



Episode One- Introduction to Food Safety Bites

Welcome to episode one of Food Safety Bites, brought to you by the University of Wisconsin Madison, and funded by the USDA Food Safety Outreach Program, this is your host Harriet Behar. This episode is **your introduction to food safety bites**. In these podcast episodes, I will identify issues, and provide suggestions for how to reduce various fresh produce contamination risks and keep your customers safe. We will not talk in detail about what is required for a GAP audit or a FSMA inspection. If you want more information on those, please see the links on the website where you found these podcasts.

Let me introduce myself; I have been a fresh produce grower on a certified organic farm since the early 1980s. I have sold to wholesale markets, at farmers market and direct to retail stores and restaurants. I have also been an organic inspector for over 30 years, visiting hundreds of farms and food processors. I have taught organic production techniques and organic certification rules for many decades to other inspectors, farmers and food handlers. I am an approved trainer under the Produce Safety Alliance for their Grower Training Course, helping others learn about produce safety, the Produce Safety Rule and Good Agricultural Practices. I will use my wide range of experience to share with you the various food safety issues encountered on farms and provide a number of useful common-sense solutions that can be used diverse vegetable and fruit operations.

How to use these podcasts? You can binge listen to all of them at once or can pick and choose to listen to podcasts that provide information on specific challenges you may be having on your farm. You can listen on your own or listen with your field and/or packing shed crew, once a day, once a week, or whatever fits your schedule. You can have new employees listen to specific podcasts that directly apply to the work they will be doing on your farm. Food safety is everyone's responsibility on the farm, everyone should know why they are doing certain activities, how to identify a concern and who to report it to, and how to prevent the spread of contamination when it is found.

Why are we producing these podcasts? These easy to digest small snippets of information are meant to help both produce growers and their workers learn the basic food safety issues when handling fresh produce on the farm. A variety of scenarios will be presented that hopefully will help you identify where these issues may be of concern on your own operation. I will share why there could be a food safety concern and also share a range of solutions to lessen the risk of contamination of the fresh produce sold.

For your own economic and emotional well-being, it is a good idea to protect yourself against liability. No one wants to be responsible for harming someone else. It is also illegal to sell food that could make others sick, even if you are small farm. All workers should know that your farm should not be ship produce that known to be contaminated. Both small and large farms can have issues. When a large operation ships produce, a problem can affect more people in a greater geographic area. But small farms can also have a serious impact on their community



even one person getting sick is a problem. Activities may be different on large and small operations, but they have the same goal, protect against contamination.

What will the podcasts cover? These podcasts will help you assess the areas of risk on your own operation and give you the tools to protect the safety of your food. Most of these suggestions to lessen risk can be implemented fairly easily, as long as everyone is following the same protocols.

A farm is not a sterile environment, and neither do we want it to be. We do need to be aware of the risks in order to manage them, birds fly overhead, slugs can spread salmonella. We want to setup systems and protocols that keep poop off food in the first place and prevent unseen problems from spreading contamination to other “clean” produce through use of water or multiple use containers.

There will be information on understanding sources of contamination, both those seen like poop from wild animals, and those unseen, like bacteria and other pathogens. Protocols for scouting fields, harvesting and post-harvest handling, cleaning food contact surfaces and produce, as well as choosing, setting up and using equipment and your packing areas in a way to facilitates food safety activities. Teaching everyone who is involved in the operation how to correctly wash their hands, assess contamination risk, and protect the produce from contamination in the first place is paramount. Corrective actions that need to be taken if there is a problem, understanding the severity of the problem and maintaining recordkeeping will also be discussed.

These podcasts will focus on fresh produce grown in high tunnels, fields and greenhouses in soil. I will not cover the special areas of concern with sprout, hydroponic, or aquaponic production. However, much of we discuss in these podcasts will be useful in these other systems.

I will not discuss how to pass a Good Agricultural Practices audit, otherwise known as GAP, nor the detailed specifics of the Produce Safety Rule under the food safety modernization act or FSMA, but much of what you learn will help develop and improve produce handling so if you are seeking or are subject to either a GAP audit or FSMA inspection, you will have the basics covered. There will be times when I will alert you special areas of concern under GAP or FSMA and will give you references to help you further meet their rules.

So that's it for this introductory episode one of Food Safety Bites, the next episode is why food safety matters. This is your host Harriet Behar brought to you by the University of Wisconsin Madison, talk to you next time!