

# Food Safety Guide



## ON THE FARM

Food safety starts on the farm, and farmers play an important role in preventing foodborne illnesses with simple food safety protocols. Farmers can reduce the risk of food contamination multiple ways including, but not limited to:

- The proper use (and disposal) of water;
- Proper composting and application of manure or compost;
- Workers using good hygiene habits;
- Regular equipment checkup and maintenance;
- Proper sanitation of processing surfaces and transportation vehicles;
- Accurate record keeping.

With these practices, a farmer is not only contributing to a safer food system, but also builds consumer confidence while reducing the potential foodborne outbreaks. Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification ensures a farmer implements these and other food safety protocols to minimize risks of food safety hazards. The South Carolina Farm to School program strongly encourages farmers to seek GAP certification for their farms and can cover the cost of the first year's audit expenses. Consult program staff for more information.

## IN THE GARDEN

In the garden, like on the farm, contamination of produce may occur during growth, harvest, transportation, preparation, and/or service and result in foodborne illness. Potential risks to garden produce can be decreased by applying some food safety protocols included in GAP and Good Handling Practices (GHP). Implementing these practices will enhance the protection of fruits and vegetables from foodborne illness. Consider the tips for food safety on the farm as well as:

- Know the usage and history of the school garden's location to ensure there are no contaminants in the soil;
- Wash hands before and after going out to the school garden;

- Bring clean containers out to the garden to collect produce;
- Clean all containers and garden tools after putting produce away;
- Store produce in a refrigerator if it is being saved for later use.

Creating and implementing a food safety plan early will set good behaviors from the start, and it can be a fun way to teach kids about hygiene and health. The South Carolina Farm to School program highly recommends that school staff create food safety plan for a school garden.

## IN THE SCHOOL

Every cafeteria and/or feeding site in a South Carolina school must have a comprehensive food safety program with a written plan. Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) is a systematic approach used by South Carolina schools to construct the required food safety program. DHEC regulations also require that each school district have at least one employee successfully complete ServSafe® training. These protocols help minimize potential food borne illness.

In the classroom, teachers and students may participate in activities such as a consuming fruits and/or vegetables through the USDA's Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, conducting taste tests to judge food preferences, and/or eating breakfast in the classroom. Consult food service staff about food safety protocols and procedures. Everyone can implement simple practices to decrease foodborne illness from being spread including, but not limited to:

- Wash hands for 20 seconds with warm water and soap before and after handling food;
- Hold perishable fresh fruits and vegetables at or below 41°F;
- Wash all produce thoroughly before eating, preparing, or cooking;
- Cut off any damaged or bruised areas on produce before using or consuming, and discard any rotten produce.