

CAPS # 17: Wash-Line Photos and Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

Explanation and Sample SOPs:

CAPS requires photos and a written Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for washing a high-risk, **raw-eaten crop that you sell** (e.g. salad greens). This SOP is required to help you minimize your risk AND improve product quality and post-harvest efficiency.

What crop should you focus on? Choose a raw-eaten leafy crop rinsed in dunk tanks, if you sell one (e.g. lettuce, spinach, mesclun). If not, choose any raw-eaten crop in dunk tanks (e.g. peppers, cucumbers, mellons). If you only spray-wash raw-eaten crops, then choose one of them (e.g. carrots, beets). If you do NOT wash a raw-eaten crop for sale, then you do NOT need photos and SOP for CAPS, but you still will need to submit section #17 to indicate that it is “NA”

The CAPS minimum requirement for washing raw-eaten produce in Dunk Tanks is **EITHER Multiple Dunk Tanks used in Series (2 or more), OR sanitizer use in a single tank.**

Multiple Dunk Tanks used in Series (2 or more):

UVM Extension field research shows that washing crops in dunk tanks can increase the risk of cross-contamination by bacteria that could cause humans to get sick, or cause the crop to spoil faster. Due to the dilution effect, however, the water in each additional dunk tank, in series, shows decrease bacteria concentration by at least two orders of magnitude between tanks! Thus, washing with multiple dunk tanks (2 or more), in series, will decrease food safety risk, and could increase product quality (i.e. less grit and slower spoil rate). Most farms use two or three dunks.

Sanitizer Use:

If the crop is fragile (e.g. large spinach leaves), a single dunk in sanitized wash-water may be more appropriate.

A sanitizer, labelled to control human pathogens in produce wash water, will reduce wash-water bacterial concentration by several orders of magnitude. Most commonly either a peroxy-acetic acid (PAA) sanitizer (e.g. Vigorox, Tsunami), or chlorine bleach (germicidal Chlorox bleach) are used. [Follow this link](#) for more information.

Note that CAPS DOES **NOT REQUIRE** raw-eaten crops to be washed before sale. Unwash crops have minimal risk of cross—contamination throughout the harvest. That said, customers should be informed, if not obvious, that a raw-eaten crop has not been washed.

For examples please browse the CAPS Share Page, or see these wash-line SOPs from 2016 CAPS Farms:

[Cedar Circle Farm](#)

[Intervale Community Farm](#)

[UVM Catamount Farm](#)

[Last Resort Farm](#)

