



# *Producing Quality Food On-Farm*



## Providing Practical & Sanitary Field Toilets

Toilet, lavatory, water closet, lou, can, jon, dunny, outhouse, port-a-potty, restroom; we have many different names for the bathroom perhaps indicating its importance in our lives. Most of us have at least one, if not two or three in our home and every gas station, coffee shop, and movie theatre has to have one by law, although they vary in degrees of comfort, cleanliness and accessibility. But perhaps the most crucial setting for a toilet is where we pick our fruit and vegetables.

Every day, pickers harvest fresh fruit and vegetables ready for immediate consumption. In this day and age with food safety scares and increased liability, growers must ensure that their workers have access to clean, accessible toilets with adequate hand washing facilities nearby.

### *Why?*

Pickers should use toilets for a number of reasons. First of all and most critically, it is unsanitary for the crop for workers to relieve themselves in the fields. Secondly, they have no means to wash their hands. Proper hand washing decreases the incidence of bacteria being spread to food, consumers or other pickers, decreasing the risk of food borne illnesses and the transmission of other diseases.

Finally, adequate personal hygiene decreases a grower's risk, and associated expenses, of causing a food borne illness or food recall and being held liable for it.

### *How?*

Toilets do not have to be fancy. As long as they are clean and maintained regularly and provide toilet paper and hand washing facilities, any toilet should do. Toilet facilities can range in style from a portable outhouse to a permanent flusher. Ideally, toilets should be spaced around a field or moved with pickers (e.g. mounted on a trailer) so pickers have easy access to them at all times (no more than a

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5-minute walk). Separate toilets for male and female pickers should be available, as some cultures do not allow both sexes to use the same facility. Furthermore, they should be well marked using the universal male/female pictures or color-coded.

## *What is a Proper Toilet Facility?*

Toilets should provide toilet paper and a hand washing facility containing warm (if possible), running, potable water, soap, individual paper towels and a garbage can. If running water is not available, a 4-litre (or larger) jug of water should be provided. If even that is not possible, a hand sanitizer and paper towels should be used; however, hand sanitizers are more effective if used in combination with soap and water, as they become ineffective if hands have any organic matter (soil, juice, etc.) on them.

## *How do I Encourage Their Use?*

Workers must be taught the microbial risks involved in your operation. Do not assume that they or the public know the importance of using the facilities provided. Encourage their use by keeping them clean and available at all times and insist that all workers wash their hands before handling food and after going to the bathroom.

*Personal hygiene is an essential part of everyone's commitment to producing safe and healthy food.*

## *Other Related Information Resources...*

Factsheet - The Importance of Washing Hands Properly  
Poster - Please Wash Your Hands

## *For More Information on On-Farm Food Quality & Safety Contact...*

Food Safety & Quality Unit  
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