



PPEC Factsheet

Sanitisation issues

Serious health issues have been raised about re-using the same containers, especially when food is involved. A recent [University of Guelph study](#) that examined some of the re-usable plastic crates (RPCs) being used to ship fresh fruit and vegetables in Canada, found that a high proportion of crates were in poor sanitary condition. Of particular concern was the high prevalence of food safety indicators, especially *E. Coli* on 13% of the crates tested. Similar conclusions were reached by a subsequent [University of California-Davis study](#), with the author suggesting that fresh produce should not come into contact with reusable containers. “If you can’t control contamination, you have to start looking for other options.”

Food scientists in [a third study](#) deliberately placed bacteria on plastic crates and then used standard industry treatments to remove them, but found they could not do so. [Another study](#), this time of corrugated boxes, found that every single one of them met acceptable sanitisation levels.

PPEC has written a number of blogs on this issue:

Food scientist warns retailers that live bacteria on crates is like a “smoking gun”	March 2, 2015
It’s not as simple as re-use versus recycling	February 12, 2015
This is not a puff piece but ...	December 11, 2014
Food safety is a big issue for growers, retailers, and consumers	November 13, 2013
Re-use is not always the better alternative	October 27, 2014
Loblaw and IFCO need to clean up their act	October 15, 2013