



## USDA, AMS, Fruit and Vegetable Program Good Agricultural Practices & Good Handling Practices (GAP&GHP) Audit Services

USDA  
GAP&GHP  
Audit Verification  
Program



Contact your local State University Cooperative Extension Educator's office for specific information on local practices, outreach and educational opportunities.

**USDA GAP&GHP Audit Verification Program** Is a voluntary, fee for service program developed at the request of the fruit and vegetable industry and State departments of agriculture in response to growing food safety concerns among U.S. consumers. USDA trained and licensed auditors provide an unbiased review of growers, handlers, or receiver's practices to minimize food safety hazards. This program verifies that the participating companies are conforming to generally accepted agricultural best practices. This program is not a regulatory or mandatory audit required by any state or federal regulation.

### Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)

A GAP audit measures efforts to reduce the risk of microbial contamination at the farm/harvesting level of production. Farms are audited against good agricultural practice guidelines.

### Good Handling Practices (GHP)

A GHP audit measures efforts to reduce the risk of microbial contamination after harvest in the packing, handling, storage, transportation and processing stages. GHP audits are typically performed on raw agricultural commodities that are not subject to FDA Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) regulations.

The USDA GAP&GHP audit matrix was derived from guidance documents developed by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA); the national GAP's program; and commodity specific best practices guidance documents. Some of these guidance documents include:

- The FDA's "*Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables.*"  
<http://www.fda.gov/downloads/Food/GuidanceComplianceRegulatoryInformation/GuidanceDocuments/ProduceandPlanProducts/UCM169112.pdf>
- National GAP's Program educational materials including "Food Safety Begins on the Farm"  
[http://ecommons.cornell.edu/bitstream/1813/2209/1/FSBF\\_Bk\\_Eng.pdf](http://ecommons.cornell.edu/bitstream/1813/2209/1/FSBF_Bk_Eng.pdf)

### USDA GAP&GHP Audit Scopes

USDA's GAP and GHP audit questions are separated into the following categories: General Questions including operational activities, standard procedures, verification of GAP&GHP training of employees and personnel hygiene; Farm Review; Field Harvesting and Field Packing Activities; Packing House Facility; Storage and Transportation; Warehouse and Distribution; and Food Defense. The grower, packer handler specifies which scopes will be audited against, however all audits must include the General Questions.



Our GAP&GHP audits are performed by licensed USDA auditors nationwide



Contact information

A score of eighty percent (80%) with no “automatic unsatisfactory conditions” per element is the minimum passing score. In addition, other minimum scores may be applied based on customer’s specifications or commodity specific audit programs such as leafy greens, tomatoes, or mushrooms. Audit results are valid for 1 year. Unannounced verification visits are also conducted after the initial audit to verify continued conformance to GAP&GHP requirements.

USDA auditors verify the following areas that participants should demonstrate control of in their operations to minimize microbial hazards in fresh fruits and vegetables:

- Verification of water testing and potability
- Manure and municipal bio-solids usage
- Worker health and hygiene
- Sanitary level of facilities
- Field sanitation practices
- Packing facility sanitation
- Transportation of products
- Traceability and any established recall procedures

The USDA GAP&GHP Audit Verification Program is available throughout the U.S and its territories, and upon request audits may be performed internationally. Auditors are located throughout the country, and are typically available in the nearest Federal or Federal-State fruit and vegetable inspection office. If an auditor is not available in your area, a USDA licensed auditor within close proximity to your facility’s region will travel to the audit site.

Audits are only performed by USDA trained and licensed Federal or State department of agriculture employees. All auditors must meet stringent requirements as outlined by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service. The USDA AMS Specialty Crops Inspection Division works in cooperation with states to ensure program integrity, uniformity, and consistency nationwide.

Passing audit results are posted on USDA’s website and are accessible by you and your customers. In addition, organizations with passing results are acknowledged with an official USDA certificate verifying that the organization passed the applicable elements of the audit. A certificate is issued from USDA to verify your achievement of a passing audit and is suitable for framing.

Visit the Specialty Crops Inspection Division, Fresh FV Audit website at:

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/gapgph>

<p>Michigan Department of Agriculture &amp; Rural Development          Fruit and Vegetable Inspection Program          Patricia Bizoukas, Program Manager          Phone: (517) 512-3603          Email: bizoukasp@michigan.gov</p>	<p><b>For more information contact:</b>  <b>USDA, Audit Services Branch</b>          Specialty Crops Inspection Division          USDA, AMS, Fruit &amp; Vegetable Program          Phone: (202) 720-5021          E-mail: FVaudits@ams.usda.gov</p>
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Find your nearest USDA, AMS, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable inspection office online:

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/scihome>