



P O Box 6434 Kettering NN15 5XT UK
T: +44(0) 1536 514365 cfa@chilledfood.org, www.chilledfood.org

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PROTOCOL FOR PRODUCE WASHING

CFA established leafy produce and non-leafy produce wash protocols in 2005 and 2006, respectively, with the aiming of reducing excessive doses of hypochlorite in particular.

The protocols have now been consolidated by the Produce WG, with the aim of introducing further consistency into produce washing, for example by Members promoting the protocol's use by suppliers to the sector.

PRODUCE WASHING PROTOCOL

This document is designed to introduce consistency into produce washing, e.g. hypochlorite dosing and pH control.

Washing (primary and secondary) is the removal of soil, other gross debris, and plant tissue exudates that occur during cutting. Sanitising is treating water with an agent that is designed to prevent cross-contamination during washing. Washing and sanitising has the potential, if properly controlled, to reduce the overall microflora of leafy vegetables and herbs. However it will not eliminate microbiological contamination; therefore, minimising the potential for contamination in the field from the seed onward is key to assuring microbiological quality.¹

Primary wash:

* <10ppm free chlorine (if used)
<100 ppm total chlorine (if used)
pH 6-7 if chlorinated, otherwise no constraint
Maximum 2 minute residency if chlorinated, otherwise no constraint
Ratio minimum 4:1 litres water:kg product, dependent on the fragility of the produce

Secondary Wash:

* <25ppm free chlorine (if used)
<100 ppm total chlorine (if used)
pH 6-7 if chlorinated, otherwise no constraint
Maximum 2 minute residency if chlorinated, otherwise no constraint
Ratio minimum 4:1 litres water:kg product, dependent on the fragility of the produce

* The minimum required amount of chlorine should be determined by validation

Alternative sanitisers may be used if properly validated - See CFA's Produce Decontamination Assessment Protocol: Part 2 - Washwater Validation (awaiting publication).

¹ FAO/WHO. 2008. *Microbiological hazards in fresh leafy vegetables and herbs: Meeting Report*. Microbiological Risk Assessment Series No. 14. Rome.