Food Safety Plan

Have and enforce a Food Safety Plan

Food safety refers to the conditions and practices that minimize hazards being introduced into the food and help prevent contamination and foodborne illnesses caused by harmful microorganisms. Sources of contamination may include biological, chemical and physical hazards.

If someone eats a blueberry that has been contaminated by a pathogenic microorganism, that person may become very ill and in some cases the illness can lead to death. It is our responsibility to provide a safe product and maintain the confidence of our consumers by following sound food safety practices.

Blueberries can become contaminated from the hands that pick them; the surfaces of the containers that are used to carry them after they have been harvested; contaminated water or animals that enter the field. Throughout the day, there are many small situations that may appear harmless but could lead to the contamination of blueberries, which puts you, your farm, your workers, and consumers at risk.

Food safety must be taken seriously. It is a farm, harvester, packer and distributor’s responsibility to have and enforce a Food Safety Plan, provide the right facilities and infrastructure, and train workers. The principles and importance of food safety, health and personal hygiene, water usage (quality) and field sanitation are critical areas that must be addressed.

Enforce the practices outlined in this brochure and post the federal and state compliant poster at multiple key areas throughout your farm (the front door, the bathroom, the office, entrance to the field, cold storage, etc.). These practices serve as an example and are not exhaustive and/or will have to be adapted to your farm.

Sources

FSMA Final Rule on Produce Safety
https://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/acm134114.htm

Produce Safety Alliance Grower Manual v1.1

FSMA Produce Safety Rule Regulatory Reference Table
https://producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu/sites/producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu/files/shared/documents/FSMA-Regulatory-Table.pdf

FSMA Guidance for Industry - Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables. FDA and USDA


Blueberry Basics: Clemson Cooperative Extension

U-Pick Blueberries. Michigan State University Extension

FIGHT BAC! Partnership for Food Safety Education

Selecting, Storing, and Serving Ohio Blueberries, Blackberries, and Raspberries. Ohio State University, College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental	Cornell University Food Safety Guides

Build a Food Safety Plan www.foodsafety.ssfpa.net

More Information

United State Department of Agriculture
www.ams.usda.gov/services/auditing/gap-ghp

Cornell University National Good Agriculture Practices Program
www.gaps.cornell.edu

Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)
www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA

Extension Agent Contact

www.blueberry.org  |  916.983.0111
**Personal Hygiene**

The health and hygiene of your farm workers directly impacts the safety of your blueberries. Optimal personal hygiene must be maintained throughout all phases of harvesting and packing blueberries as outlined below.

**Do not work if sick or wounded**
- If a worker is ill or has symptoms of nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea, they can transmit harmful microorganisms to blueberries. Ill employees should refrain from working.
- Encourage workers to immediately notify their supervisor if they are ill or wounded.
- Gloves should be worn if a worker has infected cuts, open wounds, blisters, or is bleeding, as he or she can transmit harmful microorganisms to blueberries.

**Maintain personal hygiene**
- Practice proper hand washing before work, before and after meals or eating, and after using toilet facilities.
- Bathe regularly.
- Wear clean clothing.
- Train employees and document training.

**Use restroom and dispose of toilet paper properly**
- Use the designated restroom provided by the farm.
- Instruct employees to never urinate or defecate in the field.
- Check sanitation units to ensure they are maintained and stocked with soap, paper towels, and toilet paper.

**Wash and disinfect hands after using the bathroom and before starting work**
- Instruct employees when to wash their hands
  - After using the restroom
  - Before starting or returning to work after breaks
- Before and after eating or smoking
- As soon as practical after touching animals or animal waste
- At any other time when workers hands may become contaminated

**Proper handwashing techniques for employees**
- Wet hands with clean, water, apply soap (or other effective surfactant), and work up a lather.
- Rub hands together for at least 20 seconds.
- Clean under the nails with the opposite hand.
- Rinse under clean water.
- Dry hands thoroughly using single-service towel, sanitary towel service, electric hand dryer or other covered hand drying devices.

**Instruct employees to wear proper clothing to work**
- Wear clean clothes to work. Do not wear clothing that is dirty, beaded, ripped, or torn.
- Do not wear jewelry, except plain wedding bands that cannot be cleaned or sanitized when harvesting blueberries. Remove or cover unharvested blueberries.
- Do not wear shorts, open-toed shoes, or sandals.

**Field Sanitation**

In the field, there are many opportunities for blueberries to be contaminated. Make sure you are creating a field environment that minimizes risk by enforcing compliance and instructing employees on proper field sanitation practices outlined below.

**Store harvesting containers or equipment in a safe place**
- Containers used for harvesting and packing blueberries should be stored in an area that is covered, to ensure they are not exposed to rodents, dust, pesticide drift or condensation.
- Cover sanitized containers when not used immediately to avoid contamination by birds and animals.

**Clean and sanitize harvesting equipment and/or containers**
- Clean and sanitize mechanical harvesting equipment prior to and after each use.
- Containers/buckets cleaned and sanitized on the ground.
- Do not touch or harvest blueberries with animal or bird droppings or feeding marks.

**Do not harvest in poor condition**
- Do not pick up blueberries that have dropped
  - Do not touch or harvest blueberries with animal or bird droppings or feeding marks.
  - Use animal deterrents as appropriate and monitor for wild or domesticated animals entering blueberry fields.
  - Monitor fields for animal feces to avoid contamination.

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**Keep animals out of the fields**
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- Monitor fields for animal feces to avoid contamination.

**Corrective actions**
- Instruct employees to notify their supervisor whenever there is a problem such as:
  - Sick worker
  - Animal intrusion or feces
  - Employee inadequate hygiene
  - Unclean containers, transport, equipment and utensils
  - Water problems
  - Other actions that may lead to product contamination

**Record keeping**
- Develop a Food Safety Plan for your farm and U-Pick Operation
- Conduct a self-audit
- Require daily documentation

**Water usage**
Water is an essential element in blueberry production and protection. It can also be a potential source of contamination. Water sampling and testing will be mandatory under FSMA.

**Water source, distribution and sampling requirements and procedures**

**Pre-harvest**
- Frost protection, irrigation, and pesticide/fertilizer applications that may contact a blueberry plant
- Proper employee hygiene
- Containers/buckets cleaned and sanitized

**Harvest**
- Vehicles used for transportation should be clean (field and marketplace)
- Facility cleaned and sanitized
- Fruit cooling and storage guidelines

**Post-harvest**
- Water problems
- Other actions that may lead to product contamination

**Fish cooling and storage guidelines**
- Facility cleaned and sanitized
- Water problems
- Other actions that may lead to product contamination