

Frequently Asked Questions About Gardening, Commercial Produce and PFOA

The Department of Environmental Conservation is working with other state agencies to determine the nature and extent of PFOA contamination. The Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets has provided the following information about the possible impacts to home and commercially-grown produce. The information provided is based upon the scientific literature available, and consultations with researchers and the Health Department.

Guidance based on preliminary soil results from the North Bennington-area.

Is it OK to plant and eat vegetables from my garden this year?

Based on the levels of PFOA found in the soil samples collected from gardens and agricultural land in the North Bennington-area, we do not expect to find a detectable amount of PFOA in the produce grown. The highest level found in the soil of the gardens and agricultural land was 8 ppb. Plants take up PFOA from the soil, but at the soil levels reported, measurable amounts of PFOA would not be expected in produce. Be sure to use clean water to irrigate this year's garden.

Does it make a difference what vegetable or fruit I am growing in my garden?

Different types of produce take up different amounts of PFOA from the soil. However, at the soils levels measured, even the plants that take up the most PFOA from soil are not expected to have detectable levels of PFOA in the edible parts of the plants.

I watered my garden from my well last year (and the year before...). My well was found to be contaminated, what should I do this season?

Studies have shown that gardens watered with PFOA-contaminated water will have higher levels of PFOA in the soil. PFOA does not stick to soil very much. The more clean water you add to your garden the lower the soil PFOA will be.

There are a few things you can do to further reduce potential exposure this year:

- Water your garden and seedlings with a clean source of water.
- Amend your soil with clean compost. Increasing the organic content of your garden soil can inhibit the uptake of PFOA into plants. If you have compost from last year's gardening, use that in other areas of your yard.
- Wash your produce in clean water after you harvest it. For root vegetables, consider peeling and washing before eating.

I am a commercial grower, can I have my agricultural soil and products tested?

Based on the soil results thus far, we do not recommend testing agricultural commodities. The Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets staff has been identifying and assessing the agricultural systems in the North Bennington area, and will continue to work with the Department of Environmental Conservation to identify additional sites that may need testing.

If you are a commercial grower, and have concerns, please feel free to contact the Agency of Agriculture directly so we can discuss your specific crop and situation.

What about maple syrup?

Maple syrup samples taken and tested by the state from producers in the North Bennington-area in late Spring of 2016 had no detectable amounts of PFOA.

What about livestock, i.e. goats, chickens, eggs, etc.?

Livestock should be given clean water. If your groundwater source used to water livestock is contaminated with PFOA, you need to obtain a source of clean water:

1. Fill a livestock tank or similar food grade container with the clean water and use that as your source for livestock - OR -
2. If you have a Point of Entry Treatment System (POET) for your home water supply, use that clean source for livestock -OR -
3. Check your yellow pages for local bulk water delivery companies that supply clean water.

Based upon the scientific literature and soil results so far, if animals are being given clean water we do not expect to find a detectable amount of PFOA in agricultural commodities.

If you have further questions about PFOA and agricultural products, contact:

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