WVDA to Begin Farmers Market Inspections

Charleston W.Va. -- As of July 1, 2019, the West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) will begin the inspection of farmers markets and Farmer Markets Vendor Permits. The inspections are part of the new rules and regulations authorized under Senate Bill 375 which passed during the 2018 session. Corresponding rules were approved earlier this year and went into effect June 2, 2019.

“The intent of the legislation was to expand markets for cottage foods, as well as have one agency handle the regulations. The hope was these changes would help grow small agribusinesses in our state,” said Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Leonhardt. “We need to make sure folks understand these changes are now being implemented.”

Senate Bill 375 authorized the sale of potentially hazardous foods, made in home-kitchens, at farmers markets. Previously, the sale of these foods were illegal unless made in a commercial kitchen. The legislation also transferred all authority to regulate these businesses to the WVDA. As part of the rules, all farmers markets must register with the WVDA and provide a list of potential vendors.

“We have worked with our partners to host 30 informational meetings around the state. Hundreds of stakeholders attended to ask questions. We hope people understand what they must do to come into compliance under the new law,” said WVDA Regulatory and Environmental Affairs Director Amie Minor.

Producers who wish to sell canned acidified products, pickled products, fermented products, sauces, salsas, or time-temperature controlled foods must
obtain a permit and pass a home kitchen inspection. At farmers markets, they must display that permit, as well as follow proper health safety guidelines. Vendors found in violation may be levied fines or have their permit suspended.

Rules for Farmers Markets and Vendor Permits can be found here.

For more information or questions, contact Chad Linton clinton@wvda.us or 304-558-2227

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture protects plant, animal and human health through a variety of scientific, regulatory and consumer protection programs. The Commissioner of Agriculture is one of six statewide elected officials who sits on the Board of Public Works.

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