



Specialty Crops Program

USDA Harmonized GAP audit

The USDA Harmonized GAP audit was developed as part of the Produce GAP Harmonization Initiative, an industry-driven effort to create food safety GAP standards and audit checklists for pre-harvest and post-harvest operations. The initiative is a collaborative effort on the part of growers, shippers, produce buyers, audit organizations, and government agencies, including USDA. The USDA Harmonized GAP audit, in keeping with the initiative's goals, is a single audit that is applicable to all fresh produce commodities, all sizes of on-farm operations, and all regions in the United States.

How does the USDA Harmonized GAP Plus+ service relate to other USDA GAP programs?

USDA offers several types of GAP audit services. USDA GAP audits are our basic service. These audits are aligned with industry best practices and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommendations. USDA Harmonized GAP audits meet industry best practices, FDA best practices and are aligned with the Produce GAP Harmonization Initiative and the Food Safety Modernization Act's (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule. The new USDA Harmonized GAP Plus+ audits include all USDA GAP and Harmonized GAP alignments and are recognized by the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI).

How does the alignment of the USDA Harmonized GAP Audit with the FSMA Produce Safety Rule help the specialty crop industry?

The alignment of USDA's Harmonized GAP program for specialty crops with the requirements of the FDA's FSMA Produce Safety Rule provides growers with an opportunity to better understand how their operations align with FDA's regulatory requirements for the specialty crops sector. The audit program provides a tool that verifies food safety practices have been implemented to help keep our nation's food supply safe. USDA's voluntary, user-fee funded USDA Harmonized GAP Program continues to advance preventive food safety practices and facilitate market access for the specialty crops industry.

Why did USDA undertake Global Food Safety Initiative Technical Equivalency?

We undertook the GFSI benchmarking process at the request of many grower groups, commodity boards, trade associations, and others in the specialty crops sectors, who asked us to align the USDA GAP Program with GFSI to reduce audit fatigue and the costs of multiple food safety audits. Now that the USDA Harmonized GAP Plus+ program is GFSI technically equivalent, the more than 4,000 growers, packers, and handlers who use the USDA GAP Program can also use that single audit to also meet the requirements of the many retail, food service, and institutional buyers that require their suppliers to undergo a GFSI-benchmarked food safety audit. With GFSI technical equivalency, USDA can help increase marketing opportunities for specialty crops producers and expand purchasing options for buyers.

For more information: ams.usda.gov/gapghp / (202) 720-5021 / SCAudits@usda.gov

USDA Harmonized GAP Audit:

What one USDA Audit Can Do for You

USDA HARMONIZED GAP

- Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) option via USDA H-GAP Plus+ audit
- Compliance with Harmonized GAP standard
- Aligns with Produce Safety Rule technical requirements
- Voluntary, fee-for-service
- Annual recertification
- USDA-licensed auditor
- USDA certification of meeting audit standard and acceptance criteria
- Audit certification reported on USDA website

**USDA: Market
Access Audit**

USDA GAP+FDA PSR Alignment

- ✓ Confirms compliance with USDA Harmonized GAP standard and implements relevant technical components of the Produce Safety Rule.
- ✓ Provides metrics that help you meet the Produce Safety Rule's ultimate goal of increasing food safety.

**FDA:
Regulatory
Inspection**

PRODUCE SAFETY RULE

- Confirms compliance with Produce Safety Rule
- Mandatory
- Routine or follow-up inspections
- No cost
- FDA or State regulatory inspector
- Inspection documentation provided to farmer
- Significant deficiencies recorded for correction