

Pacific Coast Producers  
Sustainable Agricultural Practices

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# Pacific Coast Producers Sustainable Agricultural Practices

## INTRODUCTION

### Goal:

Pacific Coast Producers, a grower owned cooperative, and its raw product suppliers are continuously striving to be good stewards of the environment, conserve natural resources, and to assure the food quality and safety of the raw product.

### Purpose:

Pacific Coast Producers has created policies that it deems important in maintaining sustainability.

Implementation of Sustainable Agricultural Practices (SAP) at the grower level will minimize food safety risks, which may be caused by biological, chemical or physical agents.

The objective of this manual is to increase grower awareness of all measures that should be addressed and implemented to avoid situations that may adversely affect the raw product or jeopardize food safety.

### Scope:

All members and other raw product sources delivering fruits and vegetables to Pacific Coast Producers should implement and document Sustainable Agricultural Practices (SAP) into their respective operations. In the event a grower becomes aware of deficiencies in his/her operation, corrective measures must be taken.

Growers should examine the following categories to determine if deficiencies are present and where improvements may be necessary:

- Land History and Usage
- Adjacent Property Usage
- Fertilizer Selection and Usage
- Water Usage
- Pesticide and Nutrient Usage and Control
- Maintenance for Food Safety
- Soil Quality & Soil Erosion
- Personnel Practices/Field Sanitation
- Transportation Inspection and Product Protection Practices
- Farm Research and Improvements

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**BIOSOLIDS POLICY**

**Objective:**

Establish SAP's (Sustainable Agricultural Practices) for Biosolids.

**Background:**

Biosolids are nutrient-rich organic materials resulting from the treatment of domestic sewage at a wastewater treatment facility. Biosolids is generally the term used after applicable beneficial recycling criteria have been achieved.

Municipal Sewer Sludge is generally the term used before applicable beneficial recycling criteria have been achieved which normally occurs at the outlet of the stabilization process.

**Policy:**

- Application of Biosolids is strictly prohibited.
- Application of Municipal Sewer Sludge is strictly prohibited.

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**GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISM POLICY**

**Objective:**

Establish SAP's (Sustainable Agricultural Practices) for genetically modified organisms in raw products grown for delivery to Pacific Coast Producers.

**Background:**

The emerging technology of genetically modified organisms (GMO's) has not yet gained wide public acceptance. This technology is still emerging and Pacific Coast Producers will monitor its development in fruits and vegetables.

**Policy:**

- Pacific Coast Producers currently prohibits the delivery of any raw products containing genetically modified organisms.

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**PRODUCT TRACEABILITY POLICY**

**Objective:**

Establish SAP's (Sustainable Agricultural Practices) for traceability of fresh fruits and vegetables destined for delivery to Pacific Coast Producers.

**Background:**

Traceability of raw product will maintain control of the identity of the material to its source of origin.

**Policy:**

- Pacific Coast Producers' growers are responsible for delivering fruits and vegetables of domestic origin (grown in the United States).
- All loads must have proper field identification tags when delivered to Pacific Coast Producers.
- Each container must be clearly marked with the grower name, contract number, date, time, variety and any other items specific to the lot delivered.
- Records shall be maintained identifying the fields from which the crop was harvested. These records shall link the field to the grade certificate of the crop delivered to Pacific Coast Producers. These records must include appropriate site identification, pesticide and nutrient treatment, inspection records, and other necessary documentation.
- These records should be maintained for a period no less than three years.

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**PESTICIDE & NUTRIENT USE AND CONTROL POLICY**

**Objective:**

Establish SAP's (Sustainable Agricultural Practices) in the use and control of pesticide compounds and nutrients applied to the soil of raw products grown for delivery to Pacific Coast Producers.

**Background:**

Pacific Coast Producers strives for zero pesticide residues on the raw products it processes and ultimately zero use of pesticides found to be carcinogens or reproductive toxicants. Pacific Coast Producers wants its growers and other raw product suppliers to apply only the necessary nutrients needed for a successful crop.

Growers and food processors have the responsibility of providing consumers with wholesome unadulterated quality food. We must at all times supply food products that best serve the consumer. Pacific Coast Producers encourages raw product suppliers to minimize the use of pesticides and nutrients on contracted crops, while maintaining superior quality.

**Policy:**

- Only pesticides including insecticides, fungicides, rodenticides, herbicides, fumigants, defoliants, nematicides, desiccants and plant growth regulators, which have been registered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the California Department of Regulations (DPR) may be used. Growers intended use must appear on the product label.
- The EPA and DPR have established limits or tolerances for pesticide residues remaining on raw products. Therefore, Pacific Coast Producers' growers must apply pesticides strictly in accordance with label directions. When pesticides are used in accordance with label directions, the raw product should be without excess residue and should comply with tolerances established by the EPA and DPR.
- Pacific Coast Producers reserve the right to restrict the use of any pesticide in the production of raw product intended for delivery to Pacific Coast Producers and will not accept any raw product treated with such pesticide.
- Growers must read and follow the entire pesticide label, and use strictly in accordance with label precautionary statements and directions. This includes environmental and groundwater contamination restrictions and any other concerns.

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**PESTICIDE & NUTRIENT USE AND CONTROL POLICY (continued)**

**PACIFIC COAST PRODUCERS WILL MAKE AVAILABLE TO ITS GROWERS, INFORMATION ON PESTICIDES AND THEIR USE.**

**PACIFIC COAST PRODUCERS CANNOT GUARANTEE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ANY PESTICIDE, NOR ASSURE GROWERS THAT FEDERAL OR STATE AGENCIES MAY NOT AT SOME FUTURE TIME PROHIBIT THE USE OF MATERIALS NOW LAWFUL.**

**GROWERS SHOULD CAREFULLY REVIEW EACH PESTICIDE LABEL WITH THE APPROPRIATE AUTHORITY, SUCH AS COUNTY AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONERS, LOCAL DEPARTMENT OF PESTICIDE REGULATION, AND/OR A LICENSED PEST CONTROL ADVISOR TO DETERMINE THE LATEST STATUS OF EACH PESTICIDE BEFORE APPLICATION. LAWS AND REGULATIONS ARE CONTINUALLY CHANGING.**

- Pacific Coast Producers, a food processing cooperative, must be absolutely certain that each chemical to which any raw products may be exposed, is registered and approved for use by the EPA, DPR, and/or county regulations, and is utilized strictly in accordance with such registrations.
- Pacific Coast Producers will supply its members and other raw product sources with a list of pesticides compiled from those registered with EPA and DPR for use on specified crops. However, it is the **growers' sole responsibility** to see that only registered pesticides are used in accordance with labeled directions for use.
- Members and other raw product suppliers **must submit pesticide use reports monthly, and a final report 48 hours prior to harvest.** A completed Pesticide Treatment Crop History (PTCH) must be signed by the grower / supplier before acceptance of the raw product.
- Members and other raw product suppliers must maintain complete and legible pesticide and nutrient application records for three years. Including the following information: date, time, weather conditions, material applied, rate, applicator, application method, and target pest.
- Members and other raw product suppliers have the responsibility of assuring that total residues of related pesticide chemicals remain within lawful limits as established by EPA and DPR regulations, or adjusted limits set by Pacific Coast Producers.

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**DRIFT POLICY**

**Objective:**

Establish SAP's (Sustainable Agricultural Practices) for Drift Policy.

**Background:**

Drift occurs when an application of chemicals drifts to another orchard / field that was not originally intended to be sprayed. This could be caused by inclement weather conditions (rain or wind) or spray equipment not correctly calibrated.

**Policy:**

- **If pesticide drift has occurred or is suspected, grower must notify Pacific Coast Producers immediately.** A residue test of the suspected field or area will be taken to determine if the commodity has been adulterated. No processing of any suspected raw product will occur until test results prove any chemical residues do not exceed EPA or DPR established tolerances.
- Tree fruit and grape harvest may continue solely at the growers risk and cost until test results are provided and any residues are within established tolerances. All suspected raw product will be quarantined.
- Tomato harvest will not be allowed in suspected field or area.
- Growers will alert all involved if drift is suspected.

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**TRANSPORTATION AND DELIVERY POLICY**

**Objective:**

Establish SAP's (Sustainable Agricultural Practices) for transportation and delivery of raw products grown for Pacific Coast Producers.

**Background:**

Pacific Coast Producers requires that all raw products be transported in a safe, secure and timely manner, which in no way subjects the raw product to any contaminant or loss in quality.

**Policy:**

- Any application of oil on roads or loading areas used during harvest shall be done at grower's own risk. **Raw product or containers that exhibit contamination will be rejected.** Contaminants include fuel, oil, road oil, pesticides, fertilizers, excessive mud, or any other substance that would render the raw product unacceptable.
- All vehicles using public roadways must be properly licensed, inspected and equipped for the appropriate containers.

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**BIOTERRORISM POLICY**

**Objective:**

Establish SAP's (Sustainable Agricultural Practices) for the protection and national security of raw products grown for delivery to Pacific Coast Producers.

**Background:**

The Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002 (the Bioterrorism Act) requires domestic and foreign facilities that manufacture, process, pack, or hold food for human or animal consumption in the United States to register with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

**Policy:**

- All Pacific Coast Producers' receiving locations, storage sites, and handling locations must be registered with the FDA.

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**ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCY PLAN POLICY**

**Objective:**

Establish SAP's (Sustainable Agricultural Practices) for an Environmental Emergency Plan.

**Background:**

Pacific Coast Producers requires all members and other raw product suppliers to have an Environmental Emergency Plan in place to ensure the safety of their employees, environment, and raw product.

**Policy:**

- All Pacific Coast Producers' members and other raw product suppliers must have an Environmental Emergency Plan. The plan should include, but not limited to: county and state contact information, emergency employee training, and clean up / control procedures.

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**NATURAL RESOURCE POLICY**

**Objective:**

Establish SAP's (Sustainable Agricultural Practices) to minimize the use of natural resources.

**Background:**

Pacific Coast Producers and its growers acknowledge that natural resources are in limited supply. We are striving to protect remaining natural resources.

**Policy:**

- Implement management practices or techniques to reduce fuel consumption. Growers must monitor fuel use annually.
- Implement strategies to include reuse of renewable and non-renewable resources. Example: chipping, mulching, refraining from burning, incorporating plant waste, etc.
- Growers are encouraged to maximize opportunities for recycling. Example: oil, batteries, anti-freeze, glass, metal, paper, and plastic.
- Burning of trash or vegetation must be conducted in accordance with the law. A current burn permit issued by the local Air Resource Board must be on hand. No burning of trash or vegetation, unless considered a best management practice.
- Implement strategies to reduce water usage. Example: drip irrigation systems and reuse of water.

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**SAP #1**

***Field Site Selection and Management***

- Review and select cropping soils for commodity to be grown.
- Avoid those lands that have been utilized for purposes other than farming. *Past use may contribute to inappropriate chemical residues and microbial contaminants. Do not plant suspect parcels.*
- Use soil analysis to determine if any contaminants exist.
- Avoid planting crops on soils that have high levels of heavy metals such as Cd (cadmium), Pb (lead) or As (arsenic). Crops produced on these soils may exhibit unacceptable levels of heavy metals in the raw or processed product.
- Document all site history including crop rotation.
- Maintain field maps identifying production areas, wells, ecologically sensitive areas, and waterways.
- Monitor and protect all ecologically sensitive areas. Implement reserves, buffers, filter strips, signage, fencing, removal of invasive plants, etc. when possible.
- Practice proper management to avoid soil erosion on all production sites.

**SAP #2**

***Adjacent Property Usage***

- Examine adjacent properties and surrounding areas for possible contamination.
- Construct physical barriers to prevent any contaminants from entering your growing fields.
- Chemical contamination can occur due to drift from adjacent crop pesticide applications. *Note adjacent crops and when pesticide applications are applied to those crops.*
- **If drift has occurred or is suspected, grower must notify Pacific Coast Producers immediately.** The crop will be tested for potential residues.
- Minimize risk of drift by making applications under appropriate conditions.
- A written drift management plan should be developed and available to your District Manager upon request.

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**SAP #3**

***Fertilizer Usage***

- Synthetic fertilizers applied to crops should be from a pure source, absent of excessive levels of heavy metals, such as Cd (cadmium), Pb (lead) or As (arsenic). *A history of synthetic fertilizer applications, high in heavy metals can lead to unacceptable residues in soils and agricultural commodities.*
- Periodically test soil and/or conduct leaf analysis to determine fertilization needs.
- Avoid excessive fertilization with nitrogen products, which can lead to unacceptable nitrate levels in crops, soil and/or ground water.
- Minimize nutrient applications needed for a successful crop.
- Organic fertilizers (manures) must be in compliance with Federal, State and Local regulations and or guidelines.
- Annually document all fertilizer (Synthetic or Organic) applications by field and keep on file for at least three years.
- Follow all legal requirements for nutrient applications, which may be on a written PCA's recommendation or on the manufacturer's label.

**SAP #4**

***Water Usage***

- All irrigation water supplies should be tested annually for bacteria levels.
- Water used for crop production/protection shall meet those standards used for irrigation water.
- Track water usage and reduce whenever possible. Growers are encouraged to implement water saving technologies.
- Irrigation decisions should be based on crop requirements.
- Water usage will be tracked annually at the processing plant. Efforts will be made to reduce water usage.
- **Gray water use is prohibited on all contracted crops.**

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**SAP #5**

***Pesticide Usage and Control***

- Utilization of Integrated Pest Management practices is strongly encouraged. Keep informed of new and/or improved technologies through local UC Cooperative Extension and other sources.
- Use of Category I materials should be limited whenever possible. Growers are encouraged to transition to the least toxic material for a successful application.
- All pesticide applications must be made in accordance with Federal EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) and State DPR (Department of Pesticide Regulations) registered labels. All label instructions will be strictly enforced. (*See attached Pesticide Use and Control Policy*).
- Review and adhere to the approved pesticide list provided by Pacific Coast Producers. The list is updated and distributed annually. (*See attached Pesticide Use and Control Policy*).
- If a new pesticide comes into the market place after publication of the approved list provided by Pacific Coast Producers, the grower must get prior approval before the product can be used.
- Use current Integrated Pest Management sampling techniques and pest thresholds to determine application rate and timing.
- Minimize applications needed for a successful crop, without increasing pest resistance.
- A current pesticide use permit must be maintained and available for inspection. Only individuals who are qualified under local, state, or federal regulations may perform applications of pesticides.
- Applicators must follow label instruction regarding agricultural chemical handling and application procedures. Following label instructions for chemical mixing and storage, and cleaning and disposal of containers, will help prevent any contamination.
- Application equipment must be calibrated on a regular basis (at least annually) and the date of calibrations must be documented. This insures that proper amounts of pesticides are applied to the targeted pest.
- In the event of a violation / citation, corrective measures must be taken to ensure compliance with all regulations / laws.

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**SAP #6**

***Maintenance for Food Safety***

- All equipment should be inspected prior to use to assure over-greasing does not occur, and that any loose or rubbing parts or fluid leaks are corrected. A preventative maintenance program should be implemented.
- All equipment must be regularly cleaned to prevent raw product contamination.
- All lights and light covers should be in good condition to prevent glass contamination of the raw product.
- Any equipment surfaces that are in contact with the raw product should be free of any contamination. This includes rust, loose paint, non-food grade grease and oil.

**SAP #7**

***Soil Quality & Soil Erosion***

- Each field should be tested for soil quality on a regular basis to monitor for compaction, respiration, structure, aggregate stability, texture, salinity, micronutrients, earthworm populations, and infiltration rate.
- Strive to avoid contaminants. This includes fuels, oils, etc.
- Cultivate the field only when necessary to minimize compaction, air pollution, and soil erosion.
- Soil movement should be minimal.
- Growers should minimize soil erosion by implementing cover crops, buffer strips, and wind breaks where applicable.

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**SAP #8**

***Personnel Practices/Field Sanitation***

- Employees must receive appropriate safety training prior to working within the contracted fields. This includes all aspects of good hygiene and Pacific Coast Producers' SAPs.
- Follow all appropriate worker health and safety regulations required by state and federal agencies. This includes providing necessary shade and water for workers.
- In the event of a violation / citation, corrective measures must be taken to ensure compliance with all regulations / laws.
- Employees who have exposed/infected wounds should not have contact with the raw product.
- Proper hygiene practices should be promoted to all employees.
- Proper hand washing and toilet facilities must be provided for all employees. The toilet facilities must be equipped with hand washing signs in both English and Spanish. The toilet facilities shall be constructed to prevent potential contamination of the agricultural area.
- Trash receptacles should be provided at field site and on the farm equipment to prevent fields from becoming contaminated with paper, glass, metals, plastic and other foreign matter. The trash receptacles should be emptied on a regular basis and in a manner not to contaminate the field.
- As harvested, tree fruits should be placed directly on a sorting system or into field bins. **Under no circumstances, shall tree fruit that has been in contact with the ground be placed into field bins. (NO GROUNDERS).**
- Prior to and during harvest, all containers must be inspected and kept free of foreign materials. **No raw product should be placed in any container that has visible residues of fuel, oil, pesticides, fertilizers, or other possible contaminants.**
- Raw product containers provided to growers are only to be used for contracted commodities. **Utilization of raw product containers for anything other than their intended use is strictly prohibited.**
- Fields should be kept free of any glass, metal, plastic or other foreign material.

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**SAP #9**

***Transportation and Product Protection Practices***

- Harvested fruits and vegetables will be delivered in a timely manner to Pacific Coast Producers on a first in first out (FIFO) basis.
- Harvesting / loading equipment shall be inspected for any loose parts, loose paint, rust and/or leaks and must be repaired prior to use. Lights on equipment should be protected with non-breakage shields to prevent glass from contaminating the raw product.
- All containers should be inspected prior to loading. They must be free of glass, metal, plastic, soil or other foreign material.
- Loading areas should be properly graded to promote proper drainage.
- Loading sites and farm roads must be free of any oil contamination. **Containers will not be delivered to a loading site with fresh or excessive road oil present.**
- Lights in loading areas should be protected with shatterproof covers where appropriate.
- Storage sites and transportation equipment should be inspected to assure good repair with no loose insulation, damaged metal, loose paint, rust and/or splintered wood.
- All pesticides and fertilizers must be stored in a separate locked facility away from any raw product.
- Only “approved for food contact use” chemicals should be used on any food contact surfaces on equipment.
- Raw product transport vehicles must meet all applicable DOT/BIT (Department of Transportation/Biennial Inspection of Terminals) and CHP (California Highway Patrol) regulations.

**SAP #10**

***Farm Research and Improvements***

- Growers are encouraged to pursue opportunities to implement new products, varieties, and or practices to reduce usage of natural resources, cost, time, labor, etc.
- Documentation of research results is encouraged regardless of the outcome.