

Industry

The coast of California is the best place in the world to grow strawberries. Western ocean exposure and balmy Pacific winds insulate our fields from extreme temperatures. Warm sunny days, cool foggy nights and mild winters combine with sandy soil, creating perfect growing conditions.



More than 500 strawberry growers in five distinct areas of California produce juicy, red fruit on more than 36,000 acres. Most of these are family businesses: farmers who have worked the land for generations, and produce the highest-quality fruit under the most stringent production regulations in the world.

California strawberries are planted annually on raised beds. The beds are covered with plastic, which keeps the berries away from the soil and helps retain soil moisture. Drip irrigation reduces disease problems by keeping moisture away from the fruit and uses water more efficiently.

State-of-the-art, post-harvest technology separates California from other producers. In California, once strawberries are picked, they are rushed to a cooling facility where huge fans draw out field heat. When cooled, the strawberries are loaded onto refrigerated trucks for same-day

shipment. Keeping the fruit at 32 degrees Fahrenheit during transport helps ensure a quality product for consumers.

California strawberries are available all year long. In winter, strawberries ship from Southern California; production moves north with the warming spring temperatures. Volume peaks in April, May and June when production in all districts overlaps. Weekly volume averages five to six million trays from early April through mid July, and more than 50% of the crop is harvested after the first of June.

Northern districts continue to harvest through November, and a portion of the Southern districts produce a second crop beginning in October and ending in December.

The statewide fresh production averages 40,000 pounds per acre, per season.

California grows 88% of the nation's strawberries, providing a delicious year-round supply.

The California strawberry industry's agricultural research program is more than 50 years old and has put California strawberry growers on the cutting edge of progressive farming practices, including the innovative integrated pest management (IPM) programs, advanced irrigation technologies and the development of new strawberry varieties.

Keys to Food Safety

Most people agree that California strawberries are delicious and healthy. However, few people realize that California strawberry growers follow a comprehensive food safety program to provide the safest strawberries possible.

California strawberry growers take great pride in growing America's favorite fruit. While food safety is everyone's responsibility, the grower takes extra precautions to

ensure that the strawberries are a safe and wholesome product when they leave the field.

What California Strawberry Growers Do

As responsible stewards of the land, California strawberry growers were one of the first to develop a comprehensive food safety program, serving as the model for other produce commodities. Growers must regularly test and monitor all aspects of the growing cycle, maintain records of test results and report results to local, regional and state agencies. Not satisfied with the status quo, California growers continually seek ways to improve their practices to deliver healthful, safe strawberries to market.

Critical Food Safety Guidelines:

Worker Hygiene and Field Sanitation

Good health and hygiene of anyone in contact with the fruit is a primary concern. Daily field sanitation practices and regular employee training sessions help ensure understanding and compliance.

Clean Soil and Water

Growers understand their field soil type, production history and adjacent land uses to help identify potential microbiological risks. They regularly test the water and check for any runoff from adjacent lands that may cause contamination in their own fields.

Prudent Use of Pesticides

Materials licensed under State of California guidelines - the strictest regulations in the world - are used only when warranted. They are applied by certified professionals, and workers are not permitted into the fields until deemed safe by trained professionals.

Trace-back

Every tray of strawberries that leaves the farm may be traced back to the original grower, field, date and time of harvest.

Education

Keeping up with the latest research, growers attend classes and workshops on important issues. They regularly train field supervisors and workers on the critical measures essential for safe and secure food, which protects consumers and the farmer's livelihood.

