



Vermont Vegetable & Berry Growers Association

Produce Safety Plan

Last updated July 8, 2024

Walker Farm

1190 US Route 5
East Dummerston , VT 05346
United States

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Operated by our family since 1770, Walker Farm has evolved into a horticultural destination for flower lovers from all over New England and New York. We are honored to have been selected as one of the 5 Best Nurseries in New England by Yankee Magazine in 2012, featured in The New York Times and included in The Adventurous Gardener - Where To Buy The Best Plants In New England. We specialize in choice garden and container annuals, rare perennials, trees, shrubs and conifers as well as Certified Organic heirloom and ethnic vegetable starts.

1. START HERE

Farm Practices

Has employees, Has livestock or pets on the farm, Irrigates, Applies animal manure-based products (manure, compost, Kreher's, etc.), Washes raw-eaten produce, Uses private water source to wash or rinse produce, Has cold storage, Sells wholesale

Plan Status

Existing

CAPS Program Level

CAPS Program - Includes on-line review, feedback and a CAPS certificate (no on-farm visit unless requested).

2. LAND USE AND RISK REDUCTION

Years Farming

47

Acres in Production

35

Vegetable Acres

30

Fruit Acres

5

Greenhouse Area

32000

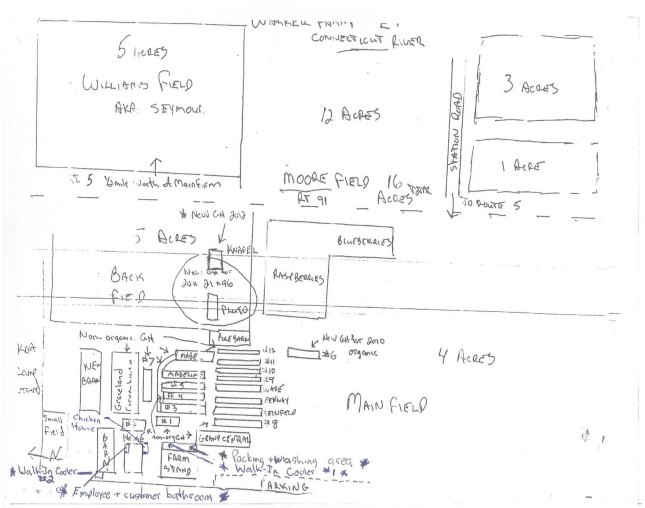
Land-based Risk

Are lands are not at risk of flooding. compost piles are located away from produce fields.

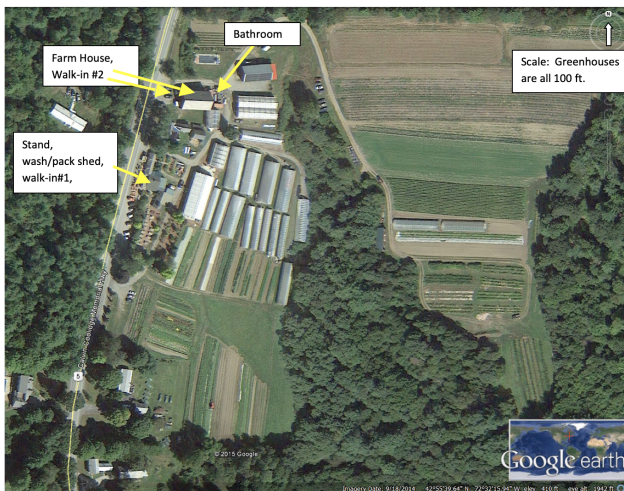
Land-based Risk Reduction

Compost piles are located away from crop land or used in early spring if trucked in compost is delivered.

Farm Map



Walker Farm—Home fields from 2,000 ft!



3. FARM CONTAINERS AND RISK REDUCTION

Clean Farm Containers

VVBGA Produce Safety Accreditation Record Templates*

Photos and Standard Operation Procedure for Harvest, Pack and Shipping Containers

Farm Name: Walker Farm

Production Year: 2020

1. List the types of containers and their uses on your farm including bins for raw agricultural commodities (RACs) (add or subtract rows as needed)

Container type
USE (es)

Red Plastic bucket
Leafy greens, tomatoes

Plastic handle buckets
Summer squash, beans, peas, potatoes

Plastic handle baskets
Lettuce, eggplant, peppers, melons

Wooden bushel baskets

Sweet corn

Plastic 20 bushel bins

Onions, Winter Squash, Sweet potatoes



Clean Packaging Plan

N/A

Keeping Produce Clean

Keep it clean. We keep non-root crops as clean as possible before washing and storing. We pick into clean containers. We mulch many crops with straw or plastic mulch to limit weeds and mud splash. We harvest into clean tubs with clean harvest tools. Row covers are used on many leafy greens to make harvest cleaner and easier.

Transport trucks have clean beds that are swept out before daily picking or rinsed out as needed. We have very few issues of damage or contamination from wild or domestic animals but workers are trained to not harvest anything in a contaminate area and to discard any questionable produce.

Picking containers are washed out with clean water after each use and stored on plastic pallets or plastic tables in packing area. 15 bushel bins are pressure washed in late summer for harvesting of fall crops and stored in 40' container until needed.

Cooling Produce

To remove field heat we wash produce with cold water and put in cooler immediately. In part to minimize micro infiltration risk, we do not soak melons, peppers and other pulpy produce in cold-water for extended periods of time.

We start harvest at 7:30 each day and finish with produce that needs to be cooled by 10 AM. Each crop is brought to cooler after harvest. If we're picking large quantities of crops such as beans or corn, those crops are kept cool covered and in shade.

4. LIVESTOCK AND DOMESTIC ANIMALS

Livestock Risk Reduction

35 Chickens are in an enclosed area with a chicken wire fence all around and above and when let out in the autumn are not near fields. The chickens are fed in the morning and night and shoes are scraped off or washed off. Hands are washed after gathering eggs.

Pet Management

Cat is a house cat. Dog's preferred deposit spot is on lawn well away from crops. No pets in wash area or packing area or coolers.

5. MANURE AND COMPOST

Compost Company Info

We've been unable to buy manure as our previous dairy farm supplier quit operating. We now buy aged compost from Westminster Farm in Westminster, VT. The compost is spread and incorporated during a two week period from mid-April to end of April depending on weather. See attached compost invoice uploaded in manure spreading section.

Manure Spreading (Waiting Period)

No raw manure is applied as we now are supplied with aged compost.

Manure Spreading Record

[compost-receipt-westminster-farm.pdf](#)

6. IRRIGATION AND RISK REDUCTION

Irrigation Type(s)

We drip irrigate with water from spring-fed pond and artesian wells. We only use sprinkler overhead irrigation from a well to germinate seeds. The pond is tested occasionally per FSMA to make sure the irrigation water is safe.

Irrigation Source(s)

We use deep wells for greenhouse irrigation and a pond for field irrigation on the main farm. At our Moore Farm field we have a 100 foot well producing 45 gallons a minute for drip and overhead irrigation.

Irrigation Risk Reduction

Overhead irrigation is only used to germinate seeds. All other crop irrigation is through drip lines.

7. WASH AND PACK FACILITY AND CLEANING

Product Flow

All produce that needs to be washed goes through a triple-bay stainless steel sink flanked by stainless steel tables.

SOP Greens Wash

- All greens must be washed using the triple sink method.
- Fill First Sink $\frac{3}{4}$ full with water, approximately 15 gallons. Fill Remaining two sinks $\frac{2}{3}$ full to mark.
- Add 2 TBS Sanidate 5.0 to first sink only.
- Add greens to first sink and toss gently, allowing dirt to fall to bottom.
- Transfer and gently toss greens into middle, and then into third sink.
- Transfer greens into approved clean bucket.
- Let drain for not more than 5 minutes out of sun then transfer to walk-in cooler.
- Water in wash sinks should be refreshed when water becomes too dirty to see drain plug in sink, or after especially dirty produce load.
- Root vegetables should soak in full sink and then be sprayed clean.

Cleaning Routine

We use only potable well water to wash produce. Well water is tested once per year as required by our organic certification. All counters and basins in the wash shed are stainless steel and wiped down before and after washings and often between washings with clean cloths and Sanidate. Deep cleaning is done daily with soap and water after the daily harvest. Floor area is swept clean and any compost is removed from pack area so next day starts fresh.

FSMA log is kept detailing what is washed during the day, how it is washed and what it is washed or wiped down with.

8. WASH LINE PHOTOS AND SOP

Wash Line Description

We use a triple bay sink with stainless steel tables for washing fresh summer greens that are harvested daily for the farmstand. In the autumn/winter we use a new washer converted to greens spinner for larger amounts of greens for CSAs.

Dunk/Rinse SOP

SOP Greens Wash

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Sanitizer Use

Yes

Sanitizer SOP

Sanidate 5.0.

2 Tablespoons per 5 gallons

9. PEST MANAGEMENT

Pest Status

We control rodents with prevention and traps. Compost containers are emptied regularly and containers are sealed to eliminate flies and rodents. Rodents are always present on a farm but we wage an active campaign twelve months of the year! The barn cat helps.

Pest Prevention

Farmstand compost bins are Rubbermaid containers with lids that are picked up every couple of days by local pig farmers or emptied into a tractor bucket when full and added to our compost pile over 1000 feet away.

Pest Control

We control rodents with prevention and traps. Compost containers are emptied regularly and containers are sealed to eliminate flies and rodents.

10. ANNUAL WATER TEST RECORD

Wash Water Source Test Result

[walker-farm-2024-water-test.pdf](#)

This is the main farm well used for washing produce. To ensure further safety, Sanidate 5.0 is added to greens wash water.

11. COLD STORAGE CLEANING AND MANAGEMENT

Cold Storage Overview

Main Refrigerated Walk-In Cooler: 8' X 20' for storage of product to be sold at the farmstand. Temperature maintained 35 - 40 degrees F.

Second Refrigerated Walk-In-Cooler: 10' X 8' for storage of longer term crops for winter CSAs. Temperature maintained at 35 - 45 degrees F.

Insulated Stainless Steel Storage Container: 40' X 8' for storage of onions and potatoes. Temperature maintained at 45 - 55 degrees. Cool-Bot unit controls air conditioner to maintain required temperature. Small heater set at 40 degrees keeps produce from freezing during winter.

See appendix for SOP with photos.

Cold Storage Photos





Cold Storage Cleaning

Coolers are deep cleaned and sanitized at the beginning of the season. Walk-in coolers are swept out and cleaned daily. Shelves are painted at the beginning of the season and wiped down with Sanidate 5.0 as needed. All refuse or old produce is removed daily from walk-ins. Refrigerated storage container is pressure washed before storing of fall crops in bins or black crates.

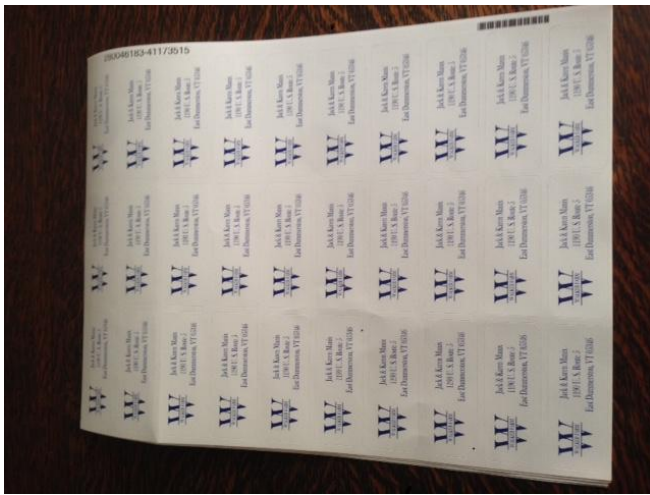
Refrigeration units are serviced at beginning of season and as needed by Dompier Refrigeration, Brattleboro, VT. Thermometers are used to check temperature and are highly visible each time one enters the cooler.

Inventory Management

Fresh produce is harvested daily and used either that day or the next during summer for our farmstand.

12. WHOLESALE SHIPPING AND TRACEABILITY

Shipping Label



Lists farm and farm owners names and address. We also date box with magic marker and VOF organic label as well as date harvested.

Traceability

We wholesale so little that we're able to identify field, date and who picked crop.

The only business where we might use our own transport is to the Putney Coop occasionally in the winter and their facility is only 4 miles away. The produce would go directly into their walk-in cooler if refrigeration is needed. Most of what we wholesale is through Food Connects which they pick up with their refrigerated truck. We try to not grow for wholesale but concentrate on direct marketing through our farmstand and CSAs. We're able to adjust our Fall/Winter and Deep Winter CSA numbers to move most of our extra harvested produce.

14. EMPLOYEE TRAINING

Total Number of Employees

40

Employee FTE

25

Year-round Employee Status

Yes

List of Names and Training Dates

See uploaded 2023 training list.

Signatures and Training Dates

[employeetraining2024.pdf](#)

Employee Training Description

New employees are given produce training and CAPS Health and Hygiene Employee Training Verification with W4 and I9 within week of hiring. Employees are trained on particular crops once they are approved to harvest that crop. Returning employees are given the CAPS verification sheet once produce harvest begins.

15. ACCESSIBLE TOILET FACILITIES

Toilet Facility

We have a public/employee bathroom with flush toilet, soap, water and paper towels at the home farm as well as a portable toilet with hand sanitizer and soap. Portable hand washing stations are brought to the fields for on-site hand-washing. If workers are at a remote field for hours, they are given a farm truck ride, as needed, back to the farm drive).to use the bathroom (less than a 5 minute drive.

Easy Access to Toilet

Toilets at the main farm are only a few minutes walk from all fields there. When at our other fields, trucks are available for rides back to the farm which is less than a 5 minute ride.

16. HEALTH AND HYGIENE POLICY

We use the following policies and employees sign the policy to verify their training:

- That my good health and hygiene are integral to our farm's smooth operation and the safety of our produce.
- Employees need to thoroughly wash hands after going to the bathroom, before returning to work, or as needed.
- Employees are required to wear reasonably clean clothes that protect the food product from bodily sources of contamination.
- There is no smoking on the farm and eating is confined to designated areas, separate from produce areas.
- Any signs or symptoms of an infectious disease (i.e. fever, vomiting, diarrhea, and jaundice), the employee will not handle raw-eaten produce and will immediately contact a foreman or supervisor.
- All employees are trained through the Worker Protection Program and instructed on the proper use, if applicable, of potentially hazardous farm chemicals.
- No one is to use harvest containers for carrying or storing non-produce items.
- The employee must quickly treat (with clean first aid supplies) cuts, abrasions, and other injuries, and report them. (*bleeding is stopped, covered and protected before continuing work).
- There will be no harvesting or packing or any produce that has come into contact with feces, blood or other body fluids, and those issues must be reported to a supervisor.
- No one will harvest a product contaminated by chemicals, petroleum, pesticides, glass, manure, etc.
- If employees do not follow standards described above, there will be consequences that may include verbal reminders, corrections, and further, work suspension or dismissal.

17. ACCESSIBLE FIRST AID KITS

Quick Access to Kit(s)

We have stocked first aid kits in every truck and at farmstand and in #1 greenhouse.

★ APPENDIX

cold storage SOP
[cold-storage-sop.pdf](#)