

[Food/Feed Quality \(/foodfeedquality/Pages/food_feed_quality.aspx\)](#) > Good Agricultural Practices

Good Agricultural Practices/Good Handling Practices

The Food Quality Assurance Program offers several Good Agricultural (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP) programs to improve food safety in the production and packing of fruits and vegetables. Good Agricultural Practices refers to farming methods that reduce the likelihood of contaminating produce. Implementation of practices that address water quality, manure and compost use, worker health and hygiene and contamination from wild life, domestic animals and livestock. Good Handling Practices refers to post harvest handling of produce to minimize contamination. Practices include water quality, sanitation of the packing house, pest control programs, and sanitation of containers.

Fruit and vegetable producers implement GAP and GHP for many reasons. A GAP/GHP food safety program reduces the risk of microbial contamination that can cause consumer illness from consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables. As a result of food borne illness outbreaks related to produce, many wholesale buyers of produce now require farmers to be GAP/GHP certified. As part of the federal Food Safety Modernization Act, the Food and Drug Administration has proposed rules for the production and handling of fruits and vegetables that are similar to GAP/GHP requirements. Implementation of a GAP/GHP program and certification that the requirements are being met assists farmers in providing safe, wholesome produce to consumers, meeting buyer requirements and meeting the requirements of FDA's proposed rule.

In cooperation with the University of Maryland, MDA is providing GAP/GHP training and one to one assistance in developing, writing and implementing food safety programs. This assistance is available to any Maryland producer of fruits and vegetables.

MDA has developed a State GAP/GHP certification program. The program consists of basic food safety requirements and is intended for direct marketers and farmers that have never had a GAP/GHP inspection or audit. Producers that pass the MDA inspection are awarded a certificate.

MDA also conducts audits of fruit and vegetable producers and handlers to determine compliance with USDA's Good Agricultural Practices and Good Handling Practices standards and the Pre Harvest and Post Harvest Harmonized standards. The program is conducted through a cooperative agreement with USDA/AMS. Conducting the audits through USDA provides national recognition for producers and handlers to the many buyers now requiring audits for compliance with the guidelines. Additional information concerning the USDA Good Agricultural Practices and Good Handling Practices Audits and the Harmonized Audits can be found at the [USDA/AMS website](#)

(<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/ams.fetchTemplateData.do?template=TemplateN&page=GAPGHPAuditVerificationProgram>). ([/foodfeedquality/Pages](#))

Maryland producers that are USDA certified can be found at <http://apps.ams.usda.gov> (http://apps.ams.usda.gov/ReportServer05_69/Pages/ReportViewer.aspx?/GAP-GHP/G05+-+By+LOcation+-+Auditees+that+Meet+Acceptance+Criteria&rs:Co). MDA currently has USDA Specialty Crop grant money to assist Maryland producers in offsetting USDA audit costs.

The USDA and Harmonized audits are based on elements derived from FDA's guidance document entitled "Guide to Minimize Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables" available at [FDA.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation](#) (<http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/GuidanceDocumentsRegulatoryInformation/default.htm>). (<http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation>). The FDA guidance document identifies water, manure and municipal bio-solids, worker health and hygiene, sanitary facilities, field sanitation, packing facility sanitation, transportation and trace back as areas to be addressed to prevent microbial contamination of fresh fruits and vegetables. FDA has also developed commodity specific guidance which is also available on their website. Categories on the audit include personnel hygiene and practices, farm review, field harvesting and field packing activities, packing house facility, storage and transportation, food security and trace-back. Additional information and materials that can assist producers in implementing a GAP/GHP program are available at <http://www.gaps.cornell.edu/>. (<http://www.gaps.cornell.edu/>) Producers can use this information to implement or improve "Good Agricultural Practices" without requesting an audit.

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Related Information and Documents

[Food Quality Assurance](#)

[Fee Schedule](#)
([/foodfeedquality/Documents/FEESCHEDULE5.10.13.pdf](#))

[GAP Program Requirements](#)
([/foodfeedquality/Documents/GHPPROGRAMREQUIREMENTS.pdf](#))

[MDA Program Basic Requirements](#)
([/foodfeedquality/Documents/MDAGAPPROGRAMBASICREQUIREMENTS.pdf](#))

[Top 10 Things to Implement-Gap checklist](#)
([/foodfeedquality/Documents/TOP10THINGSTOIMPLEMENTGAPSCHECKLIST.pdf](#))

[Water Test Labs for GAP](#)
([/foodfeedquality/Documents/GAPWATERTESTINGLABS.pdf](#))

[Gap Program Resources](#)
([/foodfeedquality/Documents/GAPs%20program%20resources.pdf](#))

[USDA GAP/GHP AUDIT REQUEST](#) ([/foodfeedquality/Documents/USDA%20GAP%20GHP%20Audit%20Request%20form.pdf](#))
- [WORD DOCUMENT](#)
([/foodfeedquality/Documents/USDA%20GAP%20GHP%20Audit%20Request%20form.doc](#))

[MDA GAP/GHP INSPECTION REQUEST FORM](#)
([/foodfeedquality/Documents/MDAGAPGHPINSPECTIONREQUESTFORM.pdf](#))
- [WORD DOCUMENT](#)
([/foodfeedquality/Documents/MDA%20GAP%20GHP%20inspection%20request%20form.doc](#))

[USDA PARTICIPANT AGREEMENT](#)
([/foodfeedquality/Documents/USDAPARTICIPANTAGREEMENT.pdf](#))

[MDA GAP INSPECTION FORM](#) ([/foodfeedquality/Documents/MDAGAPINSPECTIONFORM.pdf](#))

On The Web

- ▶ [USDA Agricultural Marketing Service](#) (<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/>)
- ▶ [FDA Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition](#) (<http://www.fda.gov/default.htm>)
- ▶ [Gateway to Government Food Safety](#) (<http://www.foodsafety.gov/>)
- ▶ [United Fresh](#) (<http://www.unitedfresh.org/>)
- ▶ [Produce Safety Alliance](#) (<http://www.producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu/>)

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**LIST OF MARYLAND GAP
CERTIFIED**



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**(/foodfeedquality/Documents
/mdagapcertifiedproducer.12.29.13.pdf)**

Picture provided by:
"thebeginwithinblog"
([http://www.thebeginwithinblog.com
/wp-content/uploads/2012/09
/Fruits-and-Vegetables.jpg](http://www.thebeginwithinblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Fruits-and-Vegetables.jpg))