



May 31, 2006

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

## NOTICE TO THE TRADE

Marketing and  
Regulatory  
Programs

### Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Required Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Verification

Agricultural  
Marketing  
Service

Several years ago the Agricultural Marketing Service, in cooperation with its State partners, developed the "USDA Federal-State Audit Verification Program for Good Agricultural Practices and Good Handling Practices" (GAP/GHP).

Washington, DC  
20250

At that time, AMS found that it was impractical to require GAP verification for our purchases of fresh produce and only required GHP verification.

After re-examining the issue, and continuing our commitment to employ best practices in our commodity purchases, we plan to require federal or federal-state verification of adherence with the FDA GAP guidelines for all fresh products supplied to our program. To assist vendors in preparing for and implementing GAP guidelines, GAP verification will be performed by the Fresh Products Branch on a **voluntary basis** beginning July 1, 2006. Verification will be based on the supplier's ability to meet the minimum score in each category for the entire system from field to receiving. These voluntary audits will allow vendors to verify that their suppliers meet GAP certification prior to July 1, 2007 when GAP verification will be a mandatory contract requirement. At that point, GAP verification must be completed within 12 months prior to the award of the contract to no later than ten days after the award. No contract action will be taken as a result of these voluntary audits performed prior to July 1, 2007 unless a deficiency that results in an "automatic unsatisfactory" is found. Those suppliers that pass the GAP verification will be listed on the USDA GAP-GHP website, <http://www.ams.usda.gov/fv/fpbgapghp.htm>.

All services provided by the Fresh Products Branch are on a cost-recovery basis and fees will be charged at \$75/ hour.

The audit tool is based on the Food and Drug Administration's *Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables* and is available at <http://vm.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/prodglan.html>.

For more information about the USDA GAP/GHP guidelines check the USDA website at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/fv/fpbgapghp.htm> or contact Kathy Staley, Head of the Fresh Products Branch's Field Operations Section at 800-811-2373.

Sincerely,

David Tuckwiller, Chief  
Commodity Procurement Branch  
Fruit and Vegetable Programs  
202-720-4517  
[david.tuckwiller@usda.gov](mailto:david.tuckwiller@usda.gov)

