

# Land & Water fact sheet

## On-farm food safety



### What is it?

Providing safe food to consumers is a priority for all food businesses. Contamination, mishandling or poor storage of fresh produce can affect your profit line. Food safety programs have been specifically designed to make growing, harvesting, packing, storage and transportation safer on your farm and to help reduce the risks of contamination of produce.

### Training

It is vital that all staff and workers are aware of all procedures. The reason for order and strict regulations during growth, harvest, packing and transportation is to prevent one part of the process contaminating the next.

There are many possible ways that your produce could be contaminated on the farm. Recognising potential hazards is important. Having procedures in place to prevent any sort of contamination is the best way to go about food safety. The many recommended food safety programs provide clear guidance for what is safe to do and what is not.

Regular food safety sessions should be conducted with workers on your farm to maintain the necessary standards in your farming operation.

All stages of production have potential hazards; this starts at farm site selection and continues through to transportation and cold storage. Some of these hazards are listed below.

### Type of hazard:

- chemical
- biological
- physical
- allergenic.

Some hazards may not be recognised easily at every stage of production. For example, contamination could occur from animal droppings in the paddock contaminating produce that is picked off the ground several months later (for example pumpkin or passionfruit).

### Chemical

Chemical contamination can occur through a wide range of farm activities, for example poorly stored containers or mishandling of equipment in the field. Minimum residue limits and withholding periods must be adhered to minimise risks to human health when using chemicals. You are required by law to check that the product you are using is intended for the crop you are growing or whether it has a current permit. Visit [www.pestgenie.com.au](http://www.pestgenie.com.au) to check online the label of any product you are using

Check speed and direction of the wind before spraying your crops. Being considerate in spraying will maintain good relations with your neighbours and avoid possible legal action.

Old practices in the past might have lead to pesticides or unwanted chemicals being buried in the farmyard, nowadays, recyclable containers are more widely available from many chemical companies and programs such as DRUMmuster are

## On-farm food safety continued

available to collect used containers which cannot be recycled. Previously contaminated areas around the farm should be cleaned up by removing the soil or by fencing these areas off or properly contained, to avoid further contamination.

Heavy metals can exist in soils naturally or may have been added to the soil from fertilisers that contain heavy metals. Some soil conditions can be conducive to the uptake of heavy metals these include; acidity, salinity and zinc deficiencies in the soil. Be aware of your soil's make up.

### Non-pesticide chemical contamination

These include oil leaks, container residues, spills and cleaning chemicals that may not have been removed properly. Hazards can be minimised with proper storage facilities using concreted flooring with bunding to prevent spills. Keep your packing shed well lit and clear of hazards especially in packing areas.

### Allergenic agents

Preservative 220 (sulphur dioxide) is included in this group. These can have effects on health, especially for those who suffer from asthma.

### Physical

Physical contamination can include: sticks, stones, soil, glass, splinters from packing crates and paint flakes. Keep the soil and packing areas free from waste materials and old scrap to minimise the risk of contamination of your produce.

### How does it help me?

Avoiding contamination of fresh produce is not only important for your health, but reducing these risks on your farm, is also good for your customer.

As a bonus food safety practices will also reduce the risk of contamination of nearby water sources.

Programs such as Freshcare, offer you a professional approach to managing food safety.

To find out more about Farm Management Systems contact Growcom on 07 3620 3863 or visit [www.growcom.com.au/knowledgeplant](http://www.growcom.com.au/knowledgeplant)

### References:

**Guidelines for On-farm Food Safety for Fresh Produce – Second Edition**

Freshcare [www.freshcare.com.au](http://www.freshcare.com.au)

HACCP - <http://www.haccp.com.au/>

Coles and Woolworths requirements



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