



Farm Food Safety Plan

WHAT IS A FOOD SAFETY PLAN?

- According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), "A food safety plan consists of the primary documents in a food safety system that provides a systematic approach to the identification of food safety hazards that must be controlled to prevent or minimize the likelihood of foodborne illness or injury."
- It contains a collection of written documents that ensure the safety of food during the growing, harvesting, packing, and holding activities of the farm when producing fresh fruits and vegetables for human consumption.

AM I REQUIRED TO HAVE A FOOD SAFETY PLAN?

- A written farm food safety plan is not required by the [Food Safety Modernization Act \(FSMA\) Produce Rule](#). However, a food safety plan will be beneficial for growers to help assess their potential physical, chemical, and microbial risks on the farm, as well as assist in developing and implementing practices that will reduce those risks.
- Even though a food safety plan is not required by the FSMA Produce Rule, growers should determine whether their farm is an exempt farm, a qualified exempt farm, or covered by the FSMA Produce Rule. [The Produce Safety Alliance](#) has developed a webinar "[Understanding the FSMA Produce Safety Rule: for Exempt Produce Farms](#)" to assist growers with this process.
- If a farm is working with a buyer who requires them to have a Third-Party Audit, then a food safety plan will need to be developed, even if the farm is exempt or qualified exempt from the FSMA Produce Rule.
- Farm management should designate a person who is familiar with existing farm policy and procedures, someone who can assess the risks, and has the power to make necessary changes to help mitigate food hazards.
- Documentation will be required for some policy/procedures such as worker training, water system inspections, compost treatment (if applicable), cleaning and sanitizing of tools, equipment and buildings, water treatment monitoring (if applicable), and agricultural water die-off corrective measures should the agricultural water on the farm not meet the numerical water quality criteria as stated in the FSMA Produce Rule.

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HOW DO I BEGIN THE PROCESS?

- Starting a food safety plan can be a daunting process. The best suggestion is to start with something you already know, or already have in place as an existing standard operating procedure. Many people start with a farm overview, which includes a general description of the farm, commodities grown, acres cultivated, water sources used, etc.
- Create maps of the farmland, surrounding areas, and the farm irrigation and water distribution system(s).
- Develop a diagram of the packing/washing line (if applicable), and/or a packinghouse flow diagram (if applicable). The packinghouse flow map should include all coolers, storage areas, cull areas, break areas, etc.
- There are many [food safety plan templates](#) on the internet that can be useful to help begin the writing process. It is not possible for one template to address every situation, as each farm is different.
- Only include items that you are currently doing, not what you plan to do in the future. Third-Party auditors will expose elements of a plan that are included, but not being implemented.
- If using a template from the internet, make the necessary changes to the plan to make it unique to your farm. Time and thought need to be directed towards your food safety plan.

NOTE: Remember, the food safety plan is a working document. Once developed, it will continually be rewritten based on changes that occur on the farm throughout the year(s). The farm's food safety manager or designee should review this document on an annual basis to make sure new information has been added, and that all policy/procedures are being followed.

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