

Open-Ended Questions for Produce Inspections

Some suggested opening questions are noted below for each section.

Soil

- What type of soil do you have?
- What are your primary struggles with your soil? (compactions, very low pH, etc.)
- What are your main strategies for improving your soil?
- Are you seeing nutrient deficiency symptoms?
- What soil amendments are you using? Are they produced on the farm?

Weeds

- What are your main weed pressures?
- How do you manage weeds on your farm?
- Do you have different strategies for perennial vs. annual weeds?

Pests

- What are your main pest pressures?
- How do you monitor pest populations?
- What's your approach to pest management?
- How do you keep records of pest sightings and interventions?

Disease

- What disease pressures do you have?
- How do you manage disease?

Preventing Contamination

- Can you describe the buffers that exist between your growing area and other activities?
- Usually easiest if this is broken down by North, South, East, West
- Tell me about your equipment. Do you borrow and/or loan out equipment, tools, or sprayers?
If so, how do you prevent contamination from conventional fields?

Seeds and planting stock

- How do you make your seed selections?
- Do you buy any transplants? If so, how do you ensure they meet CNG standards?
- How many different crops do you grow?

Environment

- What are the primary sources of energy for your farm?
- What steps, if any, are you taking to reduce fossil fuel use?
- What steps, if any, are you taking to conserve water?
- What other conservation practices do you employ on your farm?

For each section, after you've learned a bit about their practices you may also solicit the farmer's ideas for how they might improve their practices in that particular area, whether with respect to outcomes, sustainability, efficiency, minimizing inputs, etc. Probably you'd just do this for sections where there's notable room for improvement (rather than for every section).