

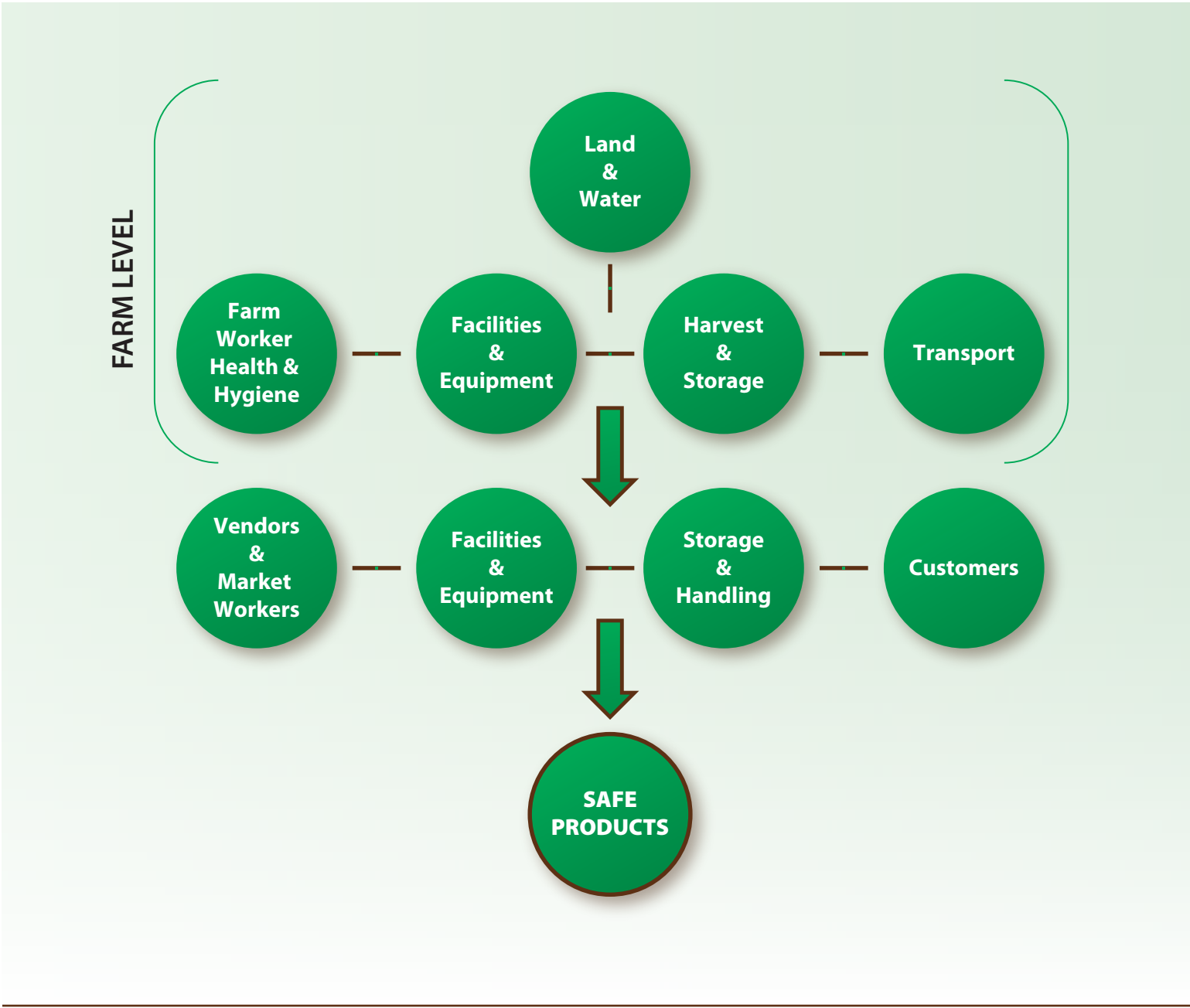
At the Market

Farmers markets are gaining in popularity. Product freshness, improved flavor, being able to meet the person who grew the food, helping local farmers and even enjoying the social atmosphere are reasons consumers say they shop at farmers markets. Regardless of the reasons, consumers are looking for safe and nutritious foods.

Produce for sale

The safety of produce sold at the market begins on the farm and is affected by the way it is handled on the farm, during transport to market and then in the market itself (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Model of food safety in the farmers market.



Foodborne illnesses

Understanding the causes of foodborne illness and ways to prevent it are responsibilities each market manager has to help ensure the safety of products sold at the market and to avoid food from unsafe sources.

Develop a food safety plan for your market.

- ◆ Ask questions to farmers/vendors about how the products were grown and handled.
- ◆ Ask farmers/vendors if they have any food safety training or certifications.
- ◆ Have a traceback system in place.
- ◆ Partner with your Cooperative Extension Service to offer trainings for farmers, vendors and market workers.
- ◆ Examine your facilities and equipment to make sure they are clean and sanitary.
- ◆ Have written policies about worker health and hygiene, sampling of foods in the market, etc.
- ◆ Monitor product storage temperatures for safety and quality.
- ◆ Make well-stocked bathroom and handwashing facilities available, even if they are portable.
- ◆ Post signs to encourage workers and customers to wash hands before handling produce.
- ◆ Exclude pets from the marketplace.

These quick tips can serve as an overview of areas that can affect the safety of products sold in farmers markets.

For more in-depth information, see *Enhancing the Safety of Locally Grown Produce: Keeping Food Safe in the Market*. Partnering with the Cooperative Extension Service is a great way to offer training resources to vendors and market workers.

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