

GroupGAP Frequently Asked Questions

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GroupGAP Basics

Q: What is GroupGAP?

GroupGAP is a new food safety certification program that will increase opportunities for the entire specialty crops industry to supply and buy GAP-certified produce. The GroupGAP Certification Program began on April 3, 2016. Under the program, growers of any size, as well as established grower groups like food hubs and other marketing organizations, can be USDA GAP-certified as a group. Group members share resources and work together under a common on-farm food safety program and Quality Management System to meet industry recognized Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and USDA GroupGAP Program requirements.

Q. Who is GroupGAP for?

GroupGAP is for producers of any size. While we focused our efforts during the pilot phase of the program on smaller producers, the GroupGAP concept is applicable to all growers regardless of their size or markets.

Q: Is GroupGAP only for produce growers?

Yes, the USDA GAP Program is designed for the fruit and vegetable industry.

Q: Do farms have to be below a certain size to be eligible for GroupGAP? If they are above a certain size, do they have to do individual GAP certification?

Any size farm can take part in GroupGAP. Any operation that can be audited using a USDA GAP&GHP audit can be a member of a GroupGAP certified group.

Q: Is GroupGAP for individual farmers?

Individual farmers would need to join together to create a group that has the infrastructure to manage the group, perform the internal audits, and implement a Quality Management System. Individual growers who are unable to form a Group should consider one of USDA's traditional GAP & GHP audit programs. More information about these programs can be found at: www.ams.usda.gov/gapghp.

Q: Do the group members all use the same food safety plan and documentation?

Yes.

Costs

Q: What is the cost structure for GroupGAP?

There are several different sets of costs to consider if you are looking to form a group. The first is the start-up cost associated with forming and implementing a group if you are not already an established group.

The second is the certification cost. There will be an application fee and an hourly fee for staff time that will be charged at the Specialty Crops Inspection Division's audit rate as published in the Federal Register, which currently is \$92 per hour. The certification charges will include the time it takes to review and approve your application, to perform the Quality Management System desk review, and to travel to and conduct the on-farm verification audits as well as the Quality Management System audit of the group. The overall cost will depend on the number of farms involved and the how long it takes to perform the system review and audits.

Q: What is the cost of the application fee?

The application fee for GroupGAP will be equivalent to 8 hours of staff time at our current hourly rate of \$92 (\$736). A full breakdown of the GroupGAP fee structure is available in Appendix III of the [GroupGAP Users Guide](#).

Q. What is the actual cost of certification?

The actual cost of certification will vary for each group based on a number of factors, including the number of members, the complexity of the Group's Quality Management System, and how prepared the group and the members are for their USDA audits. Anecdotally, the onsite system audits during the pilot program took anywhere from a half-day to 2 days, plus time to prepare the audit plan and the travel time for the auditors. External producer audits will be performed on, at a minimum, the square root of the number of members rounded to the next whole number plus any centralized facility (if applicable). To the extent possible, these audits will be scheduled together to limit the amount of auditor travel time.

Q: Can GroupGAP really save farmers money?

As with any business, there are economies of scale in regards to a return on investment. A smaller group may take longer to recoup its costs; a larger group might recoup its costs more quickly. It is an individual business decision for a group when deciding whether or not to undergo group certification. For some groups, the savings could be significant.

Q: If our facility and growers are already using USDA certification, is it worth the work to switch to GroupGAP? Is there really much difference?

Any business must consider the return on its investment. It's important to keep in mind that there are other advantages to GroupGAP beyond potential financial benefits. Having trained food safety auditors within your Group can help improve grower knowledge and comfort with Good Agricultural Practices, and helps promote a culture of food safety within the Group.

Q: How do the individual GroupGAP participants pay USDA's auditing costs?

USDA will charge the group that is being certified for our services. It is up to the group to determine how to split the cost among its members.

Groups

Q: What is a Group?

There is no legal definition of a group; for purposes of GroupGAP certification, any group of producers and/or supply chain partners who come together to implement a shared food safety program can be considered a group. A GroupGAP group must have a central entity that takes responsibility for the group's Quality Management System and must be established in such a way to ensure effective management of the group.

Q: Are there geographical limitations on a group?

No. Group participants can be geographically apart so long as a group can maintain control of its participants, ensure adherence to the Group's Quality Management System, and complete internal and unannounced audits.

Q: My group has a central warehouse or packinghouse. Can this be included as part of the group?

Yes, warehouses and packinghouse can be included as part of the group. Each will be treated as a participant in the group, and will need to adhere to the group's Quality Management System and be internally audited like all other participants.

Q: Can a fresh produce broker be a member of a group?

Any operation that can be audited using a USDA GAP&GHP audit can be a member of a GroupGAP certified group.

Q: Can an industry organized under a R&P program be considered a grower group?

We are being as flexible as we can with the definition of a group, so we don't see why an Research and Promotion (R&P) program couldn't potentially be a group. Any interested R&P program should check with its Board and the R&P Program to see if GroupGAP is a fit for that specific Board.

Q: Do all producers in the group need to be growing same kind of crop or can there be, for example, different types of produce?

The group determines the crops that will be covered under the group certification. The USDA GroupGAP program has no restrictions on the number or types of crops that a group can certify, so long as its Quality Management System and Food Safety Plan appropriately address all risks associated with each crop. The group will be required to provide a list of each member, the crops that are grown, and the scopes to which they were audited.

Q: Do all members of a Group need to use the same production practices (e.g., Amish farmers, conventional farmers, and greenhouses)?

Varied production practices can be covered under a group's certification. The USDA GroupGAP Program has no restrictions on the types of farms that a group can certify, so long as its Quality Management System and Food Safety Plan appropriately address all risks associated with each production practice. The group will need to ensure that its Quality Management System can control members with different practices, and be sure that its internal auditors have the knowledge or experience to understand the risks associated with each type of operation.

Q: How can I find growers in my area interested on the GroupGAP?

We do not have a system for identifying interested growers who are looking for a group. Interested growers should use the existing resources within their States to identify other potential group members. Participants also could contact their local extension or USDA service center to see if these offices know of any groups in the area.

Q: Can an organization have some members who opt out of the GroupGAP group?

Yes, the group identifies the members within the group who participate in the group certification. However, the group cannot make claims that the entire organization is GroupGAP-certified if the entire membership is not covered.

Q. What happens if a member of the group does not conform to the standards in the Quality Management System?

The group must have a process for ensuring that all members are conforming to the requirements of the Quality Management System, including a process for how to handle a member who does not comply, which potentially could require removing that member from the group.

Q: Can you add or remove growers from a group at any time?

Yes. Any grower who wants to join a Group must undergo an internal audit before USDA can add them to the group's certification. Growers can be removed at any time; the group would need to notify USDA of the change.

Q: If there is an issue on one farm, for example a listeria outbreak, can the other farms in their group be held accountable also?

An outbreak becomes a regulatory issue. In that case, the Food and Drug Administration and State departments of health would take point on the outbreak investigation. The traceability program established by the group will directly affect its ability to identify the source of the outbreak.

Quality Management System

Q: What is a Quality Management System?

A Quality Management System is a collection of business processes focused on achieving a quality policy and quality objectives to meet your customer's requirements. A Quality Management System addresses your group's organizational structure, policies, procedures, and the resources you need to implement a group certification process.

Q. How do I know what should go into my Quality Management System?

All GroupGAP Quality Management Systems should be based on ISO 9001 or an equivalent standard. Working through the ISO 9001 standard, or ISO 22006 (the application of ISO 9001 to crop production), may give groups a good idea of what will be expected. Groups should review the "Quality Management System – Basic Requirements for Groups" in Appendix I of the [GroupGAP Users Guide](#). We expect to publish additional Quality Management System guidance in the coming months. And, our GroupGAP pilot project partner, The Wallace Center at Winrock International, has additional resources related to GroupGAP Quality Management System development, including sample plans, on its website at www.ngfn.org/foodsafety. You can contact Winrock at GroupGAP@ngfn.org.

Q: Do you offer any templates to develop a QMS?

Our pilot project partner, The Wallace Center at Winrock International, has posted examples of Quality Management Systems that have been developed for GroupGAP on its website at www.ngfn.org/foodsafety.

Q: Must you be ISO certified in advance of applying?

There is no need to have your program and Quality Management System certified prior to applying to the GroupGAP program. But, your Group's Quality Management System must be based on ISO 9001 or an equivalent standard.

Q: Do private certifications like Global GAP, SQF, etc. cover the requirements of GroupGAP? Do USDA GroupGAP auditors accept other QMS internal systems?

The USDA has not compared our program requirements to those of other audit programs available to the produce industry. Groups interested in USDA GroupGAP certification should ensure that their Quality Management System, internal farm audits, and program documentation meet the requirements of the GroupGAP program outlined in the [USDA GroupGAP User's Guide](#).

Private certifications are not part of the USDA GroupGAP Program, but may be beneficial in preparing a group for meeting GroupGAP requirements. Most audit organizations align their programs with ISO standards, so the USDA GroupGAP program and other certification programs may share many requirements. It is not uncommon for a producer to use the same documentation to meet the requirements of several different certification programs.

Group Roles

Q: What will it take to implement a QMS? Will I need to hire new staff?

GroupGAP does not require that a group hire new staff to develop and manage a Quality Management System, but you may choose to do that. During the pilot phase of GroupGAP, several groups developed and implemented their own Quality Management Systems; others hired a contractor specifically to handle this task.

Group Leader

Q: Does the Group GAP leader have to be a farm employee or can it be a consultant from an outside company?

A GroupGAP leader, or manager, need not be an employee of the group. He/she can be a consultant or a market coordinator. The GroupGAP manager is responsible for the group's implementation of its Quality Management System and food safety plan.

Q: Could a farmers market coordinator be a GroupGAP leader?

Yes.

Q: Can a food broker serve as the GroupGAP leader for several smaller growers for whom it markets and sells?

Yes, so long as the broker is responsible for the group's Quality Management System.

Internal Farm Auditor(s)

Q: What are the education/training/experience requirements for internal auditors?

Internal auditors must have earned a high school diploma, have 3 years of post-high school education and/or work experience in an agricultural field, and must successfully complete a basic auditor training course, training on the selected food safety standard, and USDA-specific training on audit-specific acceptance criteria.

Q: Do internal auditors need to be USDA certified as a GAP auditor?

USDA does not certify the GroupGAP internal auditors, although the education, training, and experience requirements for internal auditors are the same as those for a USDA auditor. Please see the [USDA GroupGAP Users Guide](#), Appendix II for more information.

Q: When will internal auditor training be available?

A list of training opportunities offered by USDA is on the GroupGAP website at www.ams.usda.gov/groupgap. The site will be updated with additional opportunities as they become available. USDA auditor training requirements, including USDA and external equivalent options (when available), are outlined in the [GroupGAP User's Guide](#).

Q: Will auditor training be available online?

Currently, all USDA training opportunities are in-person courses. We are working to make in-person courses available throughout the country. We also are working to develop web-based options for some of the required training courses.

Q: How does one become an internal auditor? Can a Technical Service Provider become an auditor?

A group can use an employee or contractor, including a technical services provider, as its internal auditor. All internal auditors must meet USDA auditor criteria and receive training from USDA in order to be qualified.

Q: Can a Farmers Market Coordinator be the internal auditor for my market if I have post-secondary education, but not in agriculture, and am a Master Gardener?

The auditor education/experience requirement can be met in any of the following three ways:

1. Education: Education may be substituted for experience. A 4-year course of study leading to a bachelor's degree in an agriculture-related field meets the experience requirement.
2. Work Experience: Internal auditors must have at least 3 years of post-high school experience in an agricultural field such as farming, agricultural commodity grading, agricultural marketing, food processing, laboratory testing, quality assurance, process control application, process or systems auditing, or ISO standards application.
3. Combination of Education and Work Experience: Combinations of successfully completed post-high school education and experience may be used to meet total qualification requirements for experience.

Q: Can Group Leaders also be Internal Auditors?

Yes, so long as they meet the internal auditor requirements.

Q: What is actually meant by “internal”? Can it be a contractor?

This person is under the responsibility of the group, but doesn't necessarily need to be an employee. You may choose to hire a contractor for that function.

Q. The program mentions internal QMS and internal farm auditors, do these need to be different people?

No, they can be the same.

Q: If we already have people who work on educating farmers, can they be used as internal auditors?

Yes, but they will need to meet the USDA internal auditor requirements, including completing USDA-specific training, which is the same training USDA auditors must complete.

Q: Does the internal auditor take the place of a state auditor?

No. Internal auditors are part of or are hired by a group to ensure that each member of a group receives an annual audit, any applicable follow-up audits, and the appropriate number of unannounced audits as determined by the grower's production season.

State auditors may be used as part of the USDA system and external producer audits. USDA uses trained and licensed staff from 36 different state departments of agriculture across the country, from Maine to Hawaii and Alaska to Florida, to provide audit services on our behalf. In states where they are available, state auditors will be part of the USDA audit team and will perform external producer audits with or in place of Federal USDA auditors. For states without state auditors, Federal staff will perform the audits.

Audits

Q: How many audits will this program mean for a group per season? Will this increase or decrease USDA's presence on the farms in a group?

GroupGAP certification has two layers of audits. The first level is the internal producer audit of each group member that is conducted by the group's internal auditor, who is a staff member or member of the group (not USDA). The second level audit is the USDA Quality Management System audit, which focuses on determining if the group has (1) fully implemented its Quality Management System, (2) conducted its internal producer audits, and (3) taken corrective actions, if needed. The USDA system audit includes onsite audits of a randomly selected percentage of growers. Ultimately, USDA might visit a producer's site fewer times under GroupGAP than if they were certified individually, but the actual onsite audit time would be similar.

Q: What is an internal audit?

An internal producer audit is performed by an internal employee/consultant of the group according to the group's Quality Management System and to USDA requirements using a USDA audit checklist.

Q: If the Group has both an early and late harvest season, does the USDA auditor perform two audits of the group?

If you have a long harvest season, the USDA external audit will include only one visit. The internal audit, however, may include multiple site visits to cover all products and/or processes contained in the certification, in accordance with USDA audit guidelines. Please see "Auditing a Diversified Production Location" in the [USDA GroupGAP User's Guide](#) for more information.

Q: If a group of 164 farmers formed a group, what percentage of farms would be audited on an annual basis?

At a minimum, we look at the square root of the number of growers, so for a 164 grower group, we would look at a minimum of 13 growers as part of the annual system audit.

Q: What is the best way to prepare for the audit?

The internal Quality Management System audit that the group must perform as part of the GroupGAP program requirements is a good way to prepare for the USDA system audit.

Q: Does each type of crop grown need to be audited?

The group determines the scope of the certification, including the food safety standard and commodities covered. Only crops that have been internally audited will be covered under the group certification.

Q: How soon can you get an audit after starting a new business? Do you need several months of records?

There are no specified timeframes for receiving an audit after starting a new business. Before you receive a USDA audit, the group must have implemented a food safety system and Quality Management System, and performed at least 25% of its internal producer audits. Records must be in place that show evidence of Quality Management System and program implementation; there is no set number of records required. After these steps are satisfactorily completed, USDA will perform its system and producer audits. Certification occurs after all USDA and internal audits have been completed.

Q: What is the percent to pass?

There is not a specified percentage score for a passing Quality Management System audit. At the conclusion of the USDA system audit, the lead auditor will determine if the group has fully implemented its Quality Management System, if the group's internal producer audits were conducted according to USDA requirements, and, if the group as a whole meets the requirements of the USDA GroupGAP Program. These factors will determine the group's eligibility for certification.

Q: How are corrective actions dealt with? How much time will be given to make corrections?

This depends on the nature of the corrective action. Corrective actions that are initiated as part of an internal producer audit are addressed internally by the grower and the group. Corrective actions resulting from the USDA system audit are addressed by the group, with the corrective action(s) submitted to USDA as part of the system audit process. In both cases, the group would follow its Quality Management System's corrective and preventive action procedures. The timeframe for addressing a corrective action is determined by the severity of the identified issue and if it is associated with an immediate food safety risk.

Q: If a cooperative or other organization packs product from GroupGAP and non-GroupGAP certified growers, how can you be sure that only the appropriate produce is marketed as GroupGAP certified?

One component of the group's food safety plan is to ensure the traceability of the product and to conduct a mock recall. USDA reviews the group's traceability program during the audit to ensure it works and can readily identify one step forward and one step backward in the supply chain.

Q: Can only USDA do GroupGAP audits, or are private auditors/certification bodies allowed to perform the audits?

Only USDA auditors may perform the USDA system audit and external producer audits. The group can use private auditors to perform its internal audits if the auditors meet the USDA requirements for internal producer auditors, as established in Appendix II of the [GroupGAP User's Guide](#).

Q: Are current State, "USDA cooperator auditors," going to be conducting these audits? Will it vary from state to state?

USDA uses trained and licensed staff from 36 different state departments of agriculture across the country, from Maine to Hawaii and Alaska to Florida. In states where they are available, state auditors will be used as part of the USDA audit team in addition to Federal auditors. For states without state auditors, Federal staff will perform the audit.

Q: Will GroupGAP audit reports be available as live data or PDF?

Reports are issued as PDF documents to the groups.

Certification

Q: Will each member of the group get a certificate, or just the group as a whole?

A certificate will be issued to the group, with the option of issuing certificates to each individual participant as a member of the group.

Q: Will each certified participant be listed on the USDA GAP website?

Yes. The group itself will be listed as a certified entity and each grower within the group will be listed as certified as part of the larger group. The grower's listing may show up as: AMC Farms, as a member of Tomatoes-R-US Food Hub.

Q: Can a pre-existing organization that contains groups of growers, such as a marketing association or food hub, be certified even if some of its members choose to opt out?

Yes, so long as the group that participates in GroupGAP identifies both the scope of its certification in its Quality Management System, and the members within the organization who are participating in the GroupGAP certification. If any of the organization's members do not participate in GroupGAP, the organization may not claim that the entire organization is GroupGAP certified.

Q: How long will it take for a group to get certified?

This will depend on a number of factors, including the group members' readiness for a GAP audit, the maturity of the group and its leadership/management, resources available to the group, and the amount of time that a group is able to dedicate to the project.

In terms of planning for your group to be certified, you must complete a number of steps before the USDA certification can occur, including:

- The group's Quality Management System must be written and fully implemented, and the group must be able to show records of members' adherence to the QMS; and
- All members must have received one internal audit during harvest.

After all audit activity is completed, a group can expect to receive certification within 30 business days.

Q: Can a grower who is part of a cooperative that is GroupGAP certified use their certificate to market their product to buyers outside of their cooperative market channels?

Only commodities that have been internally audited by the group's auditor will be considered GAP-certified. If you grow commodities that are not covered under your group's certification, you may still need an additional certification, depending on buyer requirements. If a group chooses to receive individual certifications for each member, they may use this certification to market their certified crops outside of the Group.

Q: Is the program set up so that individual farms within the group are audited at random and the entire group result is based on the results of those random audits?

Under GroupGAP, there are two layers of audits. First, every grower in the group is audited internally to verify each is meeting the food safety requirements prescribed by the group. Internal auditors are employees or contractors of the group itself, and must meet strict USDA auditor criteria and complete training provided by USDA. The second layer of audits is a complete system review of the group carried out by a USDA auditor who reviews the group's implementation of and adherence to its Quality Management System and the internal audits. As part of the system review, a USDA auditor will randomly perform audits on a percentage of growers to ensure the internal audit process and the integrity of the program.

Q: If one farm fails an audit, does the whole group fail?

Not necessarily. Because this is a Quality Management System (QMS)-based program, the group must have a system for monitoring producers and product that are not in compliance with the QMS. If there are systems in place to exclude product that does not meet the group's requirements (e.g., the producer does not pass their audit) and the group can demonstrate that the entire system works, then the entire group would not fail based on the audit results of one member. However, if a grower(s) used poor practices that caused an immediate food safety issue that affects the entire group and the group did not take action to control it, then a single grower could cause the entire group to fail.

Q: If I sell my farm, can my USDA GAP certification be transferred to the new owner?

No, an individual Group member's USDA GAP certification is not transferable.

For the group as a whole, if the group's overall management (ownership) changes, the group loses its certification. The group's system documentation, however, could be submitted for participation in the GroupGAP program as a new group.

GroupGAP Audit Alignment

Q: Which of the USDA GAP audits is the GroupGAP program based on?

Groups can choose to certify against any current USDA GAP audit (e.g., GAP&GHP, Harmonized, or mGAP), including adding optional scopes such as food defense or the global markets addendum. USDA-approved audit standards are listed on the USDA website at www.ams.usda.gov/gapghp.

Q: How similar to existing GAP programs are the QMS requirements (e.g., GlobalGAP)? Can we use existing programs to fulfill the majority of the GroupGAP requirements?

Most audit organizations align their programs with ISO standards, thus there will be many similar requirements between the USDA GroupGAP program and existing certification programs. It is not uncommon for a producer to use the same documentation to meet the requirements of multiple different certification programs.

Q: Is GroupGAP a Global Food Safety Initiative benchmarked scheme?

At this time, USDA is not recognized by the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI). We are actively working with GFSI to explore options that would allow USDA audits to be recognized as GFSI equivalent.

FSMA Compliance

Q: How will GroupGAP align with FSMA?

AMS is engaged with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on a joint project that is reviewing the alignment of the USDA GAP program to the regulations under Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). We have committed to FDA and the industry that the USDA GAP program will be aligned with the rule and, at a minimum, meet the requirements of FSMA. In many cases, the USDA GAP requirements may be more stringent than the rule since the GAP programs also take into consideration industry best practices and the requirements of buyers. We anticipate GAP revisions to be in place on or before the final compliance implementation date as outlined in the FSMA Produce Safety Rule.

Q: Do you envision this program ultimately eliminating the need for the Tester amendment?

The Tester Amendment is a section of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) that provides for exemptions to the Act for certain producers. The USDA GAP Program, including GroupGAP, is a voluntary, user-fee funded program that is primarily used for market access by providing certification that a grower or grower group has implemented a food safety program to a specific food safety standard. Growers may be exempt from meeting the requirements of FSMA under the Tester Amendment, but still need to undergo a GAP/on-farm food safety audit to meet marketplace demands.

Buyer Acceptance

Q: Will my buyers accept GroupGAP as a GAP audit? Will large retailers like Wal-Mart, Costco, and Kroger accept it?

There are many different buyers in the marketplace with specific requirements for their suppliers, so a “one-size-fits-all” audit program isn’t necessarily possible. USDA, however, regularly works with the retail and foodservice communities to promote the various food safety audit-based programs we offer, including the GroupGAP program. We are developing a list of buyers who accept USDA GroupGAP certification, and will communicate this via our website (see below).

It is important that you check with your particular buyer(s) to determine if they will accept USDA GroupGAP certification. If your buyers have questions regarding the GroupGAP program, please direct them to our website at www.ams.usda.gov/groupgap for more information.

Q: Will the school lunch program and other USDA commodity purchase programs accept GroupGAP certification?

Yes.

Q: If you participate in GroupGAP, do you need a separate GAP certification for other produce you may grow and sell.

Only those commodities that have been internally audited by the group’s auditor will be considered GAP-certified. If you grow commodities that are not covered under the group’s certification, you may still need an additional certification depending on buyer requirements.

International Services

Q: Can international groups be audited under the GroupGAP program?

For at least 2016, we are going to restrict participation in the GroupGAP Program to domestic groups. We will be looking at ways to include international groups moving forward, but not during the first year. If you represent a group of international producers, please contact us at GroupGAP@ams.usda.gov to let us know you are interested in the program for 2017 and beyond so we can incorporate those locations into our discussions for coming years.

How to Participate in GroupGAP

Q: How do I apply for GroupGAP?

We began accepting applications on April 3, 2016. Please visit the GroupGAP webpage <http://www.ams.usda.gov/groupgap> for information on how to apply.

Resources for GroupGAP Participants

Q: Where do we obtain the requirements to be certified under the GroupGAP program?

The requirements are available in the [GroupGAP Users Guide](#) on our website at www.ams.usda.gov/groupgap.

Q: Whom could I contact to follow-up to learn more?

Both USDA (groupgap@ams.usda.gov) and the Wallace Center (groupgap@ngfn.org) have staff who can answer questions.

Q: Do you have example templates, procedures, and record keeping forms?

USDA does not maintain template resources for our audit programs, but a number of great resources are available to participants. Growers who plan to participate in USDA GAP&GHP audit programs, including GroupGAP, can find on-farm food safety plan templates and information from [The National GAPs Program at Cornell](#), [The On-Farm Food Safety Project](#), or your [local cooperative extension](#). Our pilot project partner, The Wallace Center at Winrock International, has posted examples of Quality Management Systems that have been developed for GroupGAP on its website at www.ngfn.org/foodsafety.

Q: I work with new micro ag operations, is there a train the trainer program?

At this time, there are no train-the-trainer programs in place for GroupGAP. Our pilot project partner, The Wallace Center at Winrock International, may have information on additional training opportunities. You can reach The Wallace Center at GroupGAP@ngfn.org.

Other

Q: When do you foresee putting protocols in place to allow third party auditors to conduct GroupGAP audits?

Certification issued by USDA under the GAP Program, including GroupGAP, will be conducted only by USDA employees or state department of agriculture employees licensed by USDA to provide these services.

Q: What's the difference between GAP and HACCP?

Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points, or HACCP, is a food safety system developed in the early 1960s by Pillsbury when they were contracted by NASA to ensure the food used in the Space Program didn't get astronauts sick while in space. It is a system that identifies hazards in a food process, actively monitors for those hazards, and takes proactive steps to control that hazard if it exceeds a specific limit.

Good agricultural practices, or GAP, are generally a set of steps a producer can take to minimize the risk of contamination of produce during the production and harvesting of the products.

Last updated May 4, 2016

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