

# Best Practices Guidebook FOOD HUB VENDOR MANUAL

Agdex 843-2





## Acknowledgments

Adapted with permission from Intervale Food Hub and Intervale Center, 180 Intervale Road, Burlington, VT 05401.

### **Original manual:**

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# 1

## INTRODUCTION

This *Best Practices Guidebook: Food Hub Vendor Manual* is for food hubs and other food-related businesses that are conducting aggregation and distribution. The manual has been developed by Alberta Agriculture and Forestry through a pilot with The Organic Food Box and their vendors.

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*There is a second manual in this series – Best Practices Guidebook: Food Hub Grower Manual – designed to help growers meet pre- and post-harvest standards required by food hubs and others.*

## Who Can Benefit from This Manual?

This manual is intended as a resource for current and potential growers, processors and others working within a food hub model. The focus is on vendors (also called suppliers) and summarizes basic operations, as well as policies and procedures, to help guide vendors in meeting the demands of the food hub.

While much of the following content is common practice within the realm of food aggregation and distribution, it has been tailored to vendors working within a food hub model.

## Objectives

After you complete this manual you, as a vendor, will be able to:

- Understand the food hub business by looking at examples from The Organic Box
- Adhere to buyer expectations surrounding pricing, ordering, delivering and more
- Work with food hubs to develop a plan for product supply
- Meet buyer requirements for product quality, sustainability and service

## Outline of this Manual

The Food Hub Vendor Manual is divided into four sections:

- The food hub business
- Policies and procedures
- Product quality standards
- Technical assistance and support

The appendix at the back of this document provides additional resources.





## 2 THE FOOD HUB BUSINESS

This section describes the food hub business by providing you with an example from The Organic Box of how a food hub might describe its business to its customers. Note that there is information on the mission, date of establishment, operation, types of membership, the facility and services offered.



*The Organic Box*

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### **Do Your Research**

Go to *The Organic Box* website to help you further understand the food hub business and where you, as a vendor, fit.

The Organic Box website:  
<https://www.theorganicbox.ca/>



## **Case example: The Organic Box**

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### *The Organization*

The Organic Box is a family operation owned by Danny and Miranda Turner and operated with the help of our two young sons and over 50 staff members in our Edmonton warehouse and on our farm. We started this journey to re-connect with the source of our food. We hope that you will join us as we explore local organic food and find ways to eat sustainably.

Your membership with The Organic Box supports an ethical food philosophy. It is not just about better flavor and nutrition. It is about being part of a food cycle that cares for people and the environment. The farmers that grow your food use practices that with each crop improve the quality of the soil. This is the ethical way: keeping farm employees healthy and contributing positively to the broader eco-system.

When making our food choices, we follow the money. We look to see where your food dollar is going and ensure that it stays in the communities that are producing the food. We want to support organic producers providing an economic benefit to their own communities – whether that is 100 miles away or 10,000 miles away.

### *The Food Hub*

Bringing together people who eat food and people who make food is what we do. The Organic Box is host to Edmonton's largest and one of Western Canada's most successful food hubs.

Our food hub is a place where the growers and producers of some of our city's most exciting food come together to share their wares with families, restaurants, businesses and the community. We work every day to push the limits and find new members of our food family.

In the fall of 2014 we moved into our new 17,000 square foot facility which includes a fantastic collection of cold and dry storage, freezer and processing space that gives everyone in our food family a place to use our shared storage, distribution and marketing facilities.

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# 3

## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

In general, food hubs work with a diverse range of growers and food processors, comprising all levels of experience and scale. A food hub may focus on a certain type of vendor.



### The Organic Box Vendors

The Organic Box has prioritized working with vendors that are local and/or certified organic. As well, the vendors must be able to provide the highest level of product quality, sustainability and service.

For any food hub, communication and engagement from vendors is critical in order for the hub to uphold commitments to growers, food processors and the community.

## General Requirements

The food hub dialogues with buyers to ensure that vendors understand specific requirements. These requirements ensure product quality and service is maintained as well as demonstrate the business is transparent and accountable.



### Organic Box Food Hub Requirements

A food hub requires all vendors to verify that they are meeting the specified requirements. Food hubs ask vendors to complete the Food Hub Vendor Checklist, which is Appendix 4 at the back of this document.

General vendor requirements include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Provide proof of liability insurance (minimum of \$2.5 million)
- Follow all required provincial and federal food regulations including product labeling, production and processing regulations and follow food safety best practices and certification requirements (e.g. On-farm Food Safety programs like Canada Gap or GACP; and Certified Organic Programs)
- Complete and return the food safety checklist for produce farms
- Complete and return the Food Hub Vendor Checklist, Appendix 4 (all other suppliers)

*As you go through the list, consider your own level of commitment to these vendor requirements.*

*Produce growers complete the Food Safety Checklist for Produce Farms found in the Food Hub Grower Manual.*

- Deliver product that meets processing and product labeling, grading and packaging standards
- Participate in the annual and seasonal planning process and engage in appropriate communication to notify food hub buyer/purchaser in the event of shortfall
- Agree to food hub product refusal and credit policy
- Attend annual vendor meetings (once per year)
- Provide logo, contact information, business description, photos, website and links to social media
- Engage in food hub outreach and marketing efforts to help food hubs tell their stories (demos at host locations, engage in social media, taste tests, cooking classes, etc.)
- Attend food hub events
- Understand and agree to financial agreements
- Understand and follow receiving requirements of the food hub



### Food Hub Vendor Checklist

Fill in the Food Hub Vendor Checklist (Appendix 4) at the end of this manual to help you assess how well you can meet food hub requirements.

## Annual Planning

The food hub works with you and other vendors on an annual and seasonal basis to develop a plan for product supply. This process uses seasonal sales projections for the business to determine anticipated demand for each product. The plan for supply of fresh produce is developed on an annual crop plan that runs from March of the current year to the end of February the following year.

All other product is planned on a customer demand or marketability basis in relation to the ordering cycle. Product can be supplied by one or more vendors during the course of the season. As well vendors may be requested to fill a single, one-time special order.

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*As you develop your own vendor manual, insert detailed policies, procedures and standards required by your food hub.*

You may be asked to supply product, based on the following factors:

- Seniority
- Product niche
- Farm scale and ability to meet annual commitments
- Food safety, grading, packaging and labeling standards

New growers and processors are added when there are gaps in supply.



### The Organic Box

The annual crop plan for fresh produce is completed by March and serves as a guide for the year. Growers can use the pre-planning information (products, volumes and anticipated delivery dates) to prepare for the season. For all other vendors, order projections are made prior to the start of a new ordering sales cycle. All order commitments with exact quantities are communicated once the ordering sales cycle has ended, normally once a week prior to the order being placed. In addition, the food hub buyer confirms planned orders on a weekly basis.

## Pricing

The goal is to create a pricing structure that allows food hubs to maintain a viable business while providing fair and competitive prices to vendors.

Food hubs set prices for fresh produce in collaboration with growers on an annual basis. A food hub may use a case by case basis to reflect seasonal variations with fresh produce to determine changes in product pricing. Contact the food hub buyer for current price lists.

Prices for all other products are set with individual vendors. As a vendor, you are required to adhere to set pricing for each ordering sales cycle. You must communicate price updates to the buyer in advance of the ordering sales cycle.

## Ordering

Using the annual and seasonal plan as a guide, a food hub buyer confirms weekly orders with vendors to verify availability. If you, as a vendor, are unable to meet your commitment, then the food hub will seek out a replacement and make purchases in real time. It is a best practice for you to send a weekly or bi-weekly availability list to the buyer to communicate current availability for real time purchasing.



### The Organic Box

The Organic Box uses a forecasted booking process for volumes and then confirms actual orders during the sales cycle.

## Deliveries

All food hubs will have a system for deliveries.



### The Organic Box

The Food Hub facility is located at 5712 59 Street NW, Edmonton, Alberta, and delivery is on a set day each week depending on both Edmonton and Northern Alberta locations. In some outlying areas, The Organic Box offers pickup locations.

The facility is equipped with refrigerated, frozen and dry storage space. As well The Organic Box has dock and grade loading and pallet moving equipment.

## Receiving Hours

All vendors delivering to the facility must check in with food hub staff to ensure correct volumes are delivered and product quality meets grading, packaging and labeling standards.

All deliveries must be made to the facility by the designated receiving cut-off time each day. Receiving hours for the facility are communicated on a seasonal basis by the buyer.



Fork lift





Vendor pallet in receiving

## Container Recycling

The food hub holds your containers for reuse. All containers are stored inside the facility. All containers must be clean and structurally sound for use and must only be used for orders.



### Can You Meet Container/Packaging Requirements?

Fill in the Food Grade Containers/Packaging Checklist (Appendix 5) at the end of this manual to help you assess how well you can meet container requirements.

## Product Refusal and Crediting

Vendors are required to deliver according to food hub product quality standards (food safety, grading, packaging and labeling). All products that do not meet the agreed upon standards will be subject to refusal. Product can be refused by staff upon delivery or within a 24-hour period after delivery. If your product is refused, you may choose to replace the product with one that meets product quality standards by the daily receiving cut off time; if you are unable to meet requirements, the food hub will request credit from you.



## Billing and Payment

As a vendor, you must invoice the food hub on the day of delivery. Invoices can be submitted by placing in the invoice dropbox, by mail or by email. If an invoice is not submitted upon delivery, a packing list must be provided with each delivery as a record of what has been received.

Invoices must contain the following information:

- Date of billing
- Vendor name
- Vendor contact information
- Address for payment
- Product and quantity delivered
- Price per unit
- Total cost
- GST number if appropriate
- Terms of payment

Most food hubs operate on a 30-day billing cycle, meaning all invoices will be paid within a 90-day period. All suppliers will receive payment as invoices are received. In order to assist with farm cash flow, the vendor will continue to receive payment as invoices are submitted. Direct questions regarding billing and payment to the food hub buyer.



### The Organic Box

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The billing cycle includes:

- 14 days for producer
  - 7 days for egg vendors
  - 30 days for grocery vendors
-

# 4

## PRODUCT QUALITY STANDARDS



Food hubs are committed to offering customers the highest quality food that is fresh, healthy and safe. All product supplied to the food hub must meet product quality standards including any customer specified policies, procedures or standards as outlined in this section.

## Food Safety

If you are selling product to the food hub, you are expected to use best practices and ensure food safety when handling and distributing products for the hub. By completing and signing the Food Hub Vendor Checklist, you agree to deliver product that is:

- Safe for human consumption
- Free of any contamination both in production and transport
- Maintained at proper temperatures up to and including delivery

You must follow all required provincial and federal regulations and provide proof of certification where appropriate. As a vendor, you are categorized based on the products you produce and generally fall into two categories:

- Produce grower
- Food processor

### On-Farm Food Safety Programs

On-farm food safety programs such as Canada Gap and good agriculture and collection practices were developed under the On-Farm Food Safety Recognition Program. This provides government recognition of these on-farm programs developed and implemented by national industry organizations in order to:

- Enhance food safety
- Maintain the confidence of Canadian consumers
- Facilitate market access

The Food Safety Recognition Program is led by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) with participation of the provincial and territorial governments. Recognition acknowledges that a food safety program has been developed in line with *Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point* (HACCP) principles, as defined by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, and conforms to federal, provincial and territorial legislation, policy and protocols.

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*See the Food Hub Vendor Checklist (Appendix 4) at the end of this manual.*

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*Growers are required to complete the Food Safety Checklist for Produce Farms (Appendix 5 in Food Hub Grower Manual) for their operation on an annual basis. All growers are encouraged to have a comprehensive food safety plan. Growers can refer to the Good Agricultural Practices and Good Handling Practices Program to develop, implement and maintain a proper food safety plan or the On-Farm Food Safety program of their national commodity organization.*

For more information for processors, see the Resources section for the publication *Food Safety Information for Food Processors*.



Sort for cleanliness and standard size



Example of a clear produce bag

Each On-Farm Food Safety (OFFS) program supports national, auditable, industry-led HACCP-based food safety programs, with a goal of safeguarding Canada's food supply. Each program is owned wholly by industry, but to maintain CFIA oversight, each must submit their program to CFIA every 18 months to ensure all relevant risks are addressed. OFFS programs can stand alone or be built into private sector schemes and may contain associated initiatives such as biosecurity, quality or traceability.

Food processors fall into several categories and are regulated by a number of provincial and federal agencies. Food processing categories include meat and poultry products, dairy products and all other food products.

The food hub requires that all food processors adhere to the appropriate regulations based on their product(s).

## Grading

Crops sold to food hubs must be graded based on style (e.g. bunched vs. topped roots), size, firmness and cleanliness. The food hub has to develop a set of product standards for food hub vendors. In general, the food hub requires product to meet Canada No. 1 grade standards, meaning a specific crop must be of similar varietal characteristics, fresh and/or firm, fairly well shaped and colored, fairly clean, and free from rot, decay and damage.

## Packaging

Food hub guidelines for packaging include acceptable containers and case sizes. All product delivered to the food hub must be in acceptable containers. No product shall be delivered as a stand-alone item, especially product in glass packaging. Acceptable containers include rigid plastic containers (RPCs), wax and fiberboard boxes, plastic totes, plastic mesh and plastic vented bags, and bulk bins. Case sizes are specific to each product.

The food hub requires that produce farms over-fill cases by approximately 5 percent to offset weight losses during packing, storage and transit.

## Container Labeling

You must properly label all containers delivered to a food hub. At a minimum, labels need to include your name, product (arugula, beets, carrots, etc.), packing date and the count and/or net weight (24 count, 50 pounds, 24x1/3 pound bags, etc.).



Reading labels



### Quality Standards

Write down specific quality standards required by your own food hub.

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For more details see the *Canada Agricultural Products Act* and the *Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Regulations* that address produce grades, labelling and containers: [http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/C.R.C.,\\_c.\\_285/index.html](http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/C.R.C.,_c._285/index.html)

For a complete list of food hub product standards, refer to the Appendix at the back of this document. To create your own forms, go to Appendix 6.

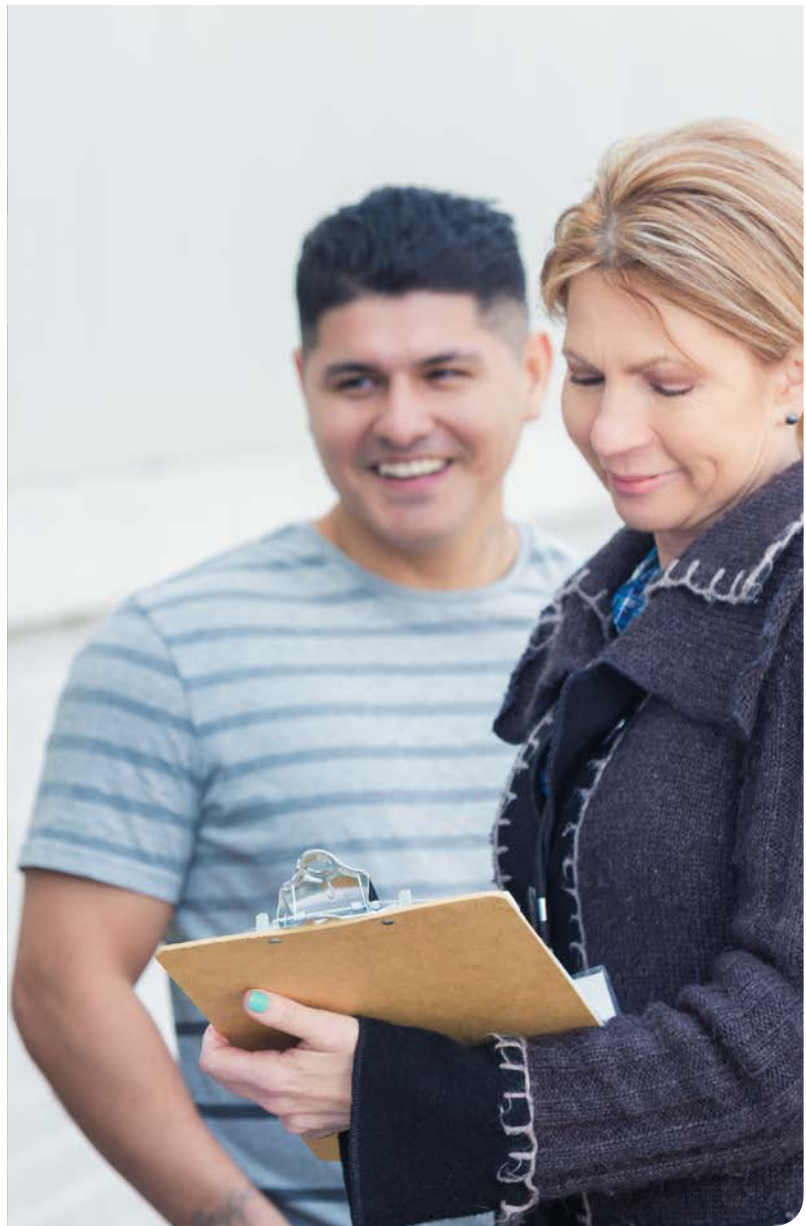


A packaging and labeling line for pickles



# 5

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT



Food hubs are committed to providing all vendors with the resources they need to have successful, viable, strong businesses. The food hub is available to provide vendors with direct technical assistance and one-on-one support.

In general, food hubs offer vendors a range of support and services, including aggregation, distribution, sales and marketing. Some food hubs offer vendors access to new markets and pass along market information, including market demand, trends and needs. This information serves as a resource for vendors, enabling them to increase production, develop new products and meet evolving requirements for pricing, packaging, labeling and food safety.

A food hub can assist you with a review of your food safety plans or may host group training sessions.



### The Organic Box

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“As part of the food hub network, we are connected to a diverse and knowledgeable network of professionals and serve as a link to provincial resources for farmers and food processors.”

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### Your Resources

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Find out the technical assistance and support that your food hub provides.

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## Conclusion

You should now have an understanding of the food hub business as illustrated by the examples from The Organic Box. You should be able to better adhere to buyer expectations surrounding pricing, ordering, delivering and product supply. Finally, you will be able to meet pre- and post-harvest buyer requirements for product quality, sustainability and service.

This manual is one of two in a series. The other manual in the series – *Food Hub Grower Manual* – is designed to help growers meet standards and establish best practices to develop internal systems and standards.





# 6

## APPENDIX

The forms appearing in the Appendix are available in digital, fillable, PDF format. These forms can be accessed directly by clicking on the links provided below:

**Appendix 1: Food Hub Staff List and Contact Information**

<https://cfr.forms.gov.ab.ca/form/piwd11297.pdf>

**Appendix 2: Food Hub Producer List and Contact**

<https://cfr.forms.gov.ab.ca/form/piwd11296.pdf>

**Appendix 3: Internal Audit Flow**

**Appendix 4: Food Hub Vendor Checklist**

<https://cfr.forms.gov.ab.ca/form/piwd11292.pdf>

**Appendix 5: Food Grade Containers/Packaging Checklist**

**Appendix 6: Food Hub Product and Packaging Standards Chart & Example**

<https://cfr.forms.gov.ab.ca/form/piwd11289.pdf>

**FOOD HUB DETAILS**

Food Hub			
Address	City/Town	Province/Territory AB	Postal Code

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

Contact Name	Position/Title
Telephone Number	Email Address

Fill out a separate contact sheet for each of your producers/vendors information using this fillable form. Begin by filling out your first form and save the form, and then hit reset and start with a new blank form and repeat for every producers or vendor for the food hub.

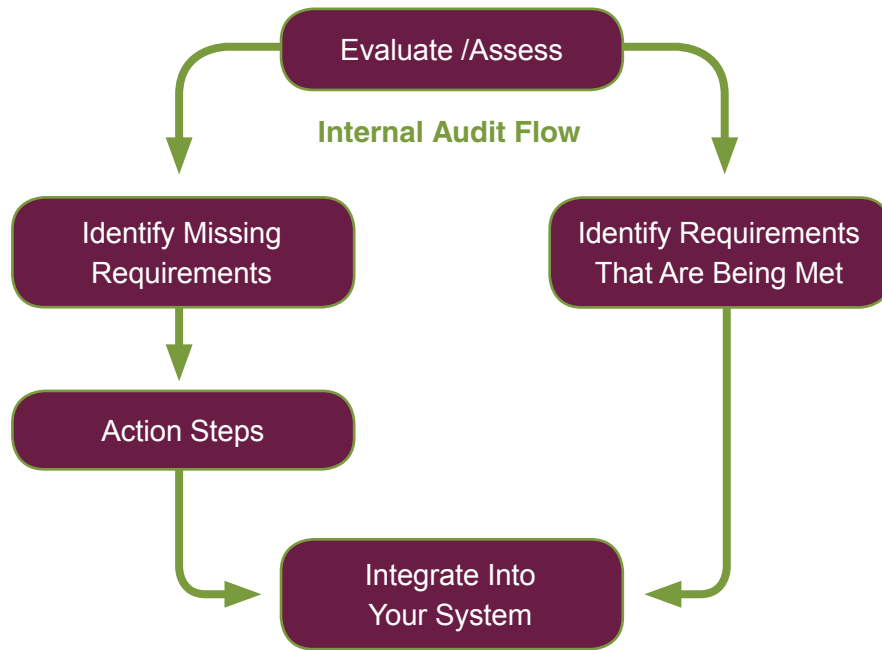
PRODUCER/VENDOR DETAILS			
Farm/Business Name			
Address	City/Town	Province/Territory AB	Postal Code
Website			

CONTACT INFORMATION	
Contact Name	Position/Title
Telephone Number	Email Address

PRODUCT(S)
Product Name

BRAND(S)
Brand Name

An internal audit or review is a systematic review of what you have in place. This review is done by qualified people within your food hub. You will use it to take a closer look at your processes and be better enabled for audit(s).



**Evaluate & Assess**

Review what you have already in place to meet the requirements of your food hub buyers (and customers) and in terms of where you are with quality, safety and traceability management.

Example: written policies, programs, procedures, records, monitoring (testing), verification, etc.

**Identify Requirements**

Do you meet these requirements or is there something absent or missing? What are the gaps? How will you fill them? You want to ensure that your records match what you are actually doing in your operation. A regularly scheduled review is vital to validate that they do match.

**Action Steps**

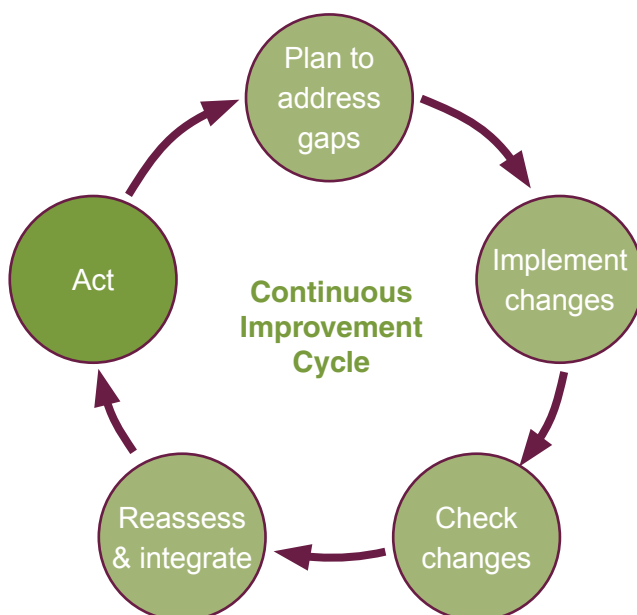
Plan to Address: if you have identified any missing requirements plan to address these gaps and put into action steps.

**Implement**

Integrate and implement the changes required into your operational systems.

**Check**

Continuous improvement cycle: reassess regularly and continually improve. Be prepared for the external audits if required.



The following checklist is an agreement between the food hub and the participating vendor (supplier) to verify that best practices are being used to eliminate risk of contamination and ensure food safety.

All vendors selling to the food hub are required to complete the checklist by \_\_\_\_\_ of each year and return to:  
Date (yyyy-mm-dd)

**FOOD HUB DETAILS**

Food Hub Name	Contact Name		
Address	City/Town	Province/Territory	Postal Code
		AB	

**VENDOR DETAILS**

Vendor Name	Contact Name		
Address	City/Town	Province/Territory	Postal Code
		AB	

**VENDOR CHECKLIST**

The checklist includes, but is not limited to the list below.

Y = Yes, N = No, N/A = Not applicable to my operation

**Individual Health and Hygiene control**

- |                          |                          |                          |                                                                                                                            |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Y                        | N                        | N/A                      |                                                                                                                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Workers/employees are trained on proper sanitation and hygiene practices                                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Restrooms with hand washing stations are available for all workers/employees                                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Restrooms are maintained regularly                                                                                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Signs are posted to instruct workers/employees to wash hands before or returning to work                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Smoking and eating areas are away from where product is handled                                                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Product will not be handled by anyone who shows signs of infectious disease (i.e. diarrhea, flu, etc.)                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | First aid supplies are available at all times                                                                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Bandages and gloves are to be used to cover any open wounds                                                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Ergonomic aspects (task performed by employees and work environment should not act as risk factors to health of employers) |

**Food Safety, quality and legal compliance**

- |                          |                          |                          |                                                                                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Y                        | N                        | N/A                      |                                                                                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Products produced in an approved registered facility                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Ingredients meet quality standards                                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Good Manufacturing Practices and/or Good Agricultural Practices in place and implemented |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | HACCP program in place and implemented where appropriate                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Product codes (dated, UPC, barcode)                                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Traceability requirements in place and implemented                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Recall system/procedure in place                                                         |

- Appropriate certificates of analysis (e.g. product shelf-life)
- Food safety training for employees
- Foods packaged and stored properly, in proper temperature, protected from contaminants
- Only approved sanitizers for food products and facilities used
- Liability and insurance requirements are met
- Product insurance in place

**Product Compliance**

- | Y                        | N                        | N/A                      |                                                                                        |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Approved supplier for other buying groups or private labels                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Labels are in compliance (e.g. complete ingredient listing and nutritional labeling)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Food claims are in compliance                                                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Allergens clearly labeled                                                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Food grade packaging                                                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Tamper proof                                                                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Product is organic                                                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Product is Kosher or other                                                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Organic, Kosher or other labelling is compliant with national and provincial standards |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Participate in 3rd party auditing                                                      |

**Storage and Transportation**

- | Y                        | N                        | N/A                      |                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | All products are handled safely from production to delivery and merchandising                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Products stored and handled under conditions to prevent damage, deterioration and contamination |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Food grade storage materials                                                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Instructions for retail and/or consumer on safe storage temperatures visible                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | The storage facility and transport vehicles are properly cleaned and maintained                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Proper storage temperatures are maintained during storage and transport of product              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Floors in storage areas are reasonably free of standing water and dirt                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Packing slip or invoice provided                                                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Shipping and other records in place                                                             |

**Verification**

Organic Certification has been completed by \_\_\_\_\_

Please sign and date below:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date (yyyy-mm-dd) Vendor Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Contact and Title Signature

***Checklist requirements have been adapted from industry examples.***

Use clean food-grade containers to store and transport food products to the food hub. These containers are not to be used for any other purpose. Regulations and reference listing for approved food-grade containers can be found at:

- Food packaging regulations  
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/securit/packag-emball/index-eng.php>
- Reference listing of accepted construction materials, packaging materials and non-food chemical product  
<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/active/scripts/fssa/reference/reference.asp?lang=e&cmd=1&cat=7&subcat=45>
- Alberta packaging material suppliers listings  
<https://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/app68/agriprocessors?cat1=Packaging+Material+Suppliers>

**Some examples of acceptable containers for food include:**

- Clean, sanitized food-grade plastic totes
- Clean food-grade cardboard boxes for fresh fruits and vegetables
- Clean, sanitized stainless steel containers
- Insulated food-grade coolers and thermal containers

**Some examples of single-use food grade packaging include:**

- Hinged “clam-shell” containers
- Berry boxes
- Cardboard bakery boxes
- Produce bags

**Exercise: Checklist for packing for transport**

- Pack products in clean, sanitized containers and cover for transport.
- Inspect each container for cleanliness, before packing.
- Check the quality of the products as you pack them for transport.
- Check to ensure food products remain at or near their storage temperatures.
- Pack different types of food in separate containers and wash your hands between handling different products.
- Sanitize the food-grade transport containers following shipping and prior to re-use

Note: a fillable form is available to adapt to your own food hub situation and depending on what the buyers request.

PRODUCT	STANDARD	PACKAGING	CASE PACK	UNIT
<b>Produce, vegetable</b>				
arugula, baby, bag	1/4lb bag	plastic bag in wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count
arugula, baby, bag	1/3lb bag	plastic bag in wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count
asparagus, bunched	U.S.no.1, 1lb bunch, 8in. stalk length minimum	packed vertical, butt - end down in pyramid crate, wax box or plastic tote	16	count
beans, snap, bag	U.S.no.1, 1/2lb bag	vented plastic bag in wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count
beans, snap, bag	U.S.no.1, 1lb bag	vented plastic bag in wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count
beet greens, bag	U.S.no.1, 1/2lb bag	plastic bag in wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count
beet greens, bag	U.S.no.1, 1lb bag	plastic bag in wax box, RPC or plastic tote	12	count
beets, bulk	U.S.no.1, roots >1.5in.diameter	vented plastic bag	25	lb
beets, bunched	U.S.no.1, 1-1.5lb bunch, 5 - 8 roots/bunch	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count
bok choy, baby	bulk, 2in. minimum diameter	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	20	lb
broccoli, bunched	U.S.no.1	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	14	count
broccoli raab, bunch	1/2lb bunch	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count
brussels sprouts, bag	U.S.no.1, 1/2lb bag, sprouts > 1in. diameter	plastic mesh or vented plastic bag in wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count
brussels sprouts, bag	U.S.no.1, 1lb bag, sprouts > 1in. diameter	plastic mesh or vented plastic bag in wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count
cabbage	U.S.no.1, medium, 2 - 5lb head	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	40	lb
napa cabbage	U.S.no.1, medium, 2 - 5lb head	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	20	lb
carrots, bulk	U.S.no.1, roots 3/4 - 1.5in. diameter	vented plastic bag	25	lb
carrots, bunched	U.S.no.1, bunch > 1lb, at least 4 carrots/bunch	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count
cauliflower	U.S.no.1	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	12	count
celery	U.S.no.1	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count
celery root	topped, well-trimmed, 3in. minimum diameter	vented plastic bag	25	lb
chard, bunch	app. 1lb bunch, 6 - 8 leaves/bunch	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count
chard, bulk	1/3lb bag	plastic bag in wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count
collards	U.S.no.1, app. 1lb bunch, 6 - 8 leaves/bunch	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count
corn	U.S.no.1	plastic mesh bag, wax box or RPC	48	count
cucumber	U.S.no.1	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	20	lb
eggplant, asian	U.S.no.1, 22 - 28/case	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	10	lb
eggplant, italian	U.S.no.1, 22 - 28/case	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	25	lb
fennel	U.S.no.1, bulb > 2in. diameter	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	12	count
garlic	U.S.no.1, bulb > 1.5in. diameter	plastic mesh bag, wax box or RPC	10	lb
garlic scapes	bulk	vented plastic bag, wax box, RPC or plastic tote	10	lb
kale, bunch	U.S.no.1, app. 1lb bunch, 6 - 8 leaves/bunch	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count



PRODUCT	STANDARD	PACKAGING	CASE PACK	UNIT
<b>Produce, vegetable (continued)</b>				
kale, lacinato, bunch	U.S.no.1, app. 1lb bunch, 6 - 8 leaves/bunch	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count
kale, bulk	U.S.no.1, 1/3lb bag	plastic bag in wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count
kohlrabi, bulk	leaves removed, diameter 2 - 4in. minimum	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	25	lb
kohlrabi, bunch	leaves in good condition, 1lb bunch, diameter 2 - 4in. min.	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count
leeks, bulk	diameter > 3/4in., 10 - 15in. length	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	20	lb
leeks, bunch	1lb bunch, diameter > 3/4in., 10 - 15in. length	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count
lettuce	U.S.no.1, 1/2lb minimum/plant	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count
mesclun	1/4lb bag	plastic bag in wax box, RPC, or plastic tote	24	count
mesclun	1/3lb bag	plastic bag in wax box, RPC, or plastic tote	24	count
mesclun	1/2lb bag	plastic bag in wax box, RPC, or plastic tote	24	count
mushrooms, shiitake	U.S.no.1, large, 4oz.	vented plastic bag in fiberboard box	16	count
mushrooms, oyster	U.S.no.1, large, 4oz.	vented plastic clamshell in fiberboard box	16	count
Onions	U.S. no. 1, bulb > 1.5in. diameter	plastic mesh bag, wax box or RPC	50	Lb.
parsnips	U.S.no.1, roots > 1.5in.diameter	vented plastic bag	25	lb
peas, snap	U.S.no.1, 1/2lb bag	vented plastic bag in wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count
peas, snap	U.S.no.1, 1lb bag	vented plastic bag in wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count
pea, snow	U.S.no.1, 1/2lb bag	vented plastic bag in wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count
pea, snow	U.S.no.1, 1lb bag	vented plastic bag in wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count
peppers, green	U.S.no.1, fruit > 2.5in. diameter	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	25	lb
peppers, red	U.S.no.1, fruit > 2.5in. diameter	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	25	lb
peppers, hot	U.S.no.1	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	5	lb
potatoes, blue	U.S.no.1, size A	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	50	lb
potatoes, fingerling	U.S.no.1	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	20	lb
potatoes, new	U.S.no.1	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	25	lb
potatoes, red	U.S.no.1, size A	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	50	lb
potatoes, white	U.S.no.1, size A	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	50	lb
potatoes, yellow	U.S.no.1, size A	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	50	lb
pumpkin, pie	U.S.no.1, 2 - 4lb	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	40	lb
radishes	U.S.no.1, 8 - 12 roots/bunch, medium - large	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count
rhubarb	U.S.no.1, 10 - 15in. stem length	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	10	lb
rutabaga	U.S.no.1, roots > 1.75in.	vented plastic bag	25	lb
scallions	U.S.no.1, 6 - 9 onions/bunch, 1/4 - 1in. diameter, length > 8in.	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count
shallots	U.S.no.1, bulb > 1in. diameter	plastic mesh bag, wax box or RPC	10	lb
spinach, baby	U.S.no.1, 1/4lb bag	plastic bag in wax box, RPC, or plastic tote	24	count
spinach, baby	U.S.no.1, 1/3lb bag	plastic bag in wax box, RPC, or plastic tote	24	count
spinach, baby	U.S.no.1, 1/2lb bag	plastic bag in wax box, RPC, or plastic tote	24	count

PRODUCT	STANDARD	PACKAGING	CASE PACK	UNIT
<b>Produce, vegetable (continued)</b>				
spinach, large	U.S.no.1, 1/2lb bag	plastic bag in wax box, RPC, or plastic tote	24	count
spinach, large	U.S.no.1, 3/4lb bag	plastic bag in wax box, RPC, or plastic tote	24	count
spinach, large	U.S.no.1, 1lb bag	plastic bag in wax box, RPC, or plastic tote	24	count
sweet potatoes	U.S.no.1, 3.5in. diameter max, 20oz. weight max	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	40	lb
tomatillos	husk - on, green fruit, husk - filled, 1in. minimum diameter	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	10	lb
tomato	U.S.no.1, large, red	1 - layer flat, tray pack	10	lb
tomato, cherry	U.S.no.1, pint	pint pulp container with mesh netting in 1 - layer, tray pack	12	count
turnips, salad	5 - 8roots/bunch, roots 1 - 2in.	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count
turnips, purple top	U.S.no.1, roots > 1.75in.	vented plastic bag	25	lb
winter squash	U.S.no.1, 2 - 4lb	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	40	lb
yellow squash	U.S.no.1	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	20	lb
zucchini	U.S.no.1	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	20	lb
<b>Produce, fruit</b>				
apples, bagged	U.S. fancy, 2.25in. diameter min, bag size varies	vented plastic bag in fiberboard box	varies	count
black currants	1/2 pint	1/2pint pulp container with mesh netting	12	count
blueberries, fresh	U.S.no.1, 1/2pint	1/2pint pulp container with mesh netting	12	count
blueberries, frozen	U.S.no.1, quart	plastic bag in wax or fiberboard box, RPC, or plastic tote		count
cantaloupe	U.S.no.1, 3 - 5lb	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	40	lb
cherries	U.S.no.1, pint	pint pulp container with mesh netting	12	count
cranberries	U.S.no.1, 12oz. pkg	12oz. custom consumer pack	18	count
gooseberries		1/2pint pulp container with mesh netting	12	count
ground cherries		pint pulp container with mesh netting	12	count
<b>Produce, fruit</b>				
honeydew	U.S.no.1, 3 - 5lb	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	40	lb
peaches	U.S.no.1, pint	pint pulp container with mesh netting	12	count
plums	U.S.no.1, pint	pint pulp container with mesh netting	12	count
raspberries	U.S.no.1, 1/2pint	1/2pint pulp container with mesh netting	12	count
strawberries	U.S.no.1, pint	pint pulp container with mesh netting	12	count
watermelon	U.S.no.1, 4 - 6lb	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	40	lb
<b>Produce, herbs</b>				
basil	4oz. bunch	vented plastic bag in wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count
cilantro	4oz. bunch	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count
dill	4oz. bunch	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count
herbs, other	1 - 4oz. bunch	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	12	count
parsley	4oz. bunch	wax box, RPC or plastic tote	24	count

PRODUCT	STANDARD	PACKAGING	CASE PACK	UNIT
<b>Dairy / Eggs / Perishables</b>				
cheese, cow, assorted (Mt.Mansfield)	8oz.	cheese paper wrap in fiberboard box, RPC or plastic tote		count
cheese, goat, assorted (Does' Leap)	5 - 9oz.	plastic 1/2pint container in fiberboard box, RPC or plastic tote		count
cheese, cheddar (Shelburne Farms)	1 year age, 8oz. Block	vacuum sealed plastic in fiberboard box		count
yogurt	quart	plastic quart container in fiberboard box	6	count
eggs	large, 1 dozen	fiberboard egg carton in fiberboard box or RPC	12	count
apple cider	1/2 gallon	1/2 gallon plastic container in fiberboard box	9	count
<b>Grains</b>				
whole wheat pastry flour	bulk	plastic lined paper bag	25	lb
whole wheat bread flour	bulk	plastic lined paper bag	25	lb
cornmeal	bulk	plastic lined paper bag	25	lb
black beans	bulk	woven plastic or plastic lined bag	25	lb
<b>Prepared Foods</b>				
prepared meal, assorted				
sauce, assorted	pint	2.25lb rectangular foil pan with lid in RPC or plastic tote		count
soup, assorted	quart	plastic pint container in fiberboard box, RPC or plastic tote		count
pesto, basil	6oz.	plastic quart container in fiberboard box, RPC or plastic tote		count
balsamic vinaigrette, dressing	12fl.oz.	plastic 1/2pint container in fiberboard box, RPC or plastic tote		count
<b>Baked Goods</b>				
bread	varies by variety	12fl.oz. glass jar in fiberboard box	12	count
paper bag in bread tray or fiberboard box				
<b>Meat / Seafood</b>				
salmon, frozen	1lb, 3 - cut family pack or 2lb filet	1lb, 3 - cut family pack or 2lb filet in vacuum sealed plastic in fiberboard box		lb
beef, ground, frozen	1lb pack	1lb pack, vacuum sealed plastic in fiberboard box		lb
pork, sausage, link	1lb pack	1lb pack, vacuum sealed plastic in fiberboard box		lb
chicken, whole, frozen	3.5 - 5.5lb bird	vacuum sealed plastic in fiberboard box		lb
<b>Grocery</b>				
apple butter	16oz.	16oz. glass jar in fiberboard box	12	count
caramel, goat's milk	8oz.	8oz. glass jar in fiberboard box	12	count
jams/jellies, assorted	8oz.	8oz. glass jar in fiberboard box	12	count
fruit syrup, assorted	6.3oz.	6.3 oz. glass jar in fiberboard box		count
sunflower oil	250ml	250ml glass jar in fiberboard box	12	count
red balsamic vinegar	250ml	250ml glass jar in fiberboard box	12	count
maple syrup	1 litre, grade varies	1 litre glass jar in fiberboard box	6	count
maple syrup	1/2 litre, grade varies	1/2 litre glass jar in fiberboard box	12	count
tea, black, loose leaf	3oz.	3oz. sealed container		count
tea, green, loose leaf	3oz.	3oz. sealed container		count
coffee, reg	1lb pack	1lb lined paper coffee bag		count
coffee, decaf	1lb pack	1lb lined paper coffee bag		count

PACKAGING STANDARDS			
Product		Standard	
Packaging		Case Pack	Unit



# 7

## RESOURCES

Alberta Agriculture and Forestry has a catalogue of factsheets. This section provides you with links to some key factsheets relevant to food hub vendors: marketing food safely, food labels and food claims.

## Resources

### **Agriculture Information Catalogue**

[http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$Department/deptdocs.nsf/All/agdex15882](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$Department/deptdocs.nsf/All/agdex15882)

### **Marketing Food Safely – Farm Direct Advantage Manual**

[http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/explore13314](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/explore13314)

### **Food Safety Information for Processors**

[http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/fs14712](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/fs14712)

### **Farm Direct Marketing: Know the Regulations – Food Labels**

[http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex15164](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex15164)

### **Industry Labelling Tool (ILT)**

<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/food/labelling/food-labelling-for-industry/eng/1383607266489/1383607344939>

### **Labelling Requirements Checklist**

<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/food/labelling/food-labelling-for-industry/labelling-requirements-checklist/eng/1393275252175/1393275314581>

### **Farm Direct Marketing: Know the Regulations – Food Claims**

[http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex15368](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex15368)

**Health claims on foods**, visit Health Canada website

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/index-eng.php>



