

Suggested Environmental Considerations for Produce: Fresh, Frozen, and Canned

Use one or more of the suggested environmental disclosure questions in your RFI/RFP to help inform your purchasing decisions.

Produce Questions

Include these questions for all produce: fresh, frozen, or canned/jarred.

#	Environmental Questions	Preferred Answer	Definition	Rationale
1.	Is this product USDA Certified Organic, Food Alliance Certified, Protected Harvest Certified, or Certified Salmon Safe? (Yes/No)	Yes	<p>Certified USDA Organic - Product must meet the federal organic standards as determined by a USDA-approved certifying agency. Organic products are produced without synthetic pesticides, fertilizers, genetically modified organisms, antibiotics or added hormones.</p> <p>Food Alliance certification ensures that farmers/producers use safe and fair working conditions, humane livestock handling practices, cannot use hormones or non-therapeutic antibiotics, cannot use or produce GMOs, reduce pesticide use, implement water and soil conservation and habitat protection practices.</p> <p>Protected Harvest - Certifies that crops have been raised with integrated pest management (IPM). Certain pesticides are prohibited and GMOs are explicitly prohibited.</p> <p>Salmon Safe – This is aimed at products from certified farms who use safe chemicals and practices to protect salmon streams from farm run-off, such as through good soil, water, and vegetation management that reduces chemical use and sustains resources.</p>	<p>Crops may have been grown with synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, or could be genetically modified organisms. (Organic certification would avoid this).</p> <p>Crops may have been produced utilizing unfair labor/working conditions and high levels of toxic pesticides and fertilizers may have been used. Farming practices may be wasteful or harmful to water, soil and habitat health (Food Alliance certification would avoid this).</p> <p>Produce may have been produced utilizing high levels of toxic pesticides and fertilizers. Farming practices may be wasteful or harmful to water, soil and habitat health. (Protected Harvest or Salmon Safe certifications would avoid this).</p>
2.	Is this product locally grown? (Yes/No)	Yes	The definition of “local” may differ in various regions of the country. Ideally foods will travel less than 200 miles or 4-5 hours from the farm to the facility. In areas with abundant year round	Crops grown in major US agricultural regions or abroad may travel long distances before reaching a facility’s kitchen. Fossil fuels burned in transport contribute to air pollutants that cause climate change and other health

			<p>produce, purchasing even closer is often possible. Local can also be defined in geographical tiers such as county, state, region, etc. Purchasing preference should be given to independent family farm/ ranch or cooperative/ network of independent family farms/ ranches where farmers/ ranchers own, labor on and earn a meaningful livelihood from their farms.</p>	<p>concerns.</p> <p>A locally produced product travels a shorter distance, is typically delivered fresher (closer to harvest), and contributes to the local and regional economy.</p> <p>By demanding a sustainably and ethically produced, local product, a facility can influence producers to protect the local environment and provide fair working conditions.</p>
3.	Is this product Fair Trade Certified or Rain Forest Alliance Certified? (Yes/No/NA)	Yes/NA	<p>Fair Trade Certified – Mainly used for small farms or farm co-ops made up of small farms that work to ensure that farmers and farm workers in developing nations receive a fair price for their product; have direct trade relations with buyers and access to credit; and encourage sustainable farming methods, without the use of a dozen of the most harmful pesticides, and forced child labor .</p> <p>Rainforest Alliance Certified – Products have been grown using environmentally responsible management practices including integrated pest and disease management practices, soil and water conservation, fair labor treatment practices and good community relations.</p>	<p>This category applies to produce grown outside the United States, typically in developing nations. Produce may have been produced utilizing unfair labor/working conditions, and high levels of toxic pesticides and fertilizers may have been used. Also farmers in developing nations may not receive a fair price for their goods. Farming practices may be wasteful or harmful to water, soil and habitat health (Fair Trade or Rainforest Alliance certification would avoid this).</p>
4.	Is this product produced without genetically modified ingredients? (Yes/No)	Yes	<p>This product was not made with ingredients from genetically engineered/modified (GE/GM) ingredients.</p>	<p>As of the printing of this guide, sweet corn is the only GE/GM direct-to-consumer product on the market (most GM/GE crops go to processing and animal feed).</p> <p>These foods and ingredients are not adequately assessed for their credible adverse effects on human or animal health, or on the environment in which they are produced. Also of concern is the threat posed by genetic engineering to environmentally sustainable food production and the threat to the economic livelihood of farmers pursuing sustainable food production.</p> <p>See related fact sheet: http://www.noharm.org/lib/downloads/food/Genetic_Engineered_Food_Stmnt.pdf</p>

Frozen

Include the following questions for frozen fruits and/or vegetables.

#	Environmental Questions	Preferred Answer	Definition	Rationale
1.	Is this product minimally processed? (Yes/No)	Yes	Commercial, minimally processed produce is fresh (with high moisture), and is prepared for convenient consumption and distribution to the consumer in a fresh-like state. Minimum processing includes preparation procedures such as washing, peeling, cutting, packing, etc., after which the product is usually placed in refrigerated storage. Generally, a preferable product has the fewest ingredients, and contains no additives or preservatives.	Processed fruits and vegetables may contain additives and preservatives. Some of these ingredients raise health concerns and might include genetically modified organisms. Produce that is minimally processed contains fewer ingredients, and less risk for the inclusion of unhealthful additives.
2.	Is this product processed locally? (Yes/No)	Yes	The definition of "local" may differ in various regions of the country. Ideally foods will travel less than 200 miles or 4-5 hours from the processor to the facility. Local can also be defined in geographical tiers such as county, state, or region.	Local processors are a crucial component of a local food system. By purchasing a locally processed food, a facility supports the regional food infrastructure and keeps money in the local economy.
3.	Is this product free of artificial dyes or flavoring? (Yes/No)	Yes	Artificial additives are used to enhance or alter the color or flavor of food.	Products may contain artificial food dyes or flavorings. Some of these additives raise health concerns. Prefer products that do not contain ingredients from the "Avoid List" put out by Center for Science in the Public Interest. View the Avoid list and learn more about specific additives and related concerns here: http://www.cspinet.org/reports/chem_cuisine.htm

Canned/Jarred Fruits and Vegetables

Include the following questions for canned/jarred fruits and vegetables.

#	Environmental Questions	Preferred Answer	Definition	Rationale
1.	Is this product processed locally? (Yes/No)	Yes	The definition of "local" may differ in various regions of the country. Ideally foods will travel less than 200 miles or 4-5 hours from the processor to the facility. Local can also be defined in geographical tiers such as county, state, or region.	Local processors are a crucial component of a local food system. By purchasing a locally processed food, a facility supports the regional food infrastructure and keeps money in the local economy.

2.	Is this product free of artificial dyes or flavoring? (Yes/No)	Yes	Artificial additives are used to enhance or alter the color or flavor of food.	Products may contain artificial food dyes or flavorings. Some of these additives raise health concerns. Prefer products that do not contain ingredients from the "Avoid List" put out by Center for Science in the Public Interest. View the Avoid list and learn more about specific additives and related concerns here: http://www.cspinet.org/reports/chemcuisine.htm
3.	Is the container used for packaging BPA-free (usually applies to metal cans)? (Yes/No) If yes, what alternative is used?	Yes	Bisphenol A (BPA) is a chemical that is frequently found in the plastic lining of cans used for food packaging. Due to health concerns regarding BPA, manufacturers are beginning to offer BPA-free cans.	BPA is an endocrine disruptor with particular risk to children and the developing fetus. Some research has also indicated BPA may play a role in other human health problems such as obesity, neurological issues, and cancer. (BPA-free cans avoid this risk.)

Packaging Questions

Include the following questions for packaged products

#	Environmental Questions	Preferred Answer	Definition	Rationale
1.	Is this product's package recyclable? (Yes/No)	Yes	Any claims of recyclability indicates the supplier can demonstrate that at least 60% of the hospitals in the U.S., or in the product distribution area, have access to an established recycling program for this item, or there is an existing take-back program by the vendor of the manufacturer that has been in operation at least one year and covers the indicated percentage of hospitals and will recycle the product.	Recyclable products, those that are recyclable in communities in the U.S., reduce materials going to the waste stream and their associated costs. Although FTC has not finalized definitions to prove this claim, we are utilizing the FTC draft definition for 'substantial majority' to mean at least 60% and adding what it means to the health care community to ensure the needs of facilities who strive to divert materials from their waste stream.
2.	Is this product packaged without polystyrene? (Yes/No)	Yes	Polystyrene (CAS 9003-53-6) is a plastic polymer from the monomer styrene. It comes in many forms: sheet, expanded or extruded foam, or as oriented polystyrene. What is commonly known as Styrofoam™ refers only to the extruded form of polystyrene. Packaging refers to all materials (primary, secondary, etc) used to transport and protect a product from damage.	Also referred to as 'PS' with the SPI (Society of the Plastics Industry) resin code 6, polystyrene is difficult for hospitals to recycle and there are alternatives. Polystyrene is made with styrene. The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classifies styrene as a possible carcinogen. Foam blowing agents (called hydrochlorofluorocarbons, HCFCs) used to make polystyrene foam are compounds that have an ozone depletion potential.

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