



NEW ENGLAND EXTENSION FOOD SAFETY CONSORTIUM

GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

In the Field Sanitation During Harvest

New England GAP Guidelines Addressed Here: *Sanitation During Harvest in the Field*

- Harvest storage containers are cleaned prior to use.
- Clean containers are kept covered until use in the field.
- Harvesting equipment is kept clean and in good working order.
- Harvested produce does not come in contact with manure or biosolids, nonpotable water, workers with poor hygiene and/or dirty boots and clothing, and unclean packaging or storage containers.
- Farm livestock, including poultry or pets are restricted from fields or orchards where crops are being grown and harvested.

Good sanitation practices during harvesting can help to reduce the risk of microbial contamination of fresh produce. Soil, fertilizers, harvesting equipment, water, workers, pets and pests can all be sources of harmful microorganisms that can cause foodborne illness. Therefore it is important that grower's set up measures to help prevent these sources of microorganisms from contaminating produce.

Good sanitation practices include cleaning and sanitizing all food contact surfaces, encouraging worker hygiene and training and keeping animals, pets and other beasts out of fields, orchards and packing house.

What do we mean by “food contact surface”, “cleaning” and “sanitizing”?

- A **food contact surface** is a surface that comes into contact with the fresh produce any time during harvesting, packing or transporting.
- **Cleaning** means to remove soil and residues from food contact surfaces by washing and scrubbing with soap or detergent, then rinsing with clean potable water.
- **Sanitizing** means to treat a food contact surface with a sanitizing solution that will kill most microorganisms. Surfaces must be cleaned first before they can be sanitized. Soil and soap residues can inactivate the sanitizing solution.
- A **sanitizing solution** is made by mixing a small measured amount of a sanitizer with potable water according to the directions given by the manufacturer.
- A **sanitizer** is a chemical compound designed to kill microorganisms. The most commonly used are chlorine bleach and quaternary ammonium compounds.

Take a walk through your facility and check for these signs of potential food safety hazards:

- Pets, livestock, poultry or wildlife in fields
- Human or animal waste in fields and orchards
- Sick or unclean workers
- Dirty harvest containers
- Produce laden with dirt or manure
- Broken and dirty harvest equipment

What can you do?

- Wash, rinse and sanitize, when possible and practical, all crop containers before harvest.
- When sanitizing, use an approved sanitizer according to the manufacturer's directions. Common sanitizers include chlorine bleach and quaternary ammonia. Store sanitizers and solutions away from the produce.
- Cover harvest containers to keep crop dust, animals, insects and birds out.
- Clean harvesting aids each day with potable water. This means they should be free of visible soil and residue.
- Keep harvesting equipment in good working order. Set up a maintenance schedule.
- Train workers to follow good hygiene practices.
- Do not haul produce in equipment that has been used to transport garbage, manure or 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

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

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