

Key Takeaways

“Post-Harvest Water: Things to Consider”

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Top 5

- 1) There is no way to remove every risk from the field during fresh produce production; therefore, there is always some risk with the produce coming in to the packinghouse from the environment. Post-harvest water (water used for activities during or after harvest) management is important because it can quickly turn a small contamination event into a big, widespread contamination problem.
- 2) Within the new proposed rule of the FSMA PSR subpart E language, regulations regarding the use of post-harvest water are not expected to change; as such, the microbial quality of post-harvest must contain no detectable generic *E. coli* per 100-milliliter sample of water at the start of use and maintained throughout use.
- 3) The FSMA PSR does not require the use of a sanitizer in post-harvest wash water; however, if you use one, you are required to follow the regulations about how to use one.
- 4) There are many sanitizer products available for use to limit cross-contamination in post-harvest wash water and, at a minimum, you must know how the chosen chemistry will interact with the quality of your water (pH, turbidity, and temperature) so you can establish and maintain its efficacy throughout use of water containing that sanitizer.
- 5) Post-harvest water (even if it contains an antimicrobial product, including a sanitizer) cannot be used as a kill-step during cooling, washing, or other handling activities used with fresh produce.

Acronym Key:

E. coli: *Escherichia coli*

FSMA: Food Safety Modernization Act

PSR: Produce Safety Rule

Additional Questions and Answers

For any questions that were not addressed during the Q&A at the live webinar, please review the “Remaining Questions from ‘Post-Harvest Water: Things to Consider’” document on the CONTACT website.

Additional Reading

- Clemson Cooperative Extension (2021). Farm Food Safety: Choosing a Sanitizer for Washing Fresh Produce. In: Home Gard. Inf. Cent. <https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/farm-food-safety-choosing-a-sanitizer-for-washing-fresh-produce/>
- LaBorde L (2018). Understanding FSMA: The Produce Safety Rule. <https://extension.psu.edu/understanding-fsma-the-produce-safety-rule>
- Produce Safety Science (2022). Clarify The Confusing: Chlorine Chemistry with Keith Schneider. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3wUFu5uwqWM>
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- Ritenour MA, Sargent SA, Bartz JA (2021). Chlorine Use in Produce Packing Lines. <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/CH160>
- Stoeckel D, Clements D, Fisk C, et al (2019). FSMA Produce Safety Rule Water Requirements: Insights to Get You Organized! <https://resources.producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu/documents/Insights-to-get-you-organized.pdf>
- Suslow T (1997). Postharvest Chlorination: Basic Properties and Key Points for Effective Disinfection. <https://ucfoodsafety.ucdavis.edu/sites/g/files/dgvnsk7366/files/inline-files/26414.pdf>
- University of Massachusetts Amherst. Produce Wash Water Sanitizers: Chlorine and PAA. In: UMass Ext. Veg. Program. <https://foodsafety.wsu.edu/produce-safety/postharvest-water/>
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration (2022b). FSMA Technical Assistance Network (TAN). FDA. <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-modernization-act-fsma/fsma-technical-assistance-network-tan>
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration (2022a). FSMA Final Rule on Produce Safety. FDA. <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-modernization-act-fsma/fsma-final-rule-produce-safety>
- Washington State University (2022). Postharvest Water. In: Prod. Saf. <https://foodsafety.wsu.edu/produce-safety/postharvest-water/>

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