

FLOODING & PRODUCE SAFETY

What Farmers Should Know

Heavy rains + flooding can create serious food safety risks. Keep these key reminders in mind:

1. Don't harvest flood-exposed produce

If crops touched floodwater, they are not safe to eat. Do not harvest or sell them. Floodwater can carry:

- Harmful bacteria
- Sewage
- Chemicals
- Other contaminants

2. Use safe water only!

Due to the Boil Water Advisory (North Shore O'ahu), municipal water may not be safe without treatment. If water must be used:

- Boiling for at least 3 minutes and allowing it to cool before use (as suggested by BWS), OR
- Using an appropriate sanitizer

3. Use sanitizers correctly

- Only use sanitizers specifically labeled for use in produce wash water
- Follow the label instructions
- Make sure the concentration and water quality are correct

4. Clean equipment and surfaces

- Clean and sanitize all tools, bins, and work areas before use
- Fully clean and dry anything exposed to floodwater
- Throw away items that can't be properly cleaned

PRODUCE SAFETY ALLIANCE- FOOD SAFETY FOR FLOODED FARMS

Important considerations after flooding

Is Your Crop Safe After Flooding?

- If the edible part of the crop touched floodwater, it is not safe and cannot be sold or eaten. There's no way to make it safe again.
- If crops were near floodwater but not directly touched, they need to be evaluated carefully (not automatically unsafe).

Consider:

- How high above the water the edible part was
- Whether floodwater may have splashed onto it
- If it will be used for animal feed, check for mold or fungal growth

Important Safety Steps

- Mark areas where floodwater reached
- Leave a 30-foot buffer between flooded and safe areas to prevent contamination
- Wear protective gear (boots, gloves) when working in flooded fields
- Clean or discard protective clothing after use
- If your well was flooded, test the water before using it
- Wait at least 60 days before replanting food crops
- Organic growers should contact their certifier about possible contamination

When in doubt, do not harvest flood-exposed crops

PRODUCE SAFETY ALLIANCE- FOOD SAFETY FOR FLOODED FARMS

Important considerations after flooding

Document before removing crops

- Before removing or destroying crops, farmers should document damage with photo evidence as thoroughly as possible.
- Contact your insurance provider or the Farm Service Agency (FSA) to report damage and check for potential financial assistance.

Not all flooding is the same

There are two types of flooding:

- Heavy rain flooding: Water pools in fields can damage crops but usually doesn't contaminate them
- True floodwater (from rivers/streams): More dangerous and likely to contaminate crops

Main risks from floodwater include:

- Microbial contamination: bacteria, viruses, parasites (from sewage, manure, etc.)
- Chemical contamination: pesticides, fuel, heavy metals, and other chemicals

When in doubt, do not harvest flood-exposed crops