

# Hospital Farm Direct Purchasing: A Guide to Ensuring Safe & Sustainable Food

*Hospitals across the country are working to improve the health and sustainability of the food they serve. Purchasing food directly from farms is one of the ways hospitals are promoting a more sustainable food system. By procuring local food hospitals help boost local farm economies, reduce the distance food travels from farm to plate, and improve access to healthy, fresh food. Ensuring that the food purchased for patients, staff, and visitors is safe is of utmost concern.*

This two-part document is designed to support hospitals in identifying growers and producers that meet requirements and preferences regarding food safety and sustainability practices. The **Guide** is for hospital use only, and provides background information for direct buying and interpreting answers on the Grower/Producer Questionnaire. The **Grower/Producer Questionnaire** is to be used with farms being considered for direct purchases.

## How to Use this Document:

1. Review the background information below, which includes liability, legal, sustainability, and food safety information and definitions. Also, retain the “On Farm Food Safety Questionnaire Answer Guide” for use in assessing answers provided by farms completing the *Grower/Producer Questionnaire*.
2. Send the **Farm to Hospital Direct Purchasing – Grower/Producer Questionnaire** to growers and producers being considered for direct purchasing relationships. This document contains reference to food safety legal requirements in *Oregon* and *Washington*. Facilities outside of this geographic area should contact appropriate state departments of agriculture for regulations specific to that region.
3. Review responses to **Farm to Hospital Direct Purchasing – Grower/Producer Questionnaire** using the “On Farm Food Safety Questionnaire Answer Guide” below and determine if they meet your food safety and sustainability standards.

## Background Information:

### Liability Requirements

Farms generally carry **liability insurance** but it is important to identify the level of coverage that they carry. Your hospital may require vendors/farms to have a certain level of liability insurance in order to purchase from them. Check with your facility as to what that level is and ensure that the farm has it prior to engaging in a purchasing agreement.

### Legal Requirement

Legal requirements for purchasing from local farms vary from state to state. Certain **licenses and inspections** may be required for producers to market and direct market their products. Specific requirements are listed in the Grower/Producer Questionnaire with reference to different food categories.

### Sustainable Practices

Increasingly, hospitals are interested in sourcing foods that have been produced with greater attention to minimizing negative environmental impact and exposure to harmful chemicals by farm workers and eaters. The Questionnaire asks about **third party certifications, label claims and other production practices** so that you have additional information for use in determining producers with whom you want to do business.

### Food Safety Practices for Produce Farmers

While most fresh produce is not classified as a potentially hazardous food, outbreaks of food borne illnesses from raw produce does raise concerns. Many produce farms are now certified under **Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)** programs, ensuring production and processing practices that meet food safety standards.



For farms that have not received GAP certification, the On Farm Food Safety Questionnaire in Appendix A of the Grower Producer Questionnaire, includes a set of questions to determine if the farm adheres to best practices. Below is a guide for you to use in evaluating farmer answers to these on-farm practices questions.

### Answer Guide for: On Farm Food Safety Questionnaire

Food Safety Question	Desired Answer	Red Flag
1. Does your farm and/or product hold one of the following food safety certifications? <input type="checkbox"/> USDA GAP/GHP <input type="checkbox"/> Global GAP <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ <b>If No, answer the Food Safety Questionnaire in Appendix A.</b>		Farms are GAP certified on a crop by crop basis. Ask about certification for each crop/product you are interested in purchasing.
<b>Pre-Production and Growing Practices Questions</b>		
1. Do you have a product traceability plan in place? Are products able to be traced back to production areas?	Yes	
2. Has water quality for irrigation been assessed?	Yes	No assessment has been done or source of irrigation water is unknown
3. Have corrective measures been implemented if irrigation water did not meet quality standards?	Yes	
4. Is water tested at least annually?	Yes	
5. Is there a municipal/commercial sewage treatment facility or waste material landfill adjacent to the farm?	No	
6. If composted manure is used, is it properly composted?	Yes	
7. If raw manure is incorporated into the soil, is it added at least 2 weeks prior to planting or 120 days prior to harvest?	Yes	Applied closer than 2 weeks before planting or less than 120 days before harvest.
8. Are crops grown next to livestock production facilities (dairy, beef, poultry, swine, etc. production)?	No	
9. If crops are grown next to livestock production facilities, are adequate natural or physical barriers in place?	Yes	
10. Are manure lagoons located near crop production areas?	No	
11. If manure lagoons are located near crop production areas, are they maintained to prevent leaking, overflowing and runoff?	Yes	
12. Do you use synthetic pesticides? If so, is a trained handler applying them?	No, If Yes...	If using synthetic pesticides, a trained handler should be applying them.
13. Are crop production areas monitored for signs of wild or domestic animals entering the land?	Yes	
<b>Harvest and Post-Harvest Questions</b>		
14. Are baskets, totes, or other containers used to collect or transport food products cleaned and sanitized before each use?	Yes	
15. Are packing materials used for food products clean/sanitized and appropriate for food contact?	Yes	
16. Are food products kept at appropriate temperatures?	Yes	
17. Is the water source for cleaning produce and storage containers potable and kept free of contaminants (e.g., manure)?	Yes	
18. Is water used for cooling and/or to make ice potable?	Yes	



19. Are food product contact surfaces washed, rinsed and sanitized at the end of each day?	Yes	
<b>Facility and Transportation Questions</b>		
20. Is there a pest control program in place for packing and storage facilities?	Yes	
21. Are chemicals, pesticides and cleaning materials properly labeled and stored in restricted areas?	Yes	
22. Are produce items transported with potentially contaminating products?	No	
23. Are animals transported in the same trucks as produce? If yes, are the trucks cleaned and sanitized before produce is transported on the truck?	No; If Yes...	If Yes, trucks should be cleaned and sanitized before produced is transported.
24. Do you maintain a specified temperature during product transit?	Yes	
25. Do you carry liability insurance? If so, what level?	Yes	Liability Insurance level needs to be in accordance with hospital's food safety policy if there is one.
<b>Worker Sanitation Questions</b>		
26. Are workers trained about proper sanitation and hygiene practices?	Yes	
27. Are hand-washing facilities with warm water, soap, and single use towels available to workers?	Yes	
28. Do workers wash hands at appropriate times – after eating, smoking and using restroom?	Yes	
29. Are workers excluded from handling food products if they are ill?	Yes	

### Direct Purchasing Resources and Links

The following resources and links may be useful in developing farm direct purchasing at your facility:

**Local Food Resources:**

- FoodHub – [www.food-hub.org](http://www.food-hub.org)
- Washington State Department of Agriculture: Small Farm and Direct Marketing Program - <http://agr.wa.gov/marketing/smallfarm/>
- Ecotrust, Food Hub - <http://www.ecotrust.org/foodhub/>
- Healthy Food in Health Care – [www.healthyfoodinhealthcare.org](http://www.healthyfoodinhealthcare.org)
- Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility - <http://www.psr.org/chapters/oregon/health-care-without-harm/healthy-food-in-health-care.html>

**Food Safety Resources:**

- Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) – Resources and Certification for food safety planning, implementation,
  - Oregon Department of Agriculture: [http://oregon.gov/ODA/ADMD/gap\\_ghp.html](http://oregon.gov/ODA/ADMD/gap_ghp.html)
  - Family Farmed, On Farm Safety Resource: <http://onfarmfoodsafety.org/>

