

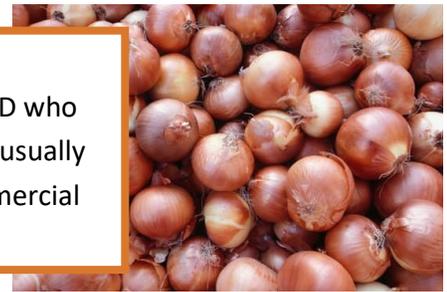


# Produce Safety Rule FAQs for Onion Growers

This fact sheet provides onion growers with information about the Produce Safety Rule (PSR) and gives examples of what growers must do to be in compliance with the PSR. The PSR is very comprehensive and, while this fact sheet does not include the entire Rule, it provides a general overview of what is expected of farmers.

## **WHO HAS TO COMPLY WITH THE PRODUCE SAFETY RULE?**

Farmers who grow, harvest, pack or hold produce that is usually consumed raw AND who sell more than \$25,000 in produce per year. Onions are considered produce that is usually consumed raw. There are some exemptions depending on sales, markets and commercial processing. Visit [www.fda.gov/FSMA](http://www.fda.gov/FSMA) for more information.



## **WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO?**

There are 6 standards under the Produce Safety Rule. Turn this document over to learn more about the standards. In addition to following the standards, someone from your farm must attend a Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training. Information on those trainings can be found: [www.coproductsafety.org](http://www.coproductsafety.org).



## **WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREPARE FOR THE PRODUCE SAFETY RULE?**

Farmers can request an On-Farm Readiness Review which is a voluntary visit where farmers are able to ask questions about the Produce Safety Rule and have their food safety practices reviewed to determine if they are compliant with the Rule. This visit is non-regulatory and it is confidential.



## **WHO CAN YOU CONTACT?**

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## Worker Health and Hygiene

- Farmers need to train employees on health and hygiene practices including proper hand washing, appropriate restroom use and personal cleanliness.
- Employees also need to be trained on food safety practices that pertain to their specific roles at the farm.
- Employees need to be trained to identify and not harvest contaminated produce, not use contaminated bins/crates/packaging, and not harvest dropped covered produce.
- Employees need to be trained in a way that they understand either through appropriate media (written, videos, pictures) and/or in a language they can understand.
- Farmers who use contract harvesters or crews need to ensure those employees are trained on health and hygiene practices.
- **Fast Fact:** Hand sanitizer cannot be used in place of hand washing using soap and water.

## Soil Amendments

- Only soil amendments that contain products of animal origin (manure, fish emulsion, poultry litter pellets, etc.) are covered under the PSR.
- Only soil amendments that come into contact with the harvestable part of the crop would need to comply with the soil amendment requirements.
- **Fast Fact:** Since onion bulbs grow 1/2 to 2/3 underground, most of the time soil amendments would contact the onion (which is the harvestable portion of the crop). Therefore onions will most likely be subject to the soil amendment requirements under the Produce Safety Rule.

## Domesticated and Wild Animals

- All fields used for growing onions should be monitored for wildlife and be assessed for contamination prior to harvest.
- Any contamination needs to be clearly identified and its presence communicated to employees so they can avoid it or manage it as required in the farm's procedures.
- **Fast Fact:** The PSR does not require onion growers to exclude wildlife from their fields; however, it requires them to monitor for the presence of wildlife and have a plan for managing any animal intrusions into growing areas.

## Equipment, Tools and Buildings

- Any tools, equipment or buildings used for onions need to be maintained such that they do not become a source of contamination, and tools and equipment that contact onions need to be properly cleaned and sanitized during the season.
- Buildings need to be monitored and maintained so they do not become a harborage for pests. Farmers need to have pest management practices and monitoring in place.
- Any equipment such as pallets, forklifts, tractors and vehicles that may come into contact with onions need to be used in a manner so that they do not become a source of contamination to onions or to any surfaces that onions may touch.
- **Fast Fact:** While the PSR does not prohibit growers from using materials that cannot be cleaned or sanitized (burlap bags, wooden crates), it does require you to clean them as best you can and then store them so that they do not become contaminated. This could include cleaning as needed and then storing those materials in a dry place where pests will not be able to contaminate them.

## Post Harvest Handling and Sanitation

- All packaging materials used for onions (boxes, bags, etc.) need to be stored in a manner where they cannot become contaminated by pests or other sources of contamination, ideally stored in a covered area up off the floor.
- Sanitizing is important for keeping food contact surfaces, tools and equipment from becoming a source of contamination. Sanitizers should be used according to their label directions and monitored for effectiveness. Temperature, turbidity and pH may also need to be monitored during sanitizer use.
- **Fast Fact:** The practice of harvesting onions into sacks and setting those sacks onto the ground to be collected later is an acceptable practice under the PSR.

## Agricultural Water

- Subpart E Agricultural Water under the Produce Safety Rule is not being enforced by the Colorado Department of Agriculture at this time.
- Only water that touches the harvestable portion of the crop will need to be in compliance with the Produce Safety Rule.
- Farmers can begin testing their water now to understand the quality of water they are using.
- **Fast Fact:** Most times furrow or drip irrigation water does contact the harvestable part of the onions so the water standards will apply to onions grown under those types of irrigation.