable onion suppliers that will provide them with better opportunities to export to many commercial destinations.

The agency from the Secretariat of Agriculture has estimated enrolling at

least 30 production and packaging units (out of 99 currently operating in the state) during the first year of operations of the Protocol.

In turn, the government of Chihuahua will assist in the promotion, information, and implementation of the protocol, so the productive sector obtains the Contamination Risk Reduction System (CRRS) certification.

Francisco Javier Trujillo Arriaba, general director of the SENASICA, Lilia Merodio Reza, secretary of Rural Development of Chihuahua, and representatives from the onion business sector, agreed to establish a technical work group to provide follow-up to the Protocol.

Through previous virtual meetings, officials and producers agreed that the personnel belonging to the production chain of the crop must receive training so they become knowledgeable about the contamination risks inherent to the product.

Technology in the service of safety.

The document outlines the responsibility of the SENASICA's technicians, through the Cesavech (Plant Health State Committee of Chihuahua) of verifying and certifying the production and packaging units' activities in order to receive the CRRS certification.

Specialists will visit any production units that enrolled for certification in

these systems, and will provide follow-up through a mobile app operated by the health authority.

The technical personnel that assists in the implementation of the CRRS systems will use mobile equipment to record data in real time, which will facilitate protecting the information created during sample collection, and makes possible to quickly address health and safety emergencies.

In the countryside, farmers must guarantee that water sources are within the established quality limits, discard visibly contaminated products, use tools that are easy to wash and disinfect, and ensure that there are no animal or pest activities in the crops.

The producers must protect onions with disposable or washable covers during their transportation to packaging units. Moreover, it is necessary to keep the perimeter of packaging and storage facilities free of pests, weeds, or unused tools and equipment, have reflux valves in the water pipes, and apply cleaning and disinfection procedures on contact surfaces.

Packagers will have the updated directory of reliable suppliers, to guarantee the traceability of the product.

The onion is the third most produced crop in Mexico, only behind tomatoes and green peppers. Mexico is the twelfth producer worldwide, with over 1,499,000 metric tons.

With 323,729 metric tons (22% of the national total production), Chihuahua is the top national producer.