



Specialty Crops Program



Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)

The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service's Specialty Crops Inspection (SCI) Division is a team of professionals who provide quality assurance reviews, inspections, and food safety audits, and develop national standards for both fresh and processed fruits and vegetables and related products to support the global specialty crops market.

What is USDA GAP?

The USDA GAP standard is a set of principles and practices applied at the farm level to reduce the risk of contamination of fruits and vegetables during production. The principles are based on the Food and Drug Administration's "*Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables*." SCI's GAP audits verify that an operation conforms to the processes and practices that have been implemented to minimize potential food safety risks. GAP audits cover: farm/greenhouse, harvest/field packing, packing house and cooler/cold storage, storage and transportation, traceability and food defense.

Benefits of GAP Certification

- Broadens an operation's market opportunities by satisfying buyers' demands for suppliers to be GAP certified.
- Decreases risk of non-compliance with national and international regulations, standards, and guidelines.
- Reduces the risk of product introducing foodborne illnesses into the supply chain.

SCI — Your Audit Provider

A few reasons to choose SCI as your GAP audit provider:

- Nationwide team of experts that provides fast, cost-effective services.
- Proven record of buyer acceptance of the USDA GAP standard.

Effective way to communicate to customers your commitment to food safety and best practices.

USDA auditors receive robust training and are constantly evaluated to ensure their performance meets competency standards.

Ongoing verification of your continued compliance and performance.

What is Harmonized GAP?

Developed under the leadership of the United Fresh Food Safety & Technology Council to drive harmonization of several GAP standards, reduce audit fatigue by suppliers and allow operations to focus their resources on achieving food safety.

- The Produce GAP Harmonization Initiative was an all-industry effort including growers, shippers, produce buyers, government agencies, audit organizations and other stakeholders.
- The result is GAP standards and audit checklists for pre- and post-harvest operations, applicable to all fresh produce commodities, all sizes of on-farm operations, and all regions in the U.S.

The Benefits of Harmonized GAP

- Brings together many audit schemes
- Developed and recognized by major institutional buyers and sellers
- Risk-based, science based, attainable, auditable and verifiable
- Takes into account regional food safety needs
- Not commodity specific - adaptable to most commodity groups
- May reduce the number of audits for the same operation
- USDA acceptance criteria include risk assessments for:
 - Food defense, field history, water sources, animal activity, animal-based soil amendments or biosolids, pre-harvest, facility/packinghouse, allergen controls, and washing process

For More Information:

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