



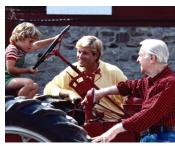
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# Traceability

## Labeling and tracking fresh produce one step backward and one step forward

The ability to track produce is critical in the event of a food recall. If food from your farm is suspected to be contaminated or has made someone sick, an efficient tracking system can aid in preventing additional cases of foodborne illness and halting an outbreak. It can also help you recall product if the quality is later determined to not meet your standards.

**If you sell to wholesale markets**, a carton of produce should be able to be traced one step backward (to a field) and one step forward (to a buyer).

**One step backward** —The box should contain enough information to inform you of the produce inside, the date it was packed, and the field it was harvested from. Ask yourself, from the information on this box, can I make the following statement?

On date / year, type of produce was packed. It was harvested from field name / number.

Your product code should contain at least these three variables:

**Date:** You may use standard date format (e.g., 071413 for July 14th, 2013, or Julian dates (see sidebar), or any other format that makes sense to you.

**Type of Produce:** Assign codes to each type of produce grown on your farm. Specify within major produce categories (e.g., butternuts, acorn, delicata squash), if that makes sense for your farm.

**Field Name / Number:** Assign names and/or numbers to the fields or harvest areas on your farm. Farm maps can be useful when assigning numbers to fields. You can make a farm map at: <http://anrmaps.vermont.gov/websites/anra/>

For example, if your lot number format is:

000 - 00 - 00 - 00

**Julian Date—Year—Crop — Field Number**

and you harvested onions (product code = 29) from field number 14 on July 19, 2013, then your product code would be 200-13-29-14.

### What are Julian dates and how do I use them?

Julian dates assign a number to each day of the year. For example, January 6th would be 006 and June 30 would be 181. The year is added to the end so that June 30th, 2013 would be 18113 or 181-13. This format reduces errors made in date format.

Julian dates are easy to determine with Julian Date Calendars, available at <http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/partners/fepp/julian-calendar.pdf>

Note that there is a separate Julian calendar for leap year.



A label gun for produce coding.

**One step forward**—For each unit of produce sold to a wholesale customer or distributor, you should have a record of where it went after leaving your farm. This information can be maintained in an invoicing system such as Quickbooks, paper invoices or harvest logs.

Label invoices for wholesale buyers with the following information:

- Your farm name, physical address and phone number
- Date of shipment
- Customer information (retailer, wholesaler, distributor) / destination
- Description and quantity of produce sold
- Lot number (conveys date of harvest, crop, and field number)

**INVOICE**

Your Farm Name  
534 Basil Lane  
Anywhere, VT 05495  
802.802.8020  
farm@mail.com

Ship date, Invoice # → Date: October 8, 2012  
Invoice # 1937

Customer / destination → SOLD TO:  
Green Bean Produce  
631 Pepper St.  
Montpelier, VT  
05445  
802.123.4567

Farm details

Product description, Lot # 000-00-00-00

QUANTITY	DESCRIPTION	UNIT PRICE	LINE TOTAL
3	Green Peppers (5lb box) Lot # 212-12-33--03		
2	Cucumbers (10lb box) Lot # 213-12-18-07		
4	Basil (12 bunch box) Lot # 213-12-04-01		

## Harvest logs

Daily harvest logs contain detail on the amount of a crop harvested from a particular field on a given day by a specified crew. You can also record the destination of product and account for product not sold. This is also required by most organic certifiers.

From your harvest log you can determine how much of a particular lot number was shipped and/or disposed. In the event of a recall, you would use your harvest log along with your invoices to determine which buyers received product from a particular lot number (e.g., Product X harvested on day X from field X by crew X).

Harvest logs also serve as historical records of crop performance and can help you make decisions for next year's crops.

A less precise method of tracing produce **One Step Backward** for farms not selling to wholesale markets is to create a farm map of planted crops, indicating the beginning and ending harvest dates for each crop area. Be sure to account for crops planted in succession.

Green Bean Produce Company  
123 Maple Street  
Farmville, VT 05496  
802-555-1212  
Lot# 200-13-29-14-01

Under the Food Safety Modernization Act proposed produce rules, the name and complete business address of the farms where produce was grown is required to be displayed at the point of purchase. This can be through labels, signs, or flyers for CSAs, farm stands and farmers' markets, or it can be an electronic notice for internet sales. Boxes and crates of produce going to a retailer, wholesaler, or distributor should have the name and location of the farm.