



## GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES (GAPs)

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 ARE GAPs

GAPs are principles and practices applied at the farm level to reduce the risk of microbial contamination of fruits and vegetables during production, harvest, and packaging. 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 GAPs audits verify that your operation follows and maintains the processes and practices you have put in place to minimize potential food safety risks. GAPs audits cover:

- Farm/Greenhouse
- Harvest
- Packing house and cooler/cold storage
- Storage and distribution
- Transportation
- Traceability

### BENEFITS OF GAPs CERTIFICATION

- Broadens your market opportunities by satisfying buyers' demands for suppliers to be GAPs certified.
- Reduces your risk of not complying with national and international regulations, standards, and guidelines.
- Reduces the risk of your product introducing food-borne illnesses into the supply chain.

### SCI — YOUR AUDIT PROVIDER

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

- Nationwide team of experts that provides fast, cost-effective services.
- Proven record of buyer acceptance of our customers' product.
- Effective way to communicate to your customers your commitment to food safety and adherence to best practices.
- USDA auditors receive robust training, and are constantly evaluated to ensure their performance .
- Ongoing verification of your continued compliance and performance.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

USDA Specialty Crops Inspection Division  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Room 1536-S, Stop 0240  
Washington, DC 20250-0240

Email: [SCI@ams.usda.gov](mailto:SCI@ams.usda.gov)  
Phone: 202-720-5870  
[www.ams.usda.gov](http://www.ams.usda.gov)



## GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES - HARMONIZED GAPs

### WHAT IS HARMONIZED GAPs

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

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

### THE BENEFITS OF HARMONIZED GAPs

- Brings together many audit schemes
- Developed and recognized by major institutional buyers and sellers and minimizes “audit creep”
- Are risk-based, science based, attainable, auditable and verifiable
- Takes into account regional food safety needs
- Not commodity specific - - allowing for adaptability to generally all commodity groups
- Harmonized audits reduce the number of multiple audits for the same operations.
- Evaluates and measures a Grower Risk Assessment
- Includes an evaluation and assessment of worker health and hygiene
- USDA acceptance criteria includes a section for “Global Markets Program” - - an added step to meet international requirements. Including:
  - \* Farm supplies are traced and reviewed
  - \* Chemical storage and chemical origination
  - \* Food Defense

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the bases of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.) If you wish to file an employment complaint, you must contact your Agency's EEO Counselor (Click the hyperlink for a listing of EEO Counselors), within 45 days of the date of the alleged discriminatory act, event, or in the case of a personnel action. Additional filing information can be found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_file.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_file.html). If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter by mail to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov). Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities and wish to file either an EEO or program complaint please contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339 or (800) 845-6136 (in Spanish). Persons with disabilities, who wish to file a program complaint, please see information above on how to contact the Department by mail directly or by email. If you require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) please contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).