

Temperature control

If you're a grower or primary processor of leafy vegetables or melons, you must keep your harvested produce at a temperature that ensures it is safe to eat.



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What is temperature control?

Temperature control involves monitoring the temperature of your harvested produce and adjusting conditions to keep it cool. Doing this once produce is harvested, and during processing, storage and transport can help keep the product's quality, reduce the risk of harmful bacteria growing in the food and reduce food waste.

What are the requirements?

Primary producers and primary processors of leafy vegetables and melons must keep harvested produce at a temperature that does not make the food unsafe or unsuitable to eat.

This means once produce has been picked, its temperature should be managed carefully to ensure it doesn't get too warm.

These requirements are under primary production and processing standards for [leafy vegetables](#) and [melons](#).

Does this apply to me?

In the Standards:

- A **primary producer** is a business that grows and/or harvests leafy vegetables or melons.
- A **primary processor** is a business that does any of the following with leafy vegetables or melons: washing, trimming, sorting, sanitising, storing, combining, packing, and transporting between packhouses.

Getting it right – reducing your risk

Things you could do to manage the temperature of your produce include:

- Harvest in the morning or at night when temperatures are cooler.
- Map out post-harvest steps that may need temperature control and how you might manage them – a flow diagram showing your processes may be useful.
- Keep harvested produce out of direct sunlight – for example, use light coloured shade cloth.
- Pre-cool harvested produce to remove field heat; for example, forced air cooling is recommended for harvested melons.
- If you're using water to cool your produce, make sure it is town water (or a similar quality).
- If you're using refrigeration equipment, regularly check the temperature and make sure it is working correctly.
- Regularly clean, sanitise and service cool rooms and cooling units so they operate efficiently.
- Determine what temperatures are safe for your produce – for example, washed and packed leafy vegetables should be kept at 0 to 5°C to manage food safety risks.

Need more information?

- Contact your state/territory [food regulatory authority](#)
- [Primary Production and Processing Standards \(Chapter 4\)](#)
- [Fresh Produce Safety Centre – Guidelines for Fresh Produce Food Safety 2022](#)