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An Important Message for Commercial Produce Growers and Livestock Owners

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture (DoAg) along with the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension system and agricultural industry groups are working to inform and provide a public message for commercial growers and gardeners concerning crops that have come in contact with flood waters, including the use of water from wells that may have become submerged by flooding.

Flood waters are likely to contain contaminants. These may come from upstream septic systems, lawns and roadways, industrial sites or overflow from municipal sewage systems. Contaminants may include: untreated sewage, oil and gas or other chemical contaminants. biological pathogens that could be in flood waters include bacteria, viruses, and parasites.

The edible portion of fresh fruits and vegetables that have come in contact with flood waters either in the field or subsequent to harvest may be a public health hazard if consumed and are considered adulterated by state law and the federal Food and Drug Administration and must be destroyed. Destruction of these crops should be documented by statements documenting the quantity, type of crop, value of crop, method of destruction, photographed before and after. Crops left unpicked should be plowed in and documented as above.

Water from wells that became submerged cannot be used in contact with fruits and vegetables until it has been evaluated for safety.

Fresh fruits and vegetables that have begun to spoil due to the lack of refrigeration should also be destroyed.

Disposition of crops in proximity to flooding, where the edible portion of the crop has not come in contact with flood waters, should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Factors to consider include:

- stage of growth
- proximity of edible portion to the flood waters
- harvesting practices and potential for cross contamination between flooded and non-flooded areas
- potential for fungal growth
- buffer of un-harvested crop between flooded and non-flooded areas

More detailed information for commercial growers and home gardeners is available in the “Hot Topics” section at the University of Connecticut, College of Agriculture web site <http://www.cag.uconn.edu> or by calling (203) 407-3163

All Connecticut farmers are reminded to notify DoAg and the United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency of **any** Tropical Storm Irene related loss. The Department has forms available at <http://www.ct.gov/doag/> or by calling (860) 713-2503.

The Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection, Food Emergency Manual can be downloaded at http://www.ct.gov/dcp/lib/dcp/pdf/publications/emergencyfoodsafety_2_.pdf

Livestock owners should contact their veterinarian for guidance concerning feeding crops and commodities that have come in contact with flood waters. Livestock owners need to consider the potential contamination of livestock feeds by flood waters. More information can be obtained from the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension system at (860) 626-6240 or by contacting the State Veterinarian at (860) 713-2505.

Consumers concerned about foods in their homes exposed to flood waters or that have been without refrigeration can obtain information on the Connecticut Department of Public Health’s website <http://www.ct.gov/dph/> or by calling (860) 509-7297.