

FLOODING

In the LGMA Metrics, flooding is defined as: the flowing or overflowing of a field with water outside a grower's control that is reasonably likely to contain microorganisms of significant public health concern and is reasonably likely to cause adulteration of edible portions of fresh produce in the field.

Note: The FDA considers produce—including leafy greens—that have been in contact with floodwaters to be adulterated.

BEST PRACTICES FOR THREE TYPES OF FLOODING

Growers should do the following if flooding occurs in their fields:

Existing crop has come into contact with flood water	Flooding is near existing crop but there is no direct contact	For future crops where ground has been flooded
For all types of flooding, conduct a risk assessment and then:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Buffer and <u>do not harvest</u> any product that has come into contact with flood waters.• Buffer and <u>do not harvest</u> any product within 30 feet of the high water mark.• The buffer may be increased if the risk assessment indicates that this is necessary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep personnel and farm/harvest equipment away from the flooded area to avoid cross-contamination.• Place markers identifying the flooding high-water line.• Place markers 30 ft. (or more) beyond this to allow equipment to turn outside of the flooded area.• <u>Do not harvest</u> within the 30 foot buffer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluate the source of flood waters for potential exposure to human pathogens.• Prevent cross-contamination by cleaning and sanitizing any equipment that may have contacted previously flooded soil.• Allow soils to dry sufficiently (see guidelines below) and rework prior to planting.
For all types of flooding, document your actions and maintain these records for two years.		

BEFORE PLANTING AFTER A FLOODING EVENT

Wait a minimum of 60 days; soil must be sufficiently dried out.



Soil testing can shorten the interval to 30 days:

- Collect a representative soil sample of the entire flooded area
- Soil test results are less than 1000 MPN/gram for fecal coliforms AND negative for Salmonella and E. coli O157:H7
- Soil Screening Guidance: Technical Background Document (US EPA 1996) provides guidance
- Third party environmental consultants and/or accredited labs can provide sampling services

This document provides an overview of a section of the LGMA Metrics (food safety practices). It is not a substitute for the full Metrics document, which can be found on the LGMA Tech Resources Page.