

Small-grower guideline

Leafy vegetables

August 2026



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Introduction

As the state's food regulatory agency, the NSW Food Authority is responsible for regulating and monitoring food safety across the entire food supply chain in NSW - from paddock to plate.

This work includes enforcing state and national food safety laws - the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the Code), the NSW *Food Act 2003* and the NSW Food Regulation 2025.

New national laws for primary producers and processors of berries, leafy vegetables and melons took effect in NSW in February 2026.

The laws were introduced in response to foodborne illness outbreaks in Australia and overseas. Berries, leafy vegetables and melons can easily pick up germs from soil, water, fertilisers, animals, and poor hygiene. Because they are eaten raw and not cooked, germs are not killed before they are eaten and can make people sick.



About this document

This guideline is designed to help small-scale businesses growing leafy vegetables for sale in NSW to meet their food safety obligations under Standard 4.2.8 of the Code.

The Food Authority recommends businesses also read Standard 4.2.8, available at legislation.gov.au/F2022L01062/latest/text.

The guidance in this document only applies to businesses growing less than 2 hectares (ha) of leafy vegetables for sale in NSW.

It does not apply to businesses that:

- grow 2 ha or more of leafy vegetables
- are certified to the industry food safety schemes Freshcare, SQF, GLOBALG.A.P or BRCGS
- grow leafy vegetables only for personal consumption.

More information

Visit www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/horticulture

Contact the NSW Food Authority helpline:

- Email food.contact@dpi.nsw.gov.au
- Phone 1300 552 406

Acknowledgments

This document was developed using content originally published in the following resources:

- Fresh Produce Safety Centre Australia & New Zealand (<https://fpssc-anz.com/>) [Multi Language Grower Guides](#) and [Fundamental Guidelines for Fresh Produce Food Safety](#)
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand's [Safe Horticulture Australia guide](#) (PDF, 2.7 MB).

Definitions

Leafy vegetable definition

Leafy vegetables are vegetables of a leafy nature where the leaf is consumed raw. Examples include:



Lettuce



Spinach leaves



Leafy herbs



Cabbages



Asian greens
e.g. bok choy



Spring onions



Silverbeet,
Swiss chard



Kale



Microgreens



Chicory

The following are **not** considered leafy vegetables: broccoli, broccolini, cauliflower, asparagus, artichoke, root and tuber vegetables, bulb vegetables, brussels sprouts, kohlrabi, cucumbers, peppers, eggplant, rhubarb, seed sprouts, squash, celery and leek.

Other terms used in this guide

- **Consumers:** the people who eat the produce.
- **Contamination:** when something that could be harmful to eat ends up in or on produce. For leafy vegetable growers, examples of contamination include:
 - chemical –such as pesticides, or leaked oil from a tractor
 - physical objects –such as stones, glass, bits of plastic and weeds
 - microbiological (germs) –such as *Salmonella* or *E. coli* getting onto leaves from dirty water, animal droppings, unclean surfaces or unwashed hands.
- **Food hygiene:** involves doing things to prevent contamination to keep leafy vegetables safe to eat, for example, using safe water and clean equipment.
- **Food safety:** is the result of practising good food hygiene, ensuring leafy vegetables will not harm people who eat them.
- **Food safety knowledge:** means understanding food safety and hygiene issues related to different tasks. For example, people picking leafy vegetables by hand must understand that dirty hands could contaminate the produce.

- **Food safety skills:** is being able to do a task in a way that ensures leafy vegetables stay safe. For example, people who trim leafy vegetables need to be able to properly wash their hands and sanitise a knife.
- **Growing site:** any area used to grow leafy vegetables. Growing sites include open fields, plastic tunnel houses, glass houses, hydroponic setups or other methods.
- **Harvest:** removing leafy vegetables from a growing site. Harvest includes picking, cutting, field packing, and transporting leafy vegetables from the growing site.
- **Hazard:** the potential for something harmful, like germs, chemicals, or physical objects, ending up in food.
- **Inputs:** the things 'put in' to help crops grow. Inputs include seeds, seedlings, soil, water, fertiliser and soil amendments, like compost, and water and chemicals used to wash produce.
- **Pathogen:** a microscopic organism (germ) that can make people sick. Pathogens include bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites.
- **Primary processing/ process:** what is done to produce soon after harvest. Primary processing includes washing, trimming, sorting, sanitising, combining produce from different growers and packing. It does not include cooking, freezing, drying, preserving, blending, juicing or adding other foods to leafy vegetables – these are carried out later in the supply chain.



1

Notification



Requirement

Businesses growing less than 2 ha of leafy vegetables for sale in NSW need to provide their business details to the Food Authority through a process called 'notification'.

What to do

Complete and submit the [Notify food business details to the Food Authority online form](#) on the Food Authority's website (www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au).

Business notification is free. Small-scale growers do not usually need a Food Authority licence.

Routine on-farm inspections do not apply to small-scale growers. The Food Authority will only visit if the business requests it or to address urgent food safety matters.

Farmers market and farm gate sales

If a grower sells produce directly to consumers, for example at markets or through deliveries, they must notify both the local council and the Food Authority.

This is because in NSW local councils have oversight of most retail food businesses, which sell food directly to consumers. The Food Authority monitors growing, primary processing and business-to-business sales of leafy vegetables.

To find a local council, visit olg.nsw.gov.au/public/find-your-local-council.

When you need a Food Authority licence

Small-scale leafy vegetable growers need to apply for a Food Authority licence instead of notifying their details if they receive leafy vegetables from other growers and process them for sale, for example wash, trim, sort, sanitise, combine and/or pack. In this scenario, they are considered a leafy vegetable processor and different requirements apply.

For more information, see www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/help/licensing.

2

Growing sites



Requirement

Growing sites must be located, designed, constructed, maintained and operated in way that keeps leafy vegetables safe to eat.

Why it's important

Growing sites can contaminate produce, depending on where they are and what they have been used for. If leafy vegetables are contaminated while they are growing, it can be difficult to fix later as they are eaten raw. Post-harvest washing can't get rid of all contamination. Common sources of contamination include:

- nearby livestock (e.g. cattle, sheep, poultry) - wind, dust, or water can bring pathogens (germs) from animals onto produce
- previous industrial land use, which may leave behind heavy metals or chemical residues
- poor farm maintenance – things like weeds, stones, glass, or metal can get into produce.

What to do

Growers must do what they can to stop food becoming unsafe.

Before planting, assess the growing site for potential food safety hazards, such as physical materials, dangerous pathogens from animal droppings, raw manure or improperly processed compost, or chemical contamination (such as from unregistered chemicals). Things to consider include:

- ***Are livestock nearby?*** Nearby animal grazing or feedlots could be a source of contamination.
- ***Could animal waste blow or be washed into the crop, for example from a nearby road?***
- ***Is the site likely to be flooded in heavy rain?*** Floodwaters carry all types of contamination.
- ***Could septic or sewage systems drain or overflow onto the site, or nearby areas?***
- ***What weeds are or were on the site?*** Some can be toxic with seeds that sprout years later.
- ***What chemicals have been applied?*** Some can stay in soil for a long time.
- ***What was the site used for before?*** Could it have been used to dump rubbish?
- ***Is the site securely fenced – could livestock or wild animals get in?***

It is a good idea to create a property plan or map showing areas of potential contamination.

Growers need to regularly check for hazards during the crop's lifecycle, and at least within a week of harvest. Common hazards and suggestions to address them are outlined in Table 1.



Table 1 - Good practices for managing growing sites

Hazard	Good practices
Physical	• Remove any physical contamination before planting and take action to prevent further contamination. • Avoid using highly contaminated areas, such as old dip sites or rifle ranges, and areas within 20 metres of busy roads. • Remove and control weeds and other foreign plants, especially those that could cause harm if eaten. Regularly maintain and repair equipment used on growing sites. • Train staff to identify and remove physical hazards. • Store rubbish away from the growing site and dispose of it regularly.
Chemical	• Avoid sites contaminated with chemicals (for example, organochlorines) and metals, such as cadmium or arsenic. • Use windbreaks or crop planning to address spray drift or dust. • Follow guidelines for testing soil and produce.
Microbiological	• Ensure septic or sewage systems are located downhill from growing areas or irrigation water storage areas. • Store or compost organic materials, such as animal or poultry manure, well away from the site. • Never use human effluent (waste), biosolids, or untreated manure on leafy vegetables. • Use secure fencing to prevent livestock and pets from entering the site. • Control wildlife, such as waterfowl, ravens, possums, kangaroos, wallabies, emus and skinks at the site and in water sources. • Do not harvest leafy vegetables touched by floodwater. • If floodwater impacts the water supply, test it before use.

3

Inputs



Requirement

The things used to grow leafy vegetables, including seeds, seedlings, soil, soil amendments, fertiliser and water, must not make leafy vegetables unsafe to eat.

Why it's important

If not properly managed, inputs can contaminate leafy vegetables with harmful germs, chemicals or physical hazards that can make people sick.

What to do

Seeds and seedlings

- Only buy leafy vegetable seeds and seedlings from reputable suppliers to ensure they are not contaminated with bacteria or toxic weeds.
- Ask suppliers if any chemicals were used to treat seeds or control pests and diseases and how they have prevented contamination.
- During storage, protect seed from contamination by rats, mice, dirty water and chemicals.

Soil, soil amendments and fertilisers

- Prevent soil from touching the edible parts of leafy vegetables, for example by using plastic mulch under plants.
- Do not use untreated animal manures or human waste for quick-growing crops like leafy vegetables.
- Ensure commercial soil amendments are certified and compliant with *Australian Standard AS 4454-2012: Composts, soil conditioners and mulches*.
- If making soil amendments, follow an approved, verified process to be sure microorganisms are reduced to safe levels.
- Check the recommended time to wait between applying any soil amendment and harvest (for example, 90 days for a soil amendment used for produce grown close to the ground). The waiting period allows time for sunlight and soil microbes to naturally destroy any harmful pathogens, ensuring the produce is safe to eat.
- Protect stored treated soil amendments from contamination by keeping them covered and away from chemicals, waste and animals.

Chemicals

- Ensure any chemicals used on the crop, such as pesticides, are suitable for food production and withholding periods are followed.

Case study

Toxic weeds in spinach causes poisoning

In 2022, more than 100 Australians were reportedly poisoned after eating spinach accidentally contaminated with a toxic weed. Symptoms were severe and included hallucinations, delirium, rapid heartbeat and blurred vision. Affected people needed medical attention.

Major supermarkets recalled dozens of spinach products across the country and consumer demand plummeted. The producer lost almost \$1 million overnight and other salad producers were also significantly impacted as consumers avoided buying bagged salads.

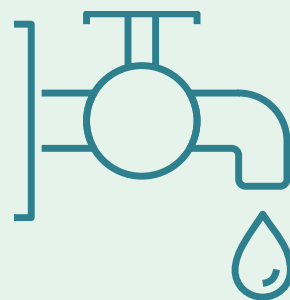
The producer went back to the growing site after harvest and found the toxic weed in larger numbers than expected. The business's operations and practices were improved to prevent the problem happening again.

Source: [Safe Horticulture Australia](#) (PDF, 2.7 MB).



4

Water use



Requirement

Water used before and after harvest must not make leafy vegetables unsafe to eat.

Why it's important

Dirty water can leave harmful germs on leafy vegetables and equipment, containers, tools, vehicles and hands.

What to do

Common sources of farm water include dams, bores, rainwater tanks and natural waterways, such as rivers and creeks. Regular testing is essential to ensure irrigation water is not carrying dangerous germs. Testing for *E.coli* is the clearest way to show if water is contaminated. The table below outlines recommended uses for different test results (microbial criteria).

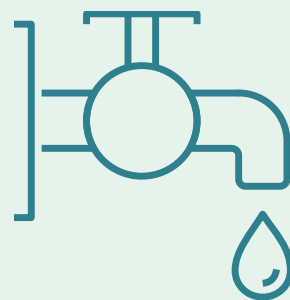
Table 2 - *E. coli* testing criteria and use

Water microbial criteria	Suggested use
<i>E. coli</i> <1 cfu/100 ml	May be used without restriction on any crop at any time.
<i>E. coli</i> <100 cfu/100 ml	May be used without restriction on any crop before harvest and for certain post-harvest applications.
<i>E. coli</i> >100 cfu/100 ml but <1,000 cfu/100 ml	Must not be used within 48 hours of harvest if the water touches the edible part of leafy vegetables.
<i>E. coli</i> >1,000 cfu/100 ml	Should not be used for irrigation or crop spraying if the water touches the edible part of leafy vegetables.

Watering crops (irrigation)

Water used to grow crops and apply fertilisers, pesticides and other agricultural chemicals, should not contain *E. coli* greater than 100 cfu/100ml. Otherwise, it could make the produce unsafe to eat.

- Regularly assess water sources of the potential for contamination in normal and high rainfall, and from spills, leaks and leaching.
- Take measures to prevent water contamination, for example, fence around dams to keep animals away and ensure water tanks are securely covered.
- If river or creek water is used for overhead irrigation of leafy vegetables, the water should be allowed to settle in farm ponds to improve water quality via sediment settlement.



- Regularly test water sources by sending samples to an appropriate laboratory, and keep testing records.
 - The best time to test water is before the beginning of the season (or in summer), with another test if the source might be contaminated (for example, after flooding).
 - Test water sources during long periods of no rain (drought) as low levels can make water saltier and toxic algae more likely.
 - Take samples from the point of use, for example the tap or spray nozzle, after allowing the system to run for 1-2 minutes.
- Treat water if required, such as with chlorine, peroxyacetic acid, UV and/or filtration, and monitor levels of any chemicals used.
- Record which water sources are used for irrigation of each growing site.
- The Food Authority can arrange free water testing for growers who don't have access to town (potable) water. For more information, email food.contact@dpird.nsw.gov.au.

Post-harvest water use

Surface water, for example from rivers, creeks and ponds, must not be used after harvest to wash or cool produce unless it has been treated and verified as safe.

- Water used to cool, wash or sanitise produce must be clean and safe (town water or similar potable drinking quality).
- Water used for cleaning food contact surfaces and hand washing must be safe – town water or similar drinking quality.
- If you are not using town water, test the post-harvest water source to confirm *E.coli* less than 1cfu/100ml.
- See washing and sanitising produce on page 14 for more guidance on post-harvest water use.



5



Premises and equipment

Requirement

Farm buildings and structures, as well as equipment and vehicles, must be in good repair and be kept clean, and sanitised where necessary. They must not contaminate leafy vegetables.

Why it's important

Poorly made and maintained farm buildings and equipment increase the chance of contamination, for example:

- paint flakes, timber splinters, rust and dirt on structures, could fall into containers or on leafy vegetables
- pathogens such as *E. coli* and *Listeria*, can survive on dirty surfaces and easily spread to produce
- chemicals or fertilisers, if not stored correctly, could spill or leak into areas where leafy vegetables are handled or packaging is stored.

What to do

Premises

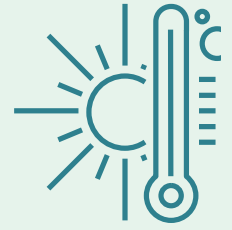
- Ensure floors can be easily cleaned and do not form pools of water that could splash onto produce.
- Surfaces that touch produce, such as harvest bins and conveyor belts, must be made of materials that can be easily cleaned, such as plastic or stainless steel. They should be regularly cleaned and where appropriate sanitised.
- Do not use wooden boxes unless they are sealed with a waterproof barrier to prevent splinters and swelling.
- Keep the premises tidy and remove rubbish regularly.
- Chemicals, fertilisers, fuels and farm machinery must be stored away from areas where leafy vegetables are handled, packed, and stored.
- Lighting in growing, packing and storage areas should be in good repair and bright enough for staff to effectively inspect produce.
- If there is a cool room, ensure the cooling unit does not drip water on produce. If necessary, add a drip pan to drain the water out of the room.



Equipment

- Regularly inspect harvest and processing equipment, including containers, and replace or repair as needed. Pay particular attention to all surfaces that contact (touch) leafy vegetables, such as crates, washing tanks and packing lines.
- Knives must have solid blades. Never use breakable/ snap-off blades or knives.
- Wash all harvesting tools daily to remove visible material and sanitise where they come into contact with (touch) produce.
- Ensure workers know how to properly use and maintain the premises and equipment.

6



Temperature after harvest

Requirement

Harvested leafy vegetables must be kept at a temperature that does not make them unsafe to eat.

Why it's important

Any germs on leafy vegetables can multiply rapidly after harvest in warm conditions. Keeping produce cool maintains quality and reduces risks to consumers. Leafy vegetables also last longer if they are kept between 0°C and 5°C.

What to do

Cooling produce as soon as possible after harvest helps keep it fresher for longer and to stop the growth of harmful germs.

- Harvest in the morning or at night when temperatures are cooler.
- Keep harvested produce under shade, for example with a light-coloured shade cloth.
- Consider any post-harvest steps that may need temperature control and how they can be managed.
- If you can, keep washed and packed leafy vegetables at 0°C to 5°C to manage food safety risks.
- Regularly check the temperature to make sure refrigeration is working.
- Ensure cool rooms are regularly cleaned and sanitised and service cooling units regularly.

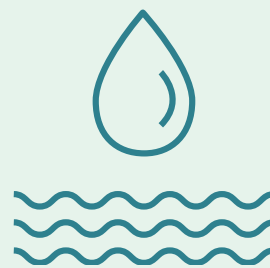
Using water to cool produce

Using water is a fast and effective way to cool leafy vegetables.

- Any water used to cool leafy vegetables must be clean town water or similar potable drinking quality.
- If water is used in a tank or is recirculated, you need to add an antimicrobial chemical (sanitiser) to the water. Ensure chemical levels are monitored and adjusted as required.
- Ice can be added to the water or used crushed or flaked when packing water-tolerant produce. Ice must be made using town water (or similar potable quality).

7

Washing after harvest



Requirement

Visible dirt and foreign material on harvested leafy vegetables must be removed. Any washing or sanitising of leafy vegetables must not make them unsafe to eat.

Why it's important

Dirty leafy vegetables can carry harmful germs. If washing and sanitising are done incorrectly, the bacteria will not be removed and can spread to other produce washed that day.

Washing and sanitising are 2 separate processes, with different purposes:

- **washing** fresh produce removes any visible material such as dirt
- **sanitising** is an additional step that reduces the number of microorganisms (germs) on leafy vegetables to a safe level, usually with a chemical such as food grade bleach. Sanitisation must only be done after washing because dirt can make sanitisers less effective.

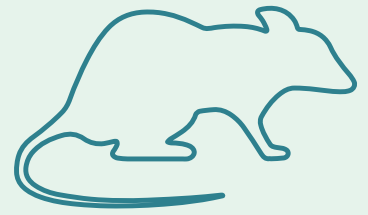
Sanitisers can only kill some germs. They cannot fix leafy vegetables that are heavily contaminated – such as crops that have been in floodwater, or touched by animal droppings or sewage. You must throw out this produce and not harvest it for food.

What to do

- Use an appropriate method to remove surface dirt and other visible material from leafy vegetables, such as shaking off dirt before trimming off roots or washing.
- Wash leafy vegetables with visible soil, bird or animal waste separately, at the end of the day if possible, to avoid spreading contamination. Discard any produce heavily soiled with bird or animal waste.
- Know the best and most effective ways to wash and sanitise the leafy vegetables, as it varies depending on the type of produce.
- Use only safe, drinking quality water for washing and regularly monitor water quality.
- Chemical sanitisers work better in clean water. Where chemical sanitisers are used:
 - ensure correct concentrations and contact times are applied. Follow the instructions provided
 - monitor the chemical levels several times during the day, adding more as required
 - change the water regularly at set intervals and when it looks dirty.

8

Animals and pests



Requirement

Small-scale growers need to minimise the presence of animals, vermin and pests in and around growing sites, the premises and equipment.

This includes livestock, pets and working dogs, rats and mice, birds, wild animals, flies, cockroaches and other insects.

Why it's important

Animals and pests can carry harmful germs that can contaminate leafy vegetables and make them unsafe to eat – both directly, through faeces, urine, hair/feathers or carcasses and indirectly by contaminating buildings, equipment and inputs (such as water) used for produce.

What to do

- Exclude all domestic animals, including pets, from areas where produce is harvested, packed and stored.
- Regularly look for signs of wildlife, pests or vermin, such as droppings, digging or nests in the growing site, buildings and equipment.
- If using surface water sources such as ponds or dams for irrigation, regularly check for signs of wildlife (for example, water birds) and animal droppings in the area.
- Protect and maintain growing sites to discourage animals from entering, for example by:
 - using fencing
 - removing damaged or rotten produce
 - preventing puddles and pools of water.
- Check growing sites for animals and pests before harvest. If found, decide whether produce is safe to harvest from those areas.
- Only use approved baits and traps for pest control. Ensure bait blocks are inside containers to minimise the risk of accidental spread of chemicals.
- Show the location of each bait station on a facility plan or map and monitor the stations often. Keep a record of the number of bait blocks replaced in each station so you can identify areas where pests are more active for additional control measures.
- If wildlife is a challenge, consider using decoys, fencing, netting, noise deterrents, ultrasonic devices, reflective tape, inflatable air figures, and/or balloons.

Scenario

Managing free range chickens

A business grows herbs and salad vegetables on a family plot to supply to restaurants. They also keep free range chickens for their eggs and manure. On inspection of the plot, a regulator notices chickens among the growing crops and points out this is unsafe, because the birds' droppings could contaminate the soil and leafy vegetables with *Salmonella* and other harmful bacteria.

The business separates the chickens from the plants with wire fencing and conducts a risk assessment to determine when it would be safe to harvest the affected plants. The business is also advised to not use any fresh manure on or near the vegetables and to make sure manure is thoroughly composted before use.

Source: [Safe Horticulture Australia](#) (PDF, 2.7 MB).



9

Skills and knowledge



Requirement

All staff and supervisors working with leafy vegetables must have the skills and knowledge to handle food safely and hygienically.

Why it's important

If everyone can follow good food safety and hygiene practices, the chances of product contamination is reduced.

What to do

It is important to first understand all the activities the business does. A process flow diagram could be useful, mapping out what each person does.

The requirement does not mandate specific training. Options might include:

- in-house training
- working alongside an experienced worker
- providing guidance materials to staff
- putting up signs to remind staff of food safety practices
- have operating procedures in place that set out the responsibilities of staff, visitors and supervisors
- formal or online food safety training courses.
- Ensure staff and supervisors can understand and follow food safety practices outlined in grower guides and other documentation, for example, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).
- Train staff to identify and report things that could make produce unsafe, for example, toxic weeds in fields or animal droppings in processing equipment.
- Set rules on good food safety and hygiene practices and make sure everyone follows them.
- Provide food safety training when staff first start work and regularly refresh training, for example at the start of each harvest season.
- For free best practice guidance materials to share with staff, see the Fresh Produce Safety Centre's [multi-language grower guides](#).

10

Health and hygiene



Requirement

Staff and visitors must follow health and hygiene practices to keep leafy vegetables safe to eat.

Why it's important

Staff (including contractors) and visitors can contaminate produce with harmful germs, chemicals, or foreign matter from their hands, body, clothes or equipment. Setting good personal health and hygiene practices ensures everyone onsite is clean and well.

What to do

- Provide clean toilets for workers and visitors. Where possible, toilets should be easily accessible to staff for specific work areas and located away from water sources and places likely to be flooded.
- Provide handwashing facilities near toilets that include running town water (or similar drinking quality), liquid soap, and single-use paper towels.
- Provide staff hygiene training when they first start work and regularly refresh training (for example, each harvest season).
- Remind everyone they must wash their hands after using the toilet, before starting or returning to work, after eating and smoking, after touching animals or animal waste, and any time hands may have become contaminated.
- Cuts, minor wounds, and sores must be securely covered with bandages and dressings. Safely discard any product that may be contaminated with blood.
- Display signs to remind people about good health and hygiene practices, telling them what they should do.
- Monitor toilets, lunch areas, and first aid kits to ensure they are clean and well-stocked.
- Do not allow smoking, vaping, spitting, chewing gum, eating, sneezing, or coughing near unprotected leafy vegetables.
- Ask everyone to remove jewellery, except for plain wedding bands.
- Encourage staff to report illness and enable them to be re-assigned to low-risk tasks during recovery. Do not allow people with symptoms of illness including nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fever, or jaundice to handle fresh produce.
- Provide inductions or materials on health, hygiene and food safety to visitors.
- Ask visitors to complete declarations that they are not sick with intestinal or respiratory illness.

Scenario

Poor hygiene causes foodborne illness

A berry picker who was still recovering from gastro illness caused by norovirus harvested fresh berries and field packed them into retail-ready punnets.

Due to poor hand hygiene, norovirus was transferred from the worker to the fruit.

Consumers eating the fruit also ingested the virus and became ill.

The affected worker should have informed their supervisor they were ill, and either stayed off work or been reassigned to a lower-risk task, such as driving farm equipment or computer work.

All staff and visitors should thoroughly wash their hands before handling fresh produce, especially after using the toilet or when hands have become contaminated (for example, from contact with bird droppings on plants).

Source: [Safe Horticulture Australia](#) (PDF, 2.7 MB).



11



Traceability

Requirement

Businesses must have a system in place to identify who they sell produce to and who they buy it from (business-to-business sales only).

Why it's important

Having this information helps growers remove leafy vegetables from food supply chain quickly if there is a problem, reducing the risk of people getting sick and costs for the business.

What to do

The system may be paper based, electronic or online. Whatever system is used, data should be clear and easy to access. A good system includes records of:

- growing location, crop type and variety, as well as inputs used, for example, source and certificate of compost, quantity applied, date of application, etc
- operational records such as harvest date, picker or picking team, harvesting equipment, packaging and product labelling
- contact details of suppliers and customers and what was supplied, including lot identification, batch number or other markings
- date of transaction or delivery.

Records can be kept on paper, a computer or device. The main goal is being able to find records quickly if there is a product recall or food safety inspection. The more detail you include, the faster you'll be able to respond if there's a problem with your product, or if you are inspected by a food safety officer.

Crop markers

- Consider dividing the farm into blocks, naming or numbering each. Every time there is work in a block, record it. Keep records of any application of fertilisers, soil amendment, and pesticides.
- At harvest, keep records of the block, what was harvested, and when.
- Keep records of any washing and processing, with the block the leafy vegetables came from and any chemical used during processing.

Marking boxes

- If washing and/or packing leafy vegetables from another grower, ensure they have good traceability records. Identify where different produce came throughout the process.
- Consider marking each box with a code to know exactly when the product was washed/packed.
- Marking packed boxes helps with responding to a customer complaint or a food safety issue.

12

Weather events



Requirement

Ensure leafy vegetables affected by weather are not unsafe to eat.

Why it's important

Severe weather such as drought, dust storms, floods, strong winds and hailstorms can physically damage leafy vegetables and cause contamination that makes them unsafe to eat. For example:

- floodwater can carry chemicals, dangerous pathogens (germs), and physical contaminants (plastic, glass, metal, wood) and deposit it in and on produce
- a septic system spill in growing areas brings heavy loads of pathogens
- wind can blow dust and dirt containing harmful pathogens onto produce
- droughts often reduce the quality and safety of water sources.

What to do

Prevention

- Ensure fields have good drainage so water does not pool around produce.
- Use wind breaks or shelter to reduce dust and dirt blowing onto produce and equipment.
- During droughts and floods, monitor water sources more closely and more often.
- Maintain a record or register of extreme weather events, such as heavy rainfall, flooding and dust storms impacting your farm and water sources.

After a flood

Floodwater often carries contamination from sewage and septic systems, manure and chemicals.

- As soon as it's safe, mark the high-water line to identify where crops were in contact with floodwater. Place a second set of markers well away from the high-water line to create a buffer zone, which allows equipment to turn without touching the flooded area.
- Discard leafy vegetables touched by floodwater.
- Thoroughly clean clothing, boots, gloves and other equipment before working in clean areas.
- Wait at least 60 days before replanting. The soil must be sufficiently dried out. Agronomists can organise soil tests to check levels of contamination in the flooded fields before replanting.

After a storm

- Check produce and remove, treat or separate any that is likely to be unsafe to eat.
- Adjust washing and sanitising steps to manage the extra soil and dust on produce.

Food safety checklist



This checklist outlines food safety requirements for small-scale leafy vegetable growers.

Requirement	Tick box
Notify business details to the NSW Food Authority.	☐
Assess the growing site for contamination risks, for example from animals or nearby operations, and take action to eliminate or manage any risks identified.	☐
Ensure seeds and seedlings, water, soil, fertiliser and compost used to grow leafy vegetables are safe for food production.	☐
Minimise the presence of animals, vermin and pests in areas where produce is grown and handled.	☐
Ensure any chemicals used on the crop, such as pesticides, are suitable for food production and withholding periods are followed.	☐
If using a chemical sanitiser after washing produce, ensure it is suitable for food production and that the manufacturer's instructions are followed.	☐
Monitor the temperature of harvested produce and if necessary, adjust conditions to keep it cool.	☐
Keep equipment and surfaces that touch leafy vegetables clean, sanitised and in good repair.	☐
Keep records of who you buy leafy vegetables from, and who you sell them to (business-to-business sales).	☐
Make sure workers understand food safety hazards and follow good personal health and hygiene practices.	☐
Understand how weather events can impact food safety and know how to prevent unsafe produce entering the food supply.	☐
Ensure any visible extraneous material on harvested leafy vegetables is removed (for example, dirt) after harvest.	☐
Use only drinking-quality water to wash produce and to clean food contact surfaces.	☐
Never sell or supply leafy vegetables if you think they could be unsafe to eat.	☐

Food Authority



For more information

- Phone 1300 552 406 (8:30am-5:30pm NSW business days)
- Email food.contact@dpird.nsw.gov.au
- Visit foodauthority.nsw.gov.au

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