

# FOOD SAFETY TOPIC: AGRICULTURAL BEST PRACTICES

During the growing and harvesting of fresh produce, Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) should be implemented to minimize risks of microbial, chemical and physical contamination. The following are some GAP best practices to safeguard the food safety of fresh produce:

## PREMISES

Assess the production sites, neighbouring sites, building exterior and interior to identify potential sources of contamination. Prevent the access of farm/pet/wild animals to fresh produce growing sites to limit the potential fecal contamination of the soil and crop and reduce the risk of microbial contamination.

## MANURE, COMPOST/COMPOST TEA AND OTHER BY-PRODUCTS

Properly manage and treat natural fertilizers, such as manure, compost and other by-products, to prevent the potential for microbial, physical and chemical contamination. Some treatments may include composting, pasteurization or heat drying. Maximize the time between fertilizer application and harvest. The best practice is that it is applied greater than 120 days before harvest.

## AGRICULTURAL WATER

Water used for irrigation and applying pesticides/fertilizers is a potential contamination risk as it may contain microbial pathogens and chemicals. Assess your water sources and do not use them if there is any sign of possible contamination, such as high levels of wild bird or animal activity, runoff from livestock farms, flood conditions, etc. You may mitigate these risks with fences or ditches, irrigating in the morning to allow the sun to increase drying time and to allow the UV light to reduce pathogen survival.

## AGRICULTURAL CHEMICALS

Only use agricultural chemicals approved for use on a specific fruit or vegetable. Use chemicals according to the manufacturer's instructions for the intended purpose.

Keep records on agricultural chemical applications, including agricultural chemicals used, rate and date of application, PHI etc.

## HEALTH & HYGIENE OF HARVESTERS & HANDLERS

Employees and Management must follow personnel hygiene requirements when they may come in contact directly or indirectly with produce. Washrooms or portapotties provided must be used, as well as hand washing facilities whenever hands are dirty and prior to handling product or packaging. Employees should not come to work if they are ill or a carrier of a disease transferable to food.

## HARVESTING

Assess the growing area, do not harvest in areas with signs of wildlife, or where there is diseased, damaged or overripe produce or product that has touched the ground. During harvesting, inspect produce for physical contaminants such as stones, pieces of wood, metal or glass, reptiles and insects.

## EQUIPMENT, TRANSPORTATION AND STORAGE

To minimize risks of contamination to equipment, transport vehicles and storage, clean and sanitize these items regularly and prevent pests from entering buildings. Avoid transporting incompatible foods, materials and animals with fresh produce to prevent contamination. Keep records of these activities.

**Discussion point** – Discuss some of the ways you follow GAP at your site and identify how your site controls hazards.



FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [PERENNIA.CA/QUALITY-FOOD-SAFETY](https://perennia.ca/quality-food-safety)

Date/Shift Identifier:

Supervisor/Lead Hand (name and initials):

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Session Facilitator (if not the same as above) (name and initials):

**EMPLOYEES WHO ATTENDED**

Name:

Initials:

**EMPLOYEE FEEDBACK, QUESTIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS**

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**TALKING POINTS COVERED**

(add in any additional aspects or references of material covered that are specific to your operation):

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