

# Fact or Myth? Locally produced food is safer than what can be purchased through the grocery store.

FOOD SAFETY INFOSHEETS

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## MYTH.

Bacteria and viruses don't focus on location or size of a food company or farm. While control measures may be less complicated to put in place, there is no data that suggests location or size matter when it comes to final food product contamination rates.

*Did You Know?* People list “safer food” as one of the reasons for shopping locally. Consumers think organic is safer. Local and organic do not necessarily mean safer.

### Think about the evidence.

We don't have much evidence on foodborne illness outbreaks from local produce. We are less likely to detect an outbreak from “local” products delivered in small quantities and sold to a small area because fewer people are potentially affected and the outbreak is likely to be contained in a

small area. Small producers are also less likely to have food safety audits, with some being exempt from FDA safeguards and not inspected.

### Regardless of where you purchase your produce, these factors will affect its safety:

- **Cutting/processing:** Cutting exposes the flesh to pathogens, increasing the risk of microbial growth
- **Temperature:** Higher temperatures increase the microbial growth rate, while colder temperatures slow it. Keep produce chilled below 40 degrees F.
- **Transport:** Bumps, bruises,

blemishes, and cuts that occur during transport or processing can promote bacterial growth. These physical signs may also indicate spoilage.

- **Contact:** If produce comes in contact with contaminated surfaces or individuals, this increases the risk of the food also becoming contaminated. Handwashing and keeping surfaces clean and sanitized are effective measures to help prevent the spread of bacteria.



**The FDA regulates food sold in grocery stores, whether it is from local or non-local sources.**