



GAP Practices: In the Field: Sanitation During Harvest

Sanitation during harvest in the fields

- 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, non-potable 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.