

Aquaponics Good Agricultural Practices Pilot

USDA Commodity Specific Audit Programs

AMS Specialty Crops Inspection (SCI) Division provides oversight for commodity specific audits performed under an ongoing pilot program to serve the requirements of the aquaponics industry. These voluntary, independent audits of produce suppliers are performed throughout the production and supply chain. The pilot program will run through December 31, 2019. SCI will review the USDA aquaponics certification pilot and associated audit guidance prior to 2020.

Aquaponics Customers

For aquaponics operations that currently are accredited under the USDA Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) standard, your certification will continue through its expiration date. When it is time for your annual audit, please request a Harmonized or Harmonized GAP Plus+ audit.

For new and existing customers, USDA audits will be available to aquaponics operations that meet the following criteria for the remainder of this calendar year:

- Plants may not be housed in the same tank as fish.
- Water that moves between tanks where fish are housed and locations where plants are grown must be filtered, at a minimum, to remove solids from the water.
- Water that moves between crop growing locations and fish tanks, and is likely to contact the edible portion of the crop, must undergo a water sanitation method (e.g., ultraviolet light, chlorination, or ozonation).
- Water must undergo routine testing at least monthly. Water samples should be taken after the fish tanks.
- The operation has instituted standard operating procedures (SOPs) to prevent cross-contamination from fish areas to crop production areas. The SOPs must address:
 - The segregation or sanitizing of tools and equipment used for crop activities and fish activities.
 - How employees prevent cross contamination by employees, which may include different employees working with fish and crops, handwashing/sanitation instructions between fish and crop activities, and protective clothing requirements.
 - How to prevent edible portion of the crop from contacting water during harvest.

Operations will be asked to submit copies of their food safety plan and a description of their operation. We may ask for additional information based on the information provided.

Aquaponics Good Agricultural Practices

Under the pilot, aquaponics operations, on a case-by-case basis, can be audited using:

- [Harmonized GAP](#)
 - [Harmonized GAP Standard \(PDF\)](#)
 - [Harmonized GAP Checklist \(Excel\)](#)
 - [Harmonized GAP Checklist \(PDF\)](#)

- [Harmonized GAP Plus+*](#)
 - [Harmonized GAP Plus+ Standard \(PDF\)](#)
 - [Harmonized GAP Plus+ Checklist \(Excel\)](#)
 - [Harmonized GAP Plus+ Checklist \(PDF\)](#)

**USDA developed the Harmonized GAP Plus+ audit program for submission to the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) for technical equivalence.*

For More Information

USDA, AMS, Specialty Crops Program, Specialty Crops Inspection Division
Audit Services Branch
Telephone: (202) 720-5021
Fax: (866) 230-9168
Email: SCAudits@ams.usda.gov