

Sample SOP: Changing Postharvest Water
in a Bulk Tank, Bin, or Container

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1—Purpose

Describes the process for changing postharvest water in a bulk produce washing tank, bin, or container, including how often the water should be changed and how to monitor turbidity to assure it is being changed often enough to reduce food safety risks. Frequently changing postharvest water reduces the risk of pathogen build up in the water and minimizes the risk of fresh produce cross contamination.

2—Scope

This SOP covers the bulk tanks that are use for fresh produce washing in the main packing shed.

3—Responsibilities

The farm owner is responsible for determining the frequency of water changes based on what commodity is being cooled or washed, the volume of produce being run, the size of washing bins, sanitizers used, and other factors such as turbidity.

The packinghouse manager is responsible for making sure that the water is monitored and changed according to the farm policy.

4—Materials

- Bulk tank, bin, or container
- Water
- *Water Monitoring log*
- *Cleaning and Sanitation log*
- Detergent [*add name here*]
- Cleaning brush
- Sanitizer [*add name here*]

5—Procedure

All procedures must be tailored to the type of tank/bin, the amount of water used, access to drains, and water source.

- Empty the tank/bin. Use an outlet hose to direct the emptying water directly into a drain or to an area away from the postharvest handling or produce growing areas.
- Rinse the tank/bin with clean, potable water.
- Add detergent and scrub tank/bin with a cleaning brush to remove any dirt stuck to the walls or floor of the water container.
- Empty the detergent and wash water into an appropriate drain.
- Rinse again with clean, potable water to rinse off all the detergent.
- Refill the container to the desired volume using clean, potable water.
- Add sanitizer to the water. Follow the SOP for adding sanitizer to the water to make sure you reach the level that is effective for reducing food safety risks. Wear appropriate protective clothing (e.g., gloves, apron, eye wear).
- Document on the log sheet when the water was changed, the tank/bin was cleaned, and when the new batch of water was mixed with sanitizer. Be sure to document the level of sanitizer before returning to produce washing/cooling. Include any actions taken to adjust the water such as changing the pH or temperature.
- Put away any chemicals, including detergent and sanitizer, tools, or materials used while changing the water and store protective equipment in the appropriate location.
- Resume washing/cooling produce.
- At the end of each day, empty the tank/bin, then clean and sanitize it (rinse if necessary). Allow the tank/bin to air dry. If the containers are outdoors and can be moved, transfer them inside where they are protected from bird or rodent activity.