

Growing sites

If you're a grower of leafy vegetables or melons, you need to make sure the site you use to grow your produce does not make the food unsafe to eat.



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What is a growing site?

A growing site is any site used to grow fresh produce. This includes open areas or fields, as well as partially or fully enclosed planting areas such as greenhouses and hydroponic facilities.

What are the requirements?

Primary producers of leafy vegetables and melons must do what they reasonably can to make sure their growing site does not make produce unacceptable to eat, from contamination with harmful bacteria, chemicals or physical hazards.

This means you need to know about your growing site, what it was used for previously, what is happening nearby and what other potential sources of contamination exist.

Where you identify there are risks of contaminating your produce (e.g. land that was previously used for waste management could contaminate produce grown on that site), you must take action to eliminate or manage those sources of contamination.

These requirements are under primary production and processing standards for [leafy vegetables](#) and [melons](#).

Does this apply to me?

In the Standards:

- **A primary producer** is a business that grows and/or harvests leafy vegetables or melons.
- **A primary processor** is a business that does any of the following with leafy vegetables or melons: washing, trimming, sorting, sanitising, storing, combining, packing, and transporting between packhouses.

Getting it right – reducing your risk

As best practice, things you can do to make sure your growing site is safe and suitable to grow and harvest your produce include:

- Know what previous crops were planted, what weeds were present and what chemical sprays were applied. Some weeds can be toxic and can produce seeds that emerge years later and some chemicals can remain in the soil for a period of time.
- Walk or drive around the growing site before planting, and at least within a week of harvest, to assess the site and surrounding area for sources of contamination (e.g. damaged fence allowing livestock in from an adjacent paddock or toxic weeds such as *Datura stramonium*).
- Growing areas should not be located where it is likely harmful bacteria could pose a high risk of contamination (e.g. if adjacent land is used for a feedlot or poultry production).
- Check growing and surrounding areas for toxic weeds throughout the crop's lifecycle; this is especially important just before harvesting.
- If potential hazards are identified, buffer areas, ditches, physical barriers and other strategies can be used to minimise the likelihood of contamination.

Need more information?

- Contact your state/territory [food regulatory authority](#)
- [Primary Production and Processing Standards \(Chapter 4\)](#)
- [Fresh Produce Safety Centre – Guidelines for Fresh Produce Food Safety 2022](#)
- [Managing food safety risks associated with toxic weeds in leafy vegetables](#)