

USDA 3rd Party Audit Verification Programs

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Good Agricultural Practices &
Good Handling Practices Program

ASQ- Certified Quality Auditor



Government Agencies

- USDA Food Safety Inspection Service FSIS has regulatory authority over meat, poultry and eggs.
- FDA has regulatory authority over all other foods including fruits and vegetables.
- USDA Ag Marketing Service has no regulatory authority, and is a totally user fee based service to the industry.

USDA AMS

- Agricultural Marketing Service-authorized by Secretary of Agriculture to provide inspection and grading services.
 - Develops US Grade Standards
 - Cooperative Agreements with 48 states
 - License state inspectors to inspect on USDA behalf

What is a 3rd Party Audit?

- Can simply be defined as a neutral party mutually chosen by 2 companies to audit a defined process or procedure.



3rd Party Audits

- Auditors will not give advice on how to answer a question, but can refer you to the experts. i.e. Extension Service, researchers, 1st party requirements, etc...
- A grower/owner knows best their operation, not an auditor, therefore food safety plan needs to be the grower/owners not the auditors.

3rd Party Audits

- ISO International Standards Organization
- ISO 9000
- ISO 22000



What is a 3rd Party Audit?

- There are many companies that offer 3rd party audits
- Primus Labs
- AIB
- Many others
- USDA

Why USDA?

- In many cases USDA is already on the farm or in the packing facility providing impartial, unbiased, 3rd party grading services.
- USDA graders are already familiar with fruits/vegetables/nuts.
- Highly professional, well trained auditors.
- Some foreign governments and the US Government will only accept USDA audits
- Commodity Procurement Domestic Feeding Programs require a USDA audit

USDA Audit Verification Programs

- Partners in Quality
- Branch Internal Quality Management System
- Customer Assisted Inspection Program
- Identity Preservation Program
- **Good Agricultural Practices/Good Handling Practices**



USDA AMS Auditor Requirements

- Licensed Fruit and Vegetable Inspector
- 40 hours of area specific classroom training
- 40 hours of ISO 9001:2000 Lead Auditor training
- Required to perform 5 audits in an audit team
- Minimum 1 audit as lead auditor

Why USDA?

- Our state cooperators were receiving requests from Industry to provide this type of service.



Good Agricultural Practices/Good Handling Practices

- At the request of the NJ Department of Agriculture in 1999, the USDA started the development of a GAP/GHP program.
- 2001, the current audit verification program was implemented.
- Completely voluntary program.



GAP/ GHP

- GAP/GHP Program development was a joint effort
 - Fresh Products Branch
 - AFVISA- State Inspection Agencies
 - National GAPS Program

Based on FDA Guidance Document



GAP/GHP

- There are 7 sections to the GAP/ GHP matrix. The auditee can choose which sections are applicable to their facility and be audited on those sections.
- (May also depend on the 1st party requirements.)

GAP/GHP

- Starting in 2002-2003, FDA had notified several sectors of fruit and vegetable industry that they need to improve on food safety voluntary, and if they didn't FDA will put regulations in place.
- Melon, Tomato and Lettuce growers in particular.
- Joint effort underway with industry, university and trade groups to develop Guidance Documents to assist growers with GAP/GHP practices

Current Activities

- As a result of the spinach outbreak in fall of 2006, California Department of Agriculture introduced a Marketing Agreement
- Signatories of the Agreement would agree to abide by the regulations outlined in the Agreement
- Part of the Agreement would be any supplier to these facilities would be required to meet stringent GAP requirements.



Current Activities

- In Fall of 2006, several major retail chains sent a letter to the major trade organizations demanding that growers adhere to GAP principles.
- January 2007- GAP is on agenda of the Fruit and Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee, which recommends action items to the Secretary of Agriculture
- January 2007- Letter from AFDO recommending partnership with AMS

Current Activities

- Review of our current audit checklist for GAP/GHP
 - AFVISA
 - Industry
 - National GAPS Program
 - USDA Agricultural Research Service Food Safety Unit



Current Activities

- Working with Processed Products Branch Qualified through Verification (QTV) program
- Tiered GAP system- multiple audits levels
- Outreach activities
- Potential National Marketing Order for GAPs
- Auditor Training
- Food Chain



Remember:

- The foundation of the GAPs questions are changing as new research is being conducted.
- GAP checklist is a living, breathing document. What works today may not work tomorrow.