Developing Traceability for Produce Growers

This is an introduction to creating a traceback system for produce growers. This will help guide you through the process of identifying and tracking produce from the field to the buyer.

**Step 1.** Map all production areas and assign letters to each field and greenhouse.

![Image of a field with letters assigned]

**Step 2.** Assign a letter code for each commodity grown.
For example: C - Cucumber, P - Peppers, S - Squash, T - Tomatoes

**Step 3.** Download the Julian Date calendar. The Julian Date method assigns a number value for each calendar day. It is recommended to use a 3-digit format for consistency with labeling (001-365). For example: If you harvested on January 18th the Julian Date is “18” so you would use “018.”

![Julian Date Calendar]

Option 1: Google Earth
Option 2: Illustration
**Step 4.** Developing your lot code. This will identify the field, harvest date, and commodity, for example A-018-T. In this example, tomatoes were harvested from field A on January 18th.

**Step 5.** Develop your product sticker. This can be a simple two-line sticker that uses a pricing gun to identify the farm and lot code (Option 1) or a printed label (Option 2). With a printed label and printer, you can input the lot code and print what you need for the day (Option 2a), or just have a main sticker with the farm information and attach the lot code with a pricing gun (Option 2b).

**Step 6.** Apply your lot code to all distributed produce.
Practice Example

On February 18th you harvested tomatoes from Field E.

First, find the Julian Date from the calendar for February 18, 2018. The Julian Date is 49 — using the 3-digit system this will be 049. The commodity code (see page 1) for tomatoes is T. Using this information the lot code is E-049-T.

1) Put the lot code on containers

2) Put the lot code on your invoice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOT CODE</th>
<th>PACKAGE</th>
<th>QTY.</th>
<th>UNIT PRICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E-049-T</td>
<td>Carton</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>$456.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you for your business

Total: $456.25
2019 Calendar

Reviewed by Londa Nwadike, PhD, Kansas State/University of Missouri Extension and Don Stoeckel, PhD, Cornell University Produce Safety Alliance.

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