

# Preharvest Water Use



Water is used for many important activities in the field. In some situations, water can spread dangerous microbes that may cause health problems to consumers.



## Water supply & sources

There are different sources of water, and each water source should be restricted to specific uses.

Town water is generally considered safe and can be used for all types of agricultural activities. It is important to remember that any stored or transported water could, however, be at risk of contamination.

Bore water is generally safe, but the bore must be properly constructed and maintained. Test bore water at least once a year to ensure that water remains clean and safe. Recommended water quality tests include microbes (e.g. E.coli as an indicator of faecal contamination and the possible presence of pathogens) and chemicals.

Surface water (e.g. rivers, dams, canals, creeks) may carry dangerous microbes (pathogens).

Only use town water (or similar quality) for pesticide and foliar applications. Tested bore water is also acceptable.

Only use town water (or similar quality) for drinking and handwashing.

## Animal contamination and water use

Dangerous microbes in water often come from human and animal waste (faeces), sewage water discharges, animal production sites, and manure piles.

Prevent animal access to water sources. Be aware of uncontrolled wildlife that can also contaminate water sources.



## Drip systems, water testing & treatment

If you use surface water for irrigation, consider methods such as drip systems that limit water contact with the produce.

If drip systems are not available, make sure the last irrigation is carried out at least 48 hours before harvest.

Contact the local agronomist or department of agriculture representative to organise periodical tests to check if the water sources are safe.

Where town water is not used, a water treatment programme must be in place for your specific situation (e.g. chlorine, filtration, UV, etc.)

