**OBJECTIVE:**

*Complete instructions on how to clean and sanitize harvest picking bags to reduce or eliminate pathogens and spoilage microorganisms.*

**REQUIREMENTS:**

*Supplies Needed*

* A cleaner or detergent.\*
* A sanitizer labeled for this use, such as germicidal bleach (Sodium Hypochlorite, 5.25%)\*
* Measuring spoons or cups for dosing detergents and sanitizers
* Sanitizer test strips or meter
* Hose with high flow water (optional)\*\*
* Backpack sprayers or spray bottles
* Sanitary scrub brushes that are cleanable and used only for cleaning food contact surfaces
* Clean plastic bins or plastic liners to place under bags while cleaning
* Hooks or drying racks to hang bags
* Ventilation air flow - either from open screened windows or using a fan and perhaps an indirect heater to promote drying.
* Water which is safe and of adequate sanitary quality.

**PROCEDURE:**

*This cleaning and sanitizing procedure should be done at the beginning of the season, as needed during the season if bags get visibly soiled, and again at the end of harvest before being stored until next season.*

**Inspection**

* Inspect each bag and determine if maintenance is needed to ensure the bag is functional and can be adequately cleaned in its current condition.
* Determine which bags need cleaning by looking for visible filth, staining, and crop residue. If cleaning can be accomplished without water, such as removing dry residue, do so.
* If using water for any cleaning and sanitizing steps, ensure the water is safe and of adequate sanitary quality.

**Cleaning**

* **Prepare the cleaning solution.** Purchase a premixed cleaning solution or follow the label for the detergent to mix to prepare the cleaning solution.
* **Prepare a cleaning station.** Use a clean table, clean plastic bins upside down on a clean surface or a plastic sheet (not directly on the ground.)
* **Lay out bags to be cleaned.** Lay picking bags / buckets that require cleaning out on the cleaning station area.
* **Soak.** Wet picking bags / buckets with water.

\* Check with your organic supplier to make sure it is OMRI-approved. \*\* - See the bottom of the next page.

* **Apply cleaning solution.** Using a backpack sprayer, spray bottle, or similar - Spray bags with soap mixture, inside and out. Scrub all surfaces, vigorously if needed. The intent is to clean the entire surface of the bag so that it is visibly clean and free of filth and staining.

**Rinse**

* If the label for the detergent requires a rinse step, rinse the bags / buckets accordingly with water which is safe and of adequate sanitary quality.

**Sanitizing**

* **Prepare sanitizer solution.** In a separate backpack sprayer, spray bottle, or similar – Fill with a purchased or pre-mixed sanitizer solution or make a sanitizer solution according to the product label instructions for sanitizing food contact surfaces.
* Use test strips or meter to measure the sanitizer level and ensure that the target concentration for sanitizing food contact surfaces is achieved. Record solution strength on a chemical sanitizer monitoring form.\*\*\*
* Spray and cover all surfaces thoroughly with the sanitizer solution.
* Allow the sanitizer to be in contact with the surface for the appropriate contact time, according to the label for the product.

**Rinse**

* If the sanitizer label requires a rinse step, rinse each bag thoroughly with water which is safe and of adequate sanitary quality using a hose.

**Drying**

* Hang bags in a clean location with ample air flow to dry completely.
* Adding heat to the drying area can help speed the drying and ensure complete drying in seams and pockets.

**POST-PROCEDURE:**

*Grower will monitor picking bags after cleaning has finished.*

* Store bags on hooks or on racks in a well ventilated, enclosed area, free from bird and rodent intrusion or other contamination sources.
* Visually verify tasks have been completed correctly.
* Regularly inspect bags for damage that requires repair or the need for cleaning and sanitizing.
* Record and sign off on the *Harvest Cleaning Log*, document.

\*\* pressure washers should not be used inside the packinghouse or near produce growing or storage areas since dirt and pathogens could become aerosolized and spread further than intended and introduce contamination where there otherwise would not be.

\*\*\* Recording-keeping form templates for FSMA are located here: (<https://producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu/sites/producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu/files/shared/documents/Templates.docx>) or the Decision Trees