

USDA Adds New Service for Fruit & Vegetable Growers, USDA GAP Audit Now Recognized by the Global Food Safety Initiative and FDA

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 13, 2018—The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced that the Harmonized Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Plus+ audit program for specialty crops is now accepted as technically equivalent by the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI).

“Technical equivalence means producers utilizing this one-stop USDA audit also meet other U.S. and international regulatory and market requirements,” said Greg Ibach, USDA’s Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs. “This important international recognition cuts down on paperwork, saves money and time, and ultimately grows markets for American farmers.”

USDA audits assure buyers, from local restaurants and farmers markets to regional, national and international food distributors, that producers have met required food safety standards and marketing practices. Since the program began in 2012, USDA has certified more than 5,300 producers to the Harmonized GAP Standard. GFSI recognition means these producers now have a new tool demonstrating they meet the standards required by many of the largest food distributors. The new GFSI certification also assists industry selling in international markets, including distributors in the European Union and Japan where GFSI certification is often required.

The department undertook the GFSI technical equivalence process at the request of the specialty crops industry to align the USDA GAP Program with industry recognized food safety audit requirements and to provide the specialty crops sector with a single government-based certification program that meets multiple market access requirements.

The USDA Harmonized GAP Plus+ gives America's specialty crops sector a new tool for delivering safe products to consumers and growing markets for their products. The USDA program fulfills the technical requirements of GFSI, the Food and Drug Administration's Food Safety Modernization Act Produce Safety Rule, the industry-driven Produce GAP Harmonization Initiative, and industry best practices in the United States.

USDA is the first to achieve recognition under GFSI's new technical equivalence for government entities. More information is available on the [Harmonized GAP](#) page of the AMS website.

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