

PFAS Uptake in Food Crops

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What does PFAS uptake mean?

PFAS uptake refers to the buildup of PFAS chemicals in the tissues of fruit, vegetable, and other crops. This buildup occurs when plants are grown in soil or water that is contaminated with PFAS. Soil can be contaminated by applying amendments sourced from biosolids or paper mill sludge, or from past or current industrial pollution.

If you suspect your soil or water is contaminated, here is a list of

Michigan labs that test for PFAS:



For questions about test results, contact MSU Extension at cullensf@msu.edu.

Pesticides can also be significant sources, especially of a type of PFAS called “ultrashort chain.” Unfortunately, ultrashort chain PFAS may go undetected as typical tests don’t include them.

Tips for Reducing PFAS Levels in Crops



Fortunately, gardening practices that protect and build the soil also tend to reduce uptake into plants by increasing PFAS binding to soil particles: adding compost, minimizing disturbance (low or no-till practices), and having living roots (cover crops or perennials) in soil year round.



Test your irrigation water to ensure it's not contaminated with PFAS. Contaminated irrigation water can be an important source of uptake in plants.

What can I do if my soil is contaminated?

- Grow in raised beds or containers with purchased soil
- Add compost, particularly compost made without compostable food containers
- Consider growing plants on the lower end of PFAS uptake efficiency
- Use cover crops and/or perennial crops

Note: One study showed washing fruits and vegetables did not reduce their PFAS content.

