

Evaluating the Retail Checklist

A Guide For Food Service Buyers

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Checklist for Retail Purchasing of Local Fresh Produce

It is important for buyers of fresh, whole produce to have assurances that safe food handling practices were followed on the farm and during delivery to their facilities. Growers can provide documentation of food safety assurances through a buyer's onsite review of their farm, a certificate of attendance at good agricultural practices (GAPs) trainings or Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) workshops, or with documentation from a third-party audit.



While some growers must comply with the Produce Safety Rule of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) and attend PSA trainings, it is not required for all growers, such as for growers of products not typically consumed raw or produce that will be further processed. Completion of this checklist can provide documentation to the buyer that GAPs were followed on the farm, and that the buyer took reasonable care when purchasing fruits and vegetables directly from a grower. This checklist can also guide the conversation between retail buyers of fresh produce and local growers as they establish terms of the purchasing arrangement to ensure safe food practices are followed.

Items on this checklist are based on GAPs and elements of the FSMA Produce Safety Rule.

Name of Producer/Farm _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Telephone _____ E-mail _____
Total acres of fresh produce farmed _____ Availability of promotional materials YES NO
Products available for purchase: _____
Product Insurance Liability is held: YES (Dollar amount _____) NO
Is produce from the farm USDA Certified Organic? YES NO
(Note: USDA Certified Organic is a certification of practices and does not focus on food safety.)
Is the farm USDA GAP certified or food safety third party certified (such as SQF or GlobalGAP)? YES NO
Has the person in charge of the farm produce completed GAPs or PSA training? YES NO
Can buyers schedule a tour of the farm during the production season? YES NO

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Produce Food Safety

It is important for buyers of fresh, whole produce to have assurances that safe food handling practices were followed on the farm and during delivery.

However, not all produce growers are required to comply with the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule. Due to cost, many produce farms in Iowa are not GAP certified or certified organic.

Fortunately, growers can provide documentation of food safety assurances in several ways:

- Onsite review of their farm
- Certificate of attendance at Good Agricultural Practices or PSA training
- Documentation from a third-party audit (i.e. USDA GAP)
- Submission of the ***Checklist for Retail Purchasing of Local Fresh Produce***

Produce Food Safety

The *Checklist for Retail Purchasing of Local Fresh Produce* was created to provide documentation that:

1. Good Agricultural Practices were followed on the farm
2. The Buyer took reasonable care when purchasing fruits and vegetables directly from a grower.

The purpose of this guide is to help food buyers evaluate the checklist submitted by a farmer and identify areas of concern (red flags).

Produce Food Safety

The Checklist has 5 sections:

1. Production Practices
2. Product Handling
3. Facilities
4. Worker Health and Hygiene
5. Transportation

Download Here:

<https://store.extension.iastate.edu/Product/12938>

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Evaluating the Food Safety Checklist

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Has the person in charge of the farm produce completed GAPs or PSA training? YES NO

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Basic contact info

The USDA allows the food buyer to determine the requirements in this section.




Evaluating the Food Safety Checklist

In this section, look for answers which may be red flags (caution).
 All of the production methods are OK to use.
 Each lists sorts the practices from lowest risk to highest risk.


Key



Higher Risk
 Lower Risk


Production Practices	Yes	No	N/A
Are wells protected from contamination?			
What is the source of irrigation water? <input type="checkbox"/> Well <input type="checkbox"/> Stream <input type="checkbox"/> Pond <input type="checkbox"/> Municipal <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____			
What method(s) of irrigation is used on the farm? <input type="checkbox"/> Drip <input type="checkbox"/> Overhead <input type="checkbox"/> Flood <small>Note: Drip is recommended for leafy greens.</small>			
Are generic <i>E. coli</i> tests conducted on agricultural water used in fields?			
What types of manure are used on produce crops? <input type="checkbox"/> Raw manure <input type="checkbox"/> Composted <input type="checkbox"/> Aged <input type="checkbox"/> No manure is used			
Is the manure composted onsite or purchased commercially? <input type="checkbox"/> Onsite composting <input type="checkbox"/> Purchased commercially			
Is there documentation of composting methods used to validate the safety of the product?			
Is raw manure incorporated into soil two weeks prior to planting or 120 days prior to harvest to avoid raw manure from touching edible portion of the produce? (USDA Organic Standard)			
Is the manure application schedule documented and available?			

Type of Manure




Raw
 Aged
 Onsite compost
 Purchased compost
 None Used

Water Source



Stream/Pond (must test)
 Well (must test)
 Municipal
 No irrigation

Irrigation Method







Overhead
 Flood (rare)
 Drip
 No irrigation

Red Flags

- No water tests on wells or surface water
- Raw manure is not applied in suggested manner.
- No application records for raw manure
- Human feces and urine are not acceptable manure sources.

Evaluating the Food Safety Checklist

In this section, look for answers which may be red flags (caution).





Production Practices	Yes	No	N/A
Is land use history available to determine risk of product contamination from sources such as runoff from upstream, flooding, chemical spills, or excessive agricultural crop application?			
Is the field protected from animal confinement or grazing area runoff?			
Is land that frequently floods used to grow food crops?			
Are there preventive procedures in place to protect fresh produce in the field from flooding?			
Are preventive measures in place to restrict livestock, domesticated animals, and wildlife from growing areas?			
Are portable toilets used in a way that prevents field contamination such as located away from growing areas on even ground surfaces and emptied regularly?			
Are there policies or procedures on how to deal with contaminated produce in the field?			

Red Flags

- Field should be protected from runoff
- Fields should not flood or have history of flooding
- Animals should be restricted from growing areas. Gleaning of land by animals is not acceptable as animals produce raw manure.
- Farms should have procedures to deal with contamination

Evaluating the Food Safety Checklist

In this section, look for answers which may be red flags (caution).






Product Handling	Yes	No	N/A
Is produce checked for signs of contamination from sources such as animal feces or footprints prior to harvest?			
Are baskets, totes, or other containers kept off the soil during harvesting?			
Are harvesting baskets, totes, or other containers kept covered and cleaned (with potable water) routinely?			
Is harvesting equipment, machinery, and tools that come into contact with produce crops kept as clean as possible?			
Do procedures used in field packing of produce items minimize risk of contamination? Examples would include elevation of boxes from the ground or wearing of clean gloves?			

Red Flags

- Field should be checked before harvesting.
- Containers and produce can potentially become contaminated by contact with the ground.
- Harvest containers, tools and machinery should be cleaned routinely and stored in a way that minimizes contamination.
- Procedures should minimize contamination.

Evaluating the Food Safety Checklist

In this section, look for answers which may be red flags (caution).




Product Handling	Yes	No	N/A
Are the same containers used for produce items typically eaten raw and other produce? If so, are containers cleaned and sanitized between uses?			
Is dirt, mud, or other debris removed from product before packing?			
Are there policies or procedures in place about how to deal with contaminated produce during packing?			
Is the water used for cleaning products after harvest from a tested, potable water source?			
Are food-grade packaging materials stored in areas protected from pets, livestock, wild animals, and other contaminants?			
Is product protected from contamination as it travels from field to packing facility?			

Red Flags

- Harvest containers should be cleaned between uses.
- Dirt and debris should be removed before packing.
- There should be procedures to manage contaminated product.
- Water using during packing should have no detectable *E.coli* present
- Packaging materials should be protected.

Evaluating the Food Safety Checklist

In this section, look for answers which may be red flags (caution).






Facilities	Yes	No	N/A
What source of water is used for cleaning purposes on the farm? <input type="checkbox"/> Well <input type="checkbox"/> Municipal <input type="checkbox"/> Other			
Is this water source tested for generic <i>E. coli</i> at least once per year with results kept on file?			
Are temperatures of storage coolers monitored and documented?			
Is a product packing area in use? Is there space for culling and storage of produce?			
Are packing and storage facilities located away from growing areas?			
Are packing areas protected from wild and domestic animals?			
Are food grade packaging materials used?			

Red Flags

- Well water must be tested at least once a year for generic *E.coli*. Municipal water does not need to be tested.
- Packing areas should be protected from animals.
- Food grade packaging should be used. Recycling of packaging materials is not encouraged unless that material can be cleaned.

Evaluating the Food Safety Checklist

In this section, look for answers which may be red flags (caution).




Facilities	Yes	No	N/A
Are toilets and hand washing stations that use potable water cleaned and serviced routinely?			
Is a pest control program in place?			
Are there standard operating procedures for cleaning and sanitizing?			
Are cleaning and sanitizing procedures routinely followed with food contact surfaces regularly washed and rinsed with potable water, and then sanitized?			
Are there policies or procedures on how to manage human waste spills, including septic spills?			

Red Flags

- Toilets and handwashing stations must be cleaned routinely.
- There should be some type of pest control program.
- There must be cleaning and sanitizing procedures for food contact surfaces.
- There should be policies or procedures for managing human waste spill.

Evaluating the Food Safety Checklist

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Worker Health and Hygiene	Yes	No	N/A
Is a worker food safety training program in place with records of dates, topics, and participants?			
Are workers trained about hygiene practices and sanitation?			
Is smoking and eating confined to designated areas separate from product handling?			
Are adequate restroom facilities with washing facilities (potable water, soap, and disposable towels) readily available for all workers or anyone who touches the product? <i>Note: OSHA requires one toilet and one handwashing facility per every 20 workers within ¼ mile of the working area.</i>			

Red Flags

- All workers must be trained about hygiene and sanitation practices.
- Eating and drinking can be sources of contamination of produce.
- Restroom and handwashing facilities are required.

Evaluating the Food Safety Checklist

In this section, look for answers which may be red flags (caution).




Worker Health and Hygiene	Yes	No	N/A
Do workers practice good hygiene when harvesting and packing product by:			
Wearing clean clothing and shoes daily?			
Keeping hair covered or restrained?			
Not wearing jewelry in the packing area?			
Washing hands after touching soiled surfaces, using the toilet, and before handling produce?			
Covering open wounds with clean bandages and another protective layer such as a disposable glove?			

Red Flags

- Handwashing is required before handling produce.
- Open wounds must be bandaged.

Evaluating the Food Safety Checklist

In this section, look for answers which may be red flags (caution).

Transportation	Yes	No	N/A
Is the product kept protected from physical damage and contamination during transit to customers?			
Is the transport vehicle inspected for cleanliness before loading product?			
Is there a cleaning schedule for the transport vehicle, and is there documentation to show it is followed?			
Are there designated areas in transport vehicles for storage of food products and non-food items to avoid the risk of cross-contamination?			
Does the transportation schedule mitigate risk of temperature abuse of products?			

Red Flags

- Produce should be protected from damage or contamination.
- Vehicles should be inspected for cleanliness before loading.
- Products should be transported in a way that mitigates risk.

Red Flags Identified – Next Steps

If you have identified red flags as you reviewed the checklist, here are some options for you.

- Ask the farmer for additional information
- Ask the farmer if you can do a farm visit
- Contact the ISU Extension Product Safety team for additional guidance - iowaFSMA@iastate.edu
- If you decide to not approve the farm as a vendor, keep documentation of your rationale. Let the farm know what they can do to improve.

Red Flags on a Farm Visit

If you decide to visit the farm, here are some items that would be red flags and should be investigated further.

- Fields show damage from animals, flooding or manure run-off.
- Packing areas are dirty (more than daily activity).
- Packing and storage areas show evidence of pests, birds, insects.
- Overflowing trash and cull containers.
- Tools and equipment are not clean before use.
- Packing supplies are not protected from environment or pests.
- Restrooms and handwashing stations are dirty or lack supplies.
- Workers handling food are not practicing good hygiene practices.
- Standing water on floors or dripping water in coolers.

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