Land Use Decision Tree

Do you have a written record of current and past land use?

1

No

Yes

Having a written history of current and prior land uses is critical to identifying food safety risks and developing a food safety plan. Although the farm owner or manager may intuitively know this information, not all workers may be aware of the farm's history and current land uses which could potentially pose food safety risks during the production of fresh produce. Providing a written history allows the farm to review its practices annually or as conditions change on the farm. Written assessments of land use may also be required for some third party food safety audits. This decision tree will walk you through evaluating various situations, both past and present, which may affect the safety of produce. Use the *Land Use Risk Assessment Log* and *Land Use Risk Assessment SOPs.* After you have identified any previous land uses that may pose risks, evaluate how the land is currently being used and whether those uses may pose food safety risks to the crop.

Are crops grown on land that has a history of flooding or recently experienced a flood?

2

Yes

No

Flood waters can carry potential contaminants from nearby areas and spread it over a wide area. If you farm on land with a recent history of flooding, soil should be tested before crops are grown. Consider testing soil for coliforms and heavy metals before crops are grown. If the edible portion of a crop is exposed to flood waters, the produce is considered adulterated under section 402(a)(4) (21 U.S.C. 342(a)(4)) of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act and should not enter human food channels.[5]

When assessing the level of risk posed by flooding, some factors to consider are:

- Whether the crop grows close to the ground (e.g. leafy greens) not (e.g. tree or vine crop)
- If the edible portion comes into contact with the soil or flood waters
- Potential sources of contamination in the flood plain (e.g. raw manure)
- Timing of the flood—whether the flood happens in the spring before planting or a flood that occurs when the crop is in the field

To reduce risks when planting after a flood: allow soil to dry out, till thoroughly, allow time for microbial pathogens to decline (the longer the better), add organic matter to promote decomposition of biological contaminants, or sow a cover crop.

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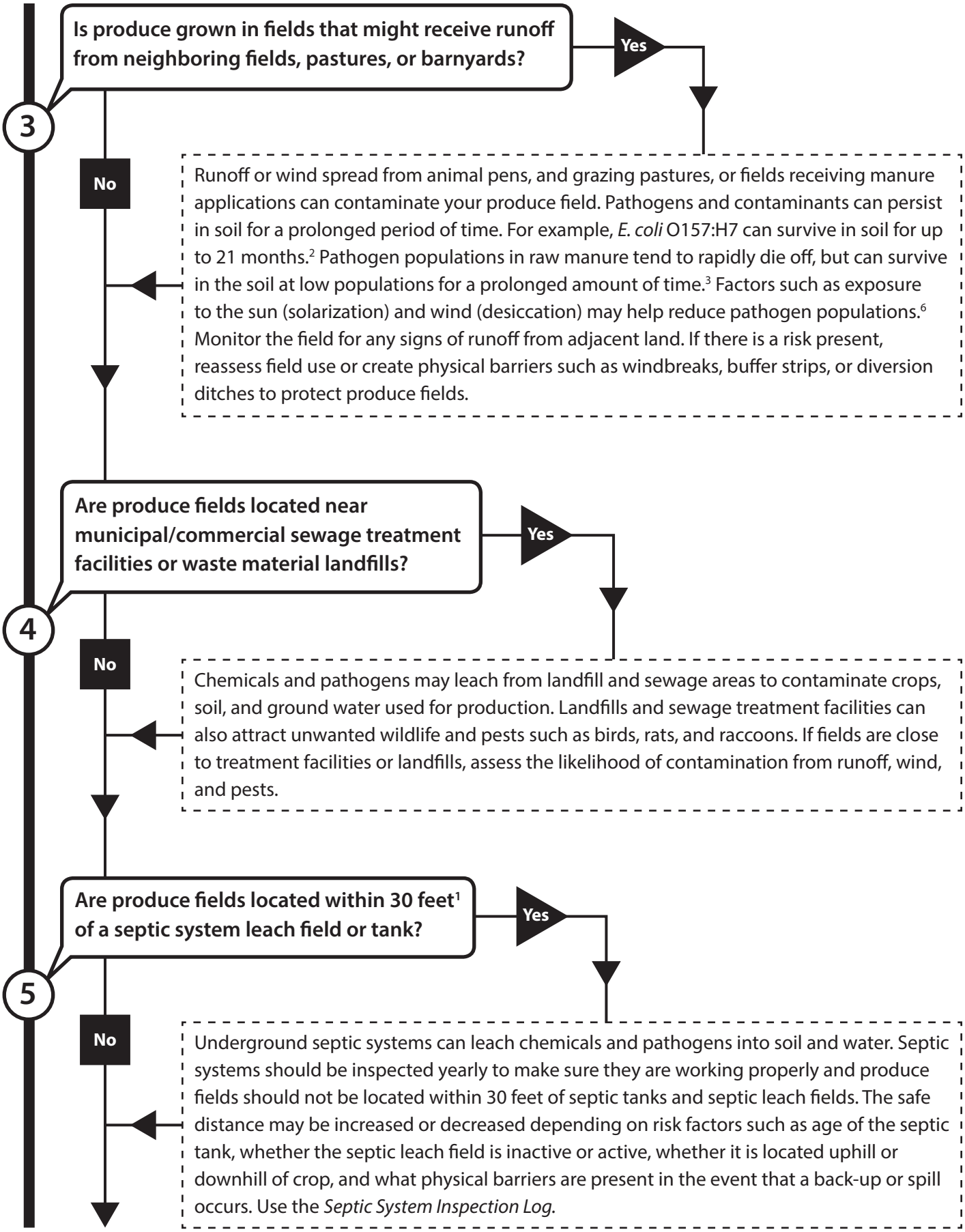

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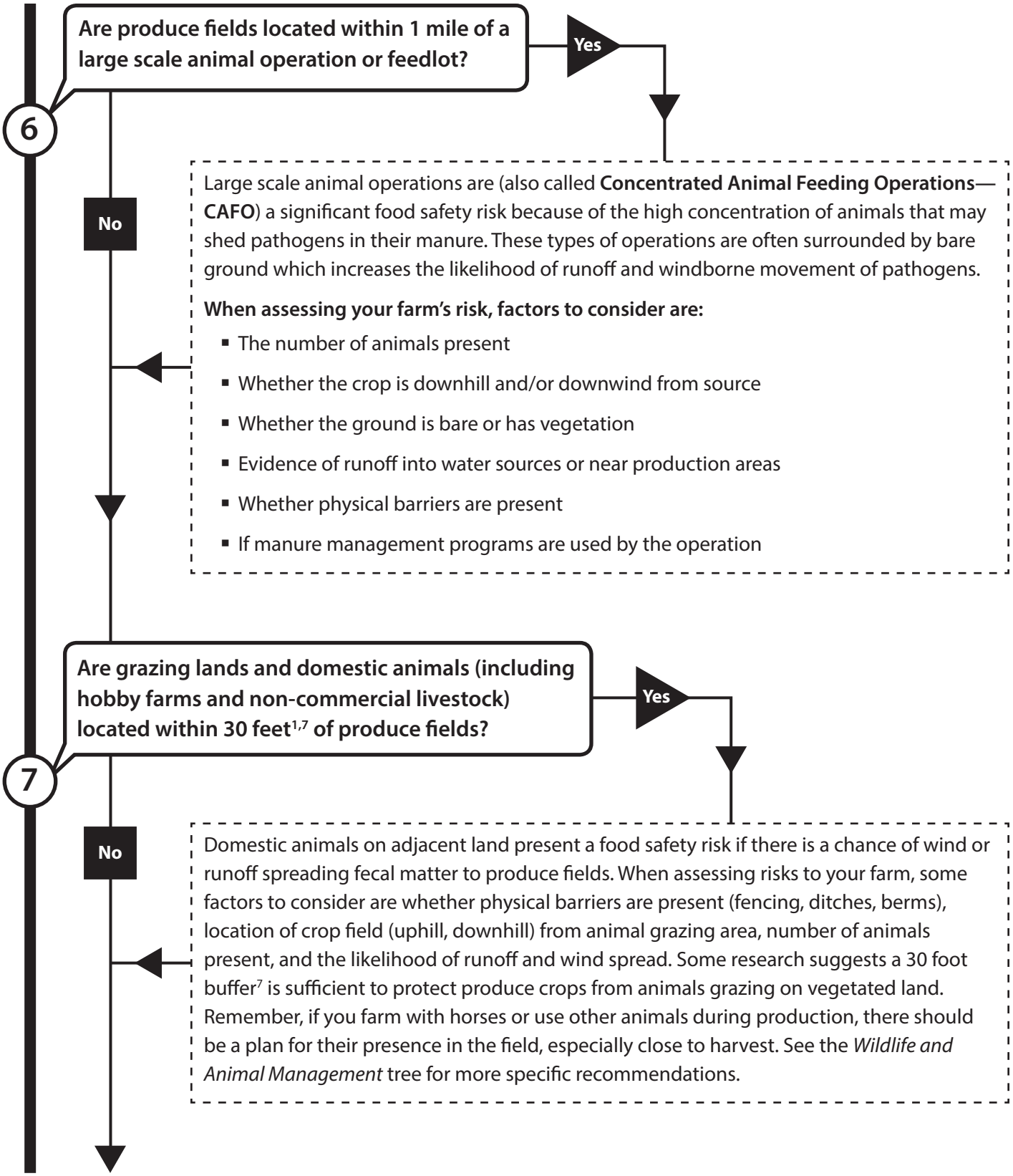

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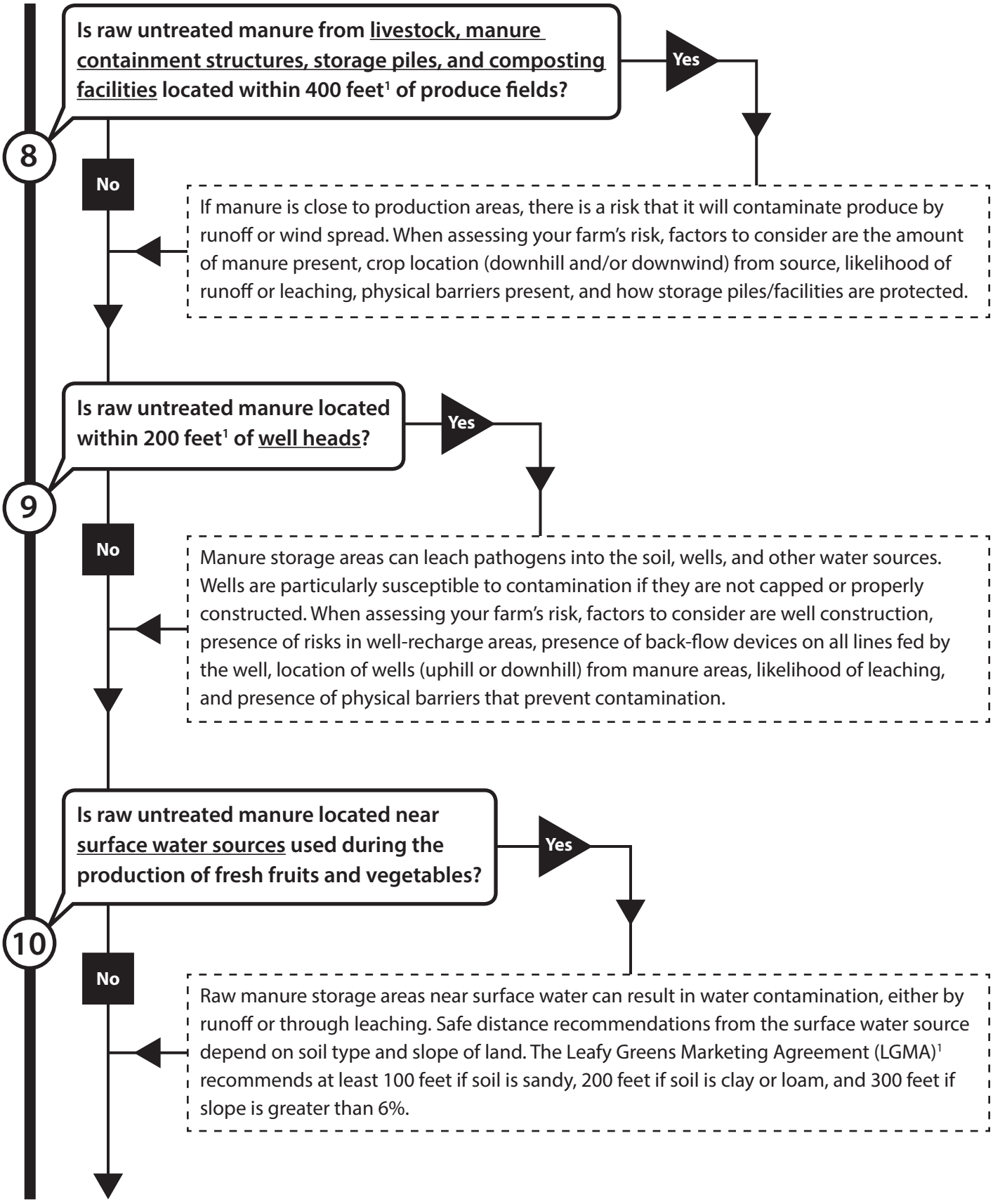

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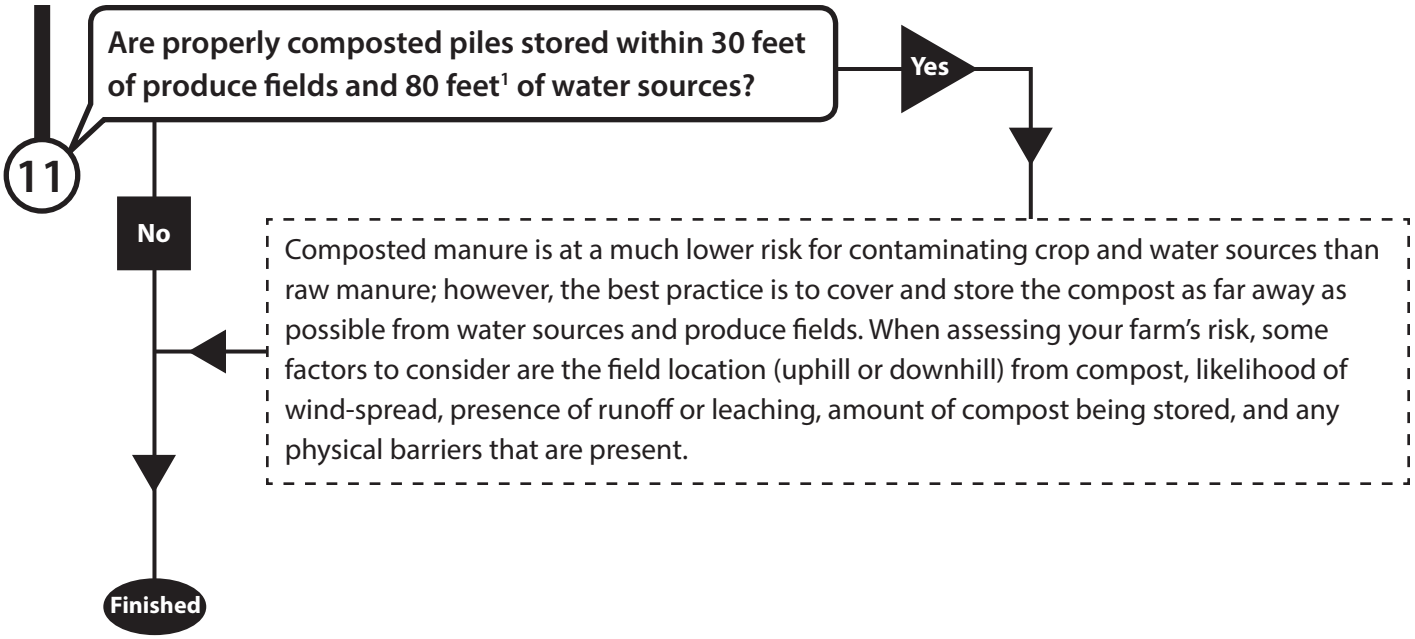

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