Record Keeping

Keeping records of all farm operations is very important, especially when it comes to food safety. With today's complex food system, watermelons are more rarely moving directly from the grower to the consumer, but are often handled many times before it reaches the market and is consumed. When foodborne illness outbreaks occur, attempts are made to trace the contamination back to the point of origin. Documenting manure use, water test results, worker health, working training programs, building sanitation, and equipment maintenance may provide important data in determining the origin of the contamination. Showing due diligence is good business and may prove contamination did not originate on your farm.

Documentation highlights a grower's commitment to produce safety by reducing microbial risks to watermelons. Examples of good record keeping include:

- A product flow diagram that describes movement of a commodity from the field to the farm gate including harvest practices, post harvest handling, storage and transportation.
- Checklists that document and verify your standard operating procedures.
 They may be as simple as recording toilet and hand washing facility cleaning or more complicated processes such as monitoring and recording worker health status.
- Records that trace watermelons from the field to the buyer. They should include field location, production practices, harvest date, harvester information, storage duration, transportation and buyer information.

Record keeping is also a valuable business tool. Many buyers are requiring third party audits of their suppliers. Good records facilitate ease of auditing by buyers and independent third party auditing firms. In terms of meeting the requirements of auditors, the need for record keeping cannot be over emphasized. Developing record keeping strategies and implementing them to record GAPs will likely be the most difficult and time-consuming part of your food safety program, but it is very important. If your actions are not documented there is no way to verify they were done.

Good Agricultural Practices

Management Area	Best Practice
Record Keeping	Farm records demonstrate adherence to SOPs and scheduled protocols, such as monitoring of
	restrooms, worker training, product coding,
	postharvest sanitation, etc. AND when variation
	in protocols occur, they are noted in the records AND all farm records are verified by
	management and kept on file.
Product Identification	Each piece or container of produce shipped
	from the farm is coded to allow the farm
	management to trace it from the field of origin to
	the distributor. The coded lot numbers are
Annual Food Safety Self	included on the bill of lading. This or other farm food safety self assessments
Assessments	are performed annually, at a minimum.
	Records are kept of the results of the self
	assessments and include action plans and
	dates of implementation.
Written Recall Plan	A recall plan is written, updated and reviewed
	regularly by farm management and employees. Copies of the plan are filed with the farm
	support services including lawyers and
	distributors.
Recall Plan Contents	The written recall plan includes names of
	employees to serve as recall team leaders,
	process for notification of the public and
	regulatory agencies for handling recalled produce and methods for verifying recall plan
	effectiveness.
Notification Contacts in	The recall plan includes current phone and fax
Case of a Recall	numbers for key farm personnel, produce
	buyers and distributors and farm support
	agencies. Notification will include description of
	produce and container size of affected lots. Notification will include requests that all
	contacted parties reply to the notice.
Mock Recall and Traceback	A mock recall has been conducted on the farm
Verification	to test the recall strategy and verify traceback
	procedures
Records of Customer	There have never been customer complaints
Complaints related to Food	about produce food safety or quality OR records
Safety or Quality	are kept of customer complaints. These records include farm responses and any
	remedial actions taken to fix the problem.