



## NEW ENGLAND EXTENSION FOOD SAFETY CONSORTIUM

### GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

"Pick Your Own" Operations  
Customer Health and Hygiene

#### **New England GAP Guidelines Addressed Here:**

##### *Customer Health and Hygiene for Pick Your Own Operations*

- Toilet facilities and handwashing stations are clean and regularly serviced and maintained in good working order (soap, water and single-use paper towels) available for customer use
- Produce picked by customers is not accepted for sale
- There is the opportunity for customers to clean hands after coming in contact with farm animals (petting zoo) prior to entering "pick your own" area.

Many fresh fruits and vegetables are eaten with little or no cooking—they are "ready to eat". Because they are not cooked, raw fruits and vegetables can be a source of disease-causing bacteria, viruses or parasites (pathogens). Foodborne disease outbreaks have been associated with raw tomatoes, carrots, sprouts, lettuce, cantaloupe and cabbage.

Humans and animals are the major source of pathogens in our food supply. *E.coli 0157.H7*, *Salmonella spp.*, *Shigella spp.*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Giardia lamblia*, *Cryptosporidium parvum* and *hepatitis A* can often be traced back to human or animal sources.

It is as important for "pick-your-own" customers to observe good hygiene practices as it is for your own employees. While you can't make customers attend a training session, you can provide handwashing and toilet facilities to promote the practices that ensure the safety of the produce they pick. Use signs to encourage customers to wash their hands and to communicate your awareness of the food safety issues that concern the public. Prevention practices and knowledge are the key to the safety of the fruits and vegetables that you harvest.

#### **What can you do?**

- Provide your customers with convenient, well-maintained toilet facilities and toilet paper.
- Provide your customers with easily accessible, well-maintained handwashing facilities/stations, with paper towels, soap and a trash can.
- Post signs encouraging customers to wash their hands before picking produce and after using the toilet facilities. Signs are available through the internet, local health departments or universities.
- Be familiar with symptoms of illness and check to make sure that customers do not have open wounds or lesions.
- If you have an on-farm petting zoo or if customers can come in contact with animals, provide a opportunity for them to wash their hands after touching animals.

## **Additional References and Resources:**

### ***Guide to Minimize Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables***

<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/prodguid.html>

US Department of Health and Human Services, Food and Drug Administration  
Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN), October, 1998  
Food Safety Initiative Staff, HFS-32

U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition  
200 C Street S.W. Washington, D. C. 20204

### ***Food Safety Begins on the Farm: A Grower's Guide: Good Agricultural Practices for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables***

Anusuya Rangarajan, Elizabeth A. Bihn, Robert B. Gravani, Donna L. Scott, and Marvin P. Pritts. Cornell University, Cornell Good Agricultural Practices Program (607) 254-5383 [cab38@cornell.edu](mailto:cab38@cornell.edu)

### ***U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP)***

Code of Federal Regulations (CFR); section 21, part 110.

[http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx\\_01/21cfr110\\_01.html](http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_01/21cfr110_01.html)

### ***Minimizing Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables***

***Karen L.B. Gast and Kirn Holt.***

Kansas State University Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

<http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/>

### ***Food safety gateway to government food safety information***

<http://www.foodsafety.gov>

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