

Farm Maps: Previous and Present Land Use Documentation

Accurate farm maps, with fields, water, and pathogen sources included, provide a clear foundation in food safety manuals and help provide full trace back of the farm's produce. Also, potential risks that might have been overlooked before can become more evident with the creation of the farm map.

Maps should contain the name, address and contact information of your farm as well as the fields outlined and labeled with the current year's crop. Be as detailed and specific as you can.

Farm map templates showing fields, acreage, and distance are a useful tool for many different types of record keeping. Crop and soil building rotations, planting dates, irrigation, tracking wildlife activity, and more, most production practices can be recorded on them and used later for decision-making. Create a basic template and keep copies of them with all your record keeping materials.

1. Identifying Potential Microbial Risk Sources

On a map of your farm and adjoining areas that could impact your farm via wind or water or vehicle movement, identify key sources of potential microbial risk, as well as natural and built mitigation systems for these sources of contamination? Include all seasons of the year. Describe in writing when details are needed. Include:

- Compost production and storage
- Manure storage
- Fertilizer storage
- Animal feedlots or grazing
- Location of all domestic animals
- Human sanitation facilities
- Buffer zones between possible sources of contamination and crops
- Areas pets frequent
- High levels of wild animal activity (i.e. migratory paths, nesting or feeding areas)
- Previous recent land history of animal operations or other waste, industrial activities
- Topographical features such as slopes that can send runoff to fields
- Areas that have flood potential
- Indicate prevailing wind
- Roads
- Indicate North and approximate distances to nearest towns and major roadways.
- Identify commonly used routes on the property. (avoid recontamination to a food-sensitive area)
- With arrows show wind and traffic movement
- Buildings that store animal-amendment handling equipment
- Areas that wash animal-amendment handling equipment
- Identify areas of flooding
- Areas where rain water pools
- Toilet and sanitation facilities
- Septic leach fields

Identifying Potential Chemical Contamination

- Gasoline storage
- Chemical and pesticide storage

2. Perform a “Sanitary Survey” of the water sources and distribution systems on your farm.

Use a map and/or describe in writing when more detail is needed.

- Identify the water sources that are available to your farm, wells, irrigation hydrants, streams, ponds, wetlands
- With arrows show water flow and wind direction
- Identify any potential contamination risks that may exist for these sources.
- Buffer zones between possible sources of contamination and water sources
- Describe or diagram how water is used for irrigation on your farm.
- Describe your water testing policy, monitoring, and record keeping protocols based on irrigation water use.

3. Exercise: *Write a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)*

For something you currently do on your farm – but may not have formalized with a SOP

The goal of creating a SOP is to clearly and succinctly convey the specific actions that are absolutely required to complete a task.

A specific SOP should include:

- A descriptive title
- The date it was written, an updated
- Who will perform the task
- When and how frequently
- A description of the procedure to be performed that includes all the steps and materials involved

Tips for refining:

Keep it action oriented – Start with an action word “wipe,” “remove” . . .

Be concise

Break tasks up into numbered steps