## SOP: Accepting School Garden Produce

**Purpose**: To prevent foodborne illness by ensuring school garden produce is harvested safely, received in sound condition, and is stored properly after receipt.

**Procedures**:

* Harvesting:
  + Before harvesting, staff, students, and volunteers must wash hands thoroughly in accordance with the proper handwashing procedures indicated in “Handwashing” SOP (#1).
  + All open cuts, wounds, or open sores on hands, arms, or legs must be properly covered before harvesting. Refer to “Food Handler Health, Personal Cleanliness & Hygienic Practices” SOP (#2).
  + Harvesters may be required to use disposable gloves when harvesting or handling fresh produce.
  + Harvesters must not participate in harvesting when they are ill with specific symptoms or diagnoses. They must report specified health conditions (including vomiting, diarrhea, sore throat with fever, jaundice, or abdominal cramps experienced within the last 24 hours) to the harvesting supervisor or other person in charge. Refer to “Food Handler Health, Personal Cleanliness & Hygienic Practices” SOP (#2).
  + Harvesting tools, such as knives, scissors, etc., must be thoroughly cleaned with soap and potable water and sanitized immediately before and after each harvest.
  + Containers for harvested produce must be made of non-porous, food-grade material that is easily cleanable. Containers must be cleaned and sanitized before use. Containers should be designated specifically for harvesting produce to minimize cross-contamination. Use different containers for other garden-related purposes (e.g. carrying tools, weeding, disposing of rotten produce).¹
  + Harvest bins and containers must be stored in a place where they will not become contaminated by unwanted dirt, chemicals, bird droppings, or other contaminants and will not become a home for rodents. Bins should be inspected before use to make sure they are clean.¹
  + Before harvesting produce, the produce and the area where it is grown in should be looked over. Produce that is damaged, decayed, or visibly contaminated by animal feces, chemicals, or any other substance must not be harvested. Produce that has dropped to the ground (such as apples or tomatoes that were not originally growing on the ground) is included here, as it may have been damaged or contaminated upon impact and is more likely to harbor bacteria.¹
  + After harvesting, produce must be transported to the school kitchen immediately.
* Receiving:
  + Kitchen staff must be present to receive garden produce.
  + Harvested produce must be received in cleaned and sanitized food-grade containers, such as plastic bins or buckets. Produce may not be received in garbage bags, garbage cans, or any container that originally held chemicals.
  + Receive and inspect produce harvested from school gardens according to the same procedures used to inspect produce from all other food distributors. Reject produce that does not meet your school nutrition program standards.
  + Do not accept any produce that has been noticeably contaminated by animals or insects.
  + Produce must be washed in a clean, sanitized food sink with cool, potable water. Remove any soil, dust, or other contaminants during the washing process. Produce should be washed before storing in the cooler. Refer to “Washing and Handling Fresh Fruits and Vegetables” SOP (#14).
  + Immediately after washing, produce must be cooled to 41 degrees Fahrenheit or below within two hours. Refrigerate garden produce immediately, unless the item is normally held at room temperature.
  + Store, prepare, and serve school garden produce separately from other sources of produce to maintain traceability. Avoid co-mingling different batches of harvested produce as well as co-mingling school garden produce with produce from other sources.
  + Ensure “Receiving Deliveries” SOP (#9) procedures are followed when produce is delivered.

**Monitoring and Recordkeeping**:

* Person in charge will ensure practices in the SOP are followed.
* Person in charge will maintain a record of all produce received from school gardens that includes product/variety name, harvest date, and all persons involved with harvesting.²
* Person in charge or designated food handler will inspect items when received for any signs of damage or decay, wholesomeness, and quality. Items that do not meet receiving standards will be rejected according to established procedures.
* Indicate which (if any) products have been rejected and the reason for the rejection on a receiving log and/or delivery invoice. Receiving logs and/or delivery invoices will be retained for the designated time period.
* Record the name of the food item(s) that are discarded including the source, date, time, and the reason why the food was discarded on a damaged/discarded product log. Damaged/discarded product log will be retained for the designated time period.
* Garden coordinator should keep a record of any injury or illness that may have been a source of produce contamination.¹

**Corrective Action**:

* Garden harvesters and food handlers observed not following proper procedures will be retrained.
* Adhere to established procedures for rejecting delivered or donated items. Reject deliveries and donations of food that do not meet specifications. The following should be rejected:
  + Items delivered in vehicle with dirty interior or vehicle that contains chemicals.
  + Items delivered in dirty crates, pallets, or containers.
  + Items with signs of pest damage.
  + Rotten, decaying, or damaged produce.
* Person in charge or designated food service employee should communicate with garden coordinator regarding the reasons for any produce rejection.
* Record rejected deliveries or donations and any discarded items as described under “Monitoring and Recordkeeping.”
* Additional/Alternative Corrective Action (describe): Click or tap here to enter text.

¹<https://www.massfarmtoschool.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/SchoolGardenFoodSafetyManual.pdf>

²<https://www.fns.usda.gov/fs/ensuring-traceability-fresh-produce>

Other information adapted from: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/food-safety-tips-school-gardens>