

West Virginia Department of Agriculture

Walt Helmick, Commissioner



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FLOOD CONTAMINATED PRODUCE NEEDS TO BE DESTROYED

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – Gardens are blooming this summer with fresh fruits and vegetables. However, Commissioner of Agriculture Walt Helmick reminds growers any produce that came in contact with flood waters earlier this summer cannot be eaten and must be destroyed.

“Gardens that were partially flooded may still be growing. Produce ripe for picking may look edible. However, any plants that came in contact with flood water must be destroyed. It is a serious health concern,” stressed Helmick.

Flood waters carry pathogens such as E. coli, Salmonella and Listeria. Raw sewage, heavy metals and chemicals are also a concern. Whenever those organisms come in contact with a food source, it becomes dangerous to consume.

If the garden or plants belong to you, make sure to properly dispose of the produce. If you are purchasing produce from a roadside stand, ask where that food has come from. If there is any question it might have been contaminated, do not consume it.

The United States Food and Drug Administration’s Guide on Flooding says: “If the edible portion of a crop is exposed to flood waters, it is considered adulterated under...the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act and should not enter the human food chain. There is no practical method of reconditioning the edible portion of a crop that will provide a reasonable assurance of human food safety. Therefore, the FDA recommends that these crops be disposed of in a manner that ensures they are kept separate from crops that have not been flood damaged to avoid adulterating ‘clean crops.’”

If you have any questions about adulterated food or concerns someone may be selling produce from flooded areas, contact WVDA Communications Officer Buddy Davidson at 304/558-3708 or 304/541-5932. He can also be reached at bdavidson@wvda.us.

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