Evaluations of potential food safety risks are some of the most important procedures fruit and vegetable growers can undertake to make sure they are ready for harvesting.

These pre-harvest assessments focus on all potential on-farm food safety hazards – looking for any elements that could reduce the food safety of the produce.

Your farm’s standard operating procedures for pre-harvest assessment must include written guidelines regarding evaluating potential food safety risks on and surrounding your farm. Those standard operating procedures also should include policies that outline steps for corrective actions if the assessments identify any potential food safety hazards.

**Examples of potential food safety hazards**

- Oil leaks from harvesting equipment
- Signs of wildlife or animal intrusion around the crops
- Wet spots on the field or behind big equipment, which may be an indication of human and/or animal urination
- Manure or cull piles in close proximity to the production site
- Workers showing signs or symptoms of illness
- Application of manure sprays on neighboring fields
- Dirty (soil or plant debris) harvesting containers and/or harvesting aids
- No soap or water at hand-washing stations
- Dirty toilet facilities
- No single-use towels or garbage pails in toilet facilities
- Signs of flooding or standing water in the field
- Trucks for produce transportation being used for multiple purposes (i.e., waste, plant debris transport, animal transport)

**Items to check before you start to harvest**

On the day of harvesting, check the following items to verify each is in order and that the hazard is avoided or minimized. If there are situations indicating food safety risks, immediately take corrective actions.

Food safety risks vary according to each farm, the types of crops grown and production practices used. Develop a checklist that covers your practices, location and crops. This sample checklist can provide ideas:

- Weather conditions are appropriate for harvesting.
- Workers do not show any sign of sickness.
- Workers have been trained on health and sanitation practices and are complying with hygiene policies.
- There are no signs of recent animal activities in the field.
- There are no signs of flooding or runoff water from nearby water sources or septic systems.
- There are proper numbers of toilet and hand-washing facilities and they are properly located.
- Toilet facilities are cleaned, accessible and adequately supplied.
- Hand-washing stations have adequate water, hand-washing soap and single-use paper towels.
• Dirty water from hand-washing stations is collected in a separate container or diverted away from production areas.
• Contaminated plants are flagged clearly as “no harvest.”
• Enough potable water is available in the farm.
• Workers have a designated area for eating food separate from the production area.
• Chemicals, pesticides and fertilizers are stored in isolated areas to prevent crop contamination.
• Harvesting containers have been cleaned and sanitized according to the policies stated in the food safety plan.
• Equipment and tools have been cleaned, sanitized and stored in a clean environment that prevents contamination.
• Trucks that will be used for transporting produce are clean.
• Packaging materials have been stored in a dry and clean area to prevent contamination.