

ARKANSAS PRODUCE SAFETY



Agricultural Water: Know Your Water Sources

Understanding the potential for microbial contamination for each of your water sources used in all stages of produce farming is necessary in order to manage and reduce your risk. **There are three primary sources of water, each with different levels of microbial contamination risk.**



SURFACE WATER

Surface water is open to the environment which gives it the **highest risk of contamination**. Examples include rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, and man made reservoirs. The quality of this water varies greatly, and contamination can occur rarely, seasonally, or continually. Under the Food Safety Modernization Act Produce Safety Rule, **surface water cannot be used for harvest and postharvest activities** (§112.44).

GROUND WATER

Ground water is from a source beneath the Earth's surface, such as a well, spring, or aquifer. **This water typically contains fewer microorganisms than surface water** as these are filtered out as the water passes through layers of soil, clay, and rock on its way to the source. Be aware that ground water pumped and stored above ground (such as in a reservoir) is considered surface water.



MUNICIPAL (PUBLIC) WATER

Municipal (public) water **has been treated and tested for microorganisms** by a local water utility. This source of water has the **lowest risk for microbial contamination** and is **considered potable** (safe for drinking). If using this source, request a copy of the water quality test results or certificates of compliance from the local water utility at least annually.

This resource was created by Dr. Amanda Philyaw Perez, Rip Weaver, Julia Fryer, and Dr. Natacha Cureau. For more information, please contact the Local, Regional, and Safe Foods team at 501-671-2226.

