

Key Takeaways

“Safe-Tea: Brewing and Using Agricultural Teas Safely”

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Top 5

- 1) Biofilms can form quickly in your agricultural tea equipment – and even quicker when additives are used. Clean and sanitize brew, application, and storage equipment and, if possible, designate specific equipment and tools for these uses.
- 2) Appropriately managed agricultural teas can be classified as ‘Treated’ BSAAO (per 21 CFR §112.54), meaning they must be used in accordance with the PSR application restrictions (21 CFR §112.56) appropriate for the level of treatment. It is possible for an agricultural tea made with compost (treated to 21 CFR §112.54(b)) to maintain this same treatment status throughout the brewing process. This means the agricultural tea would have the same application restrictions as the compost feedstock – it must be applied in a manner that minimizes contact with produce (i.e. not directly applied to the harvestable or harvested portion of the commodity).
- 3) The agricultural tea additives used to encourage microbial growth and improve plant and soil health may inadvertently support the growth of foodborne pathogens in your agricultural tea. Due to this risk, the use of additives during brewing may require you to consider and utilize the agricultural tea as if it were an untreated BSAAO.
- 4) When considering the use of agricultural teas in your operation, please consider your tolerance for risk by understanding how factors like the Ag Tea feedstock(s), brewing time, aeration during the brewing process, the use of ag tea additives, application equipment and methods, and the type of crop (and stage of growth during application) may impact the safety of your crop. Foliar application to the harvestable part of the crop, for example, provides more opportunity for risk.
- 5) Don’t forget about water quality! In addition to using a treated soil amendment, the agricultural tea must be made with microbially-safe water (no detectable generic *E. coli*) to be considered a treated soil amendment.

Acronym Key

BSAAO: Biological Soil Amendment of Animal Origin

PSR: Produce Safety Rule

Additional Reading

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