

# Food Safety



One of the most important objectives of California Tomato Farmers has always been to provide the safest tomatoes to both consumers and the buying trade.

## Food Safety Program

California's fresh tomato growers commissioned researchers at the University of California to develop the first commodity specific Food Safety Guidance for Fresh Tomatoes in 1999. For many years, the California tomato industry conducted a wide range of food safety research through the University of California into the growing, harvesting, packing, and transportation of fresh tomatoes. As this research yielded new information, the industry revised the Good Agricultural Practices accordingly.

Today, California Tomato Farmers has taken what has been learned from recent outbreaks and ongoing discussions with health officials and updated the requirements and guidelines to establish "The Fresh Standard" for food safety. These standards were peer reviewed by scientists from the University of California, Davis, and Cornell University. "The Fresh Standard" fully incorporates the 2008 Food Safety Guidance for the fresh tomato supply chain, developed in cooperation with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Further, California Tomato Farmers has formed an advisory panel comprised of government agencies, customers from retail and food service, university scientists, and farm labor advocates. This advisory panel periodically reviews "The Fresh Standard" for food safety and provides valuable input.



### **How does California Tomato Farmers verify that members are in compliance with "The Fresh Standard?"**

All members of California Tomato Farmers are subjected to mandatory and regular food safety audits conducted by U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) inspectors to confirm compliance with "The Fresh Standard" for food safety. California Tomato Farmers members must also pass unannounced audits by the government to ensure compliance. Failure to comply with "The Fresh Standard" for food safety will result in expulsion from the cooperative.

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“The Fresh Standard” for food safety focuses on five primary areas to ensure that only the safest tomatoes reach consumers.

## Five Primary Areas of Focus

### Water Quality

- Regular testing of all irrigation water sources
- Water quality for irrigation must meet the standards defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Continuous monitoring of environmental factors

### Soil Amendments

- All fertilizers must list supplier and identify the product's origin
- Processed manure must be properly composted and certified for use on food crops
- No biosolids or raw manure

### Environmental Conditions and Risks

- Members must monitor land use adjacent to their operations
- Physical barriers must be built when livestock are raised adjacent to tomato operations
- Members must communicate with neighboring farmers when pesticides are used

### Worker Health and Hygiene

- Workers showing signs of illness must be reassigned to paid activities that do not involve contact with food
- Contracted, third-party companies must adhere to the same high employment practices

### Harvesting, Packing, and Shipping

- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) auditors inspect to standards higher than those of traditional USDA guidelines
- All harvest containers, bins, and other items that come into contact with tomatoes must be cleaned and sanitized
- All wash water that contacts tomatoes must be of drinking water quality as defined by the EPA

