



United States Department of Agriculture

Agricultural Marketing Service, Specialty Crops Program, Specialty Crops Inspection Division

AQUAPONIC OPERATION GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES (GAP)

Purpose

This document provides requirements for aquaponic operations to be eligible to be audited under the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) GAP audit program. Aquaponic operations may only be audited utilizing the USDA Harmonized Produce GAP audit or the USDA Harmonized GAP Plus+ audit. Information on both audit services can be found on the USDA website at: www.ams.usda.gov/gapghp.

Requirements for Aquaponic Operations

USDA audits will be available to aquaponic operations that meet the following criteria:

- 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 from the water distribution system after the fish tanks and water sanitation method.
- If root systems are packaged with the crop, water used to grow the crop must have no detectable generic *Escherichia coli* (*E.coli*) in 100 milliliters (mL).
- 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. USDA may ask for additional information based on the information provided.

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