



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Marketing and  
Regulatory  
Programs

Agricultural  
Marketing  
Service

Washington, DC  
20250

## Notice to the Industry

In 2001, the Agricultural Marketing Service Fruit and Vegetable Programs, in cooperation with its state partners developed the “Good Agricultural Practices & Good Handling Practice” (GAP&GHP) Audit Verification Program. This voluntary program utilizes an audit checklist developed from the Food and Drug Administration’s “Guide to Minimize Microbial Contamination of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables” to assess whether a facility is adhering to the recommendations made in the “Guide.”

Many retailers are requiring that their suppliers be 3<sup>rd</sup> party audited to show adherence to good agricultural practices and/or good handling practices. In addition, the USDA Commodity Purchase programs require that their contactors be audited prior to selling their products to the Federal Government. After a review of the current GAP&GHP program, and evaluating its effectiveness for its users, the Fresh Products Branch (FPB) is making the following changes to the program effective October 1, 2007.

- A minimum of one (1) additional unannounced audit may be performed on any farm or facility that wishes to participate in the USDA GAP&GHP Program. The total number of additional unannounced audits will be based on the length a facility is in operation. This is being done to verify that a comprehensive food safety program has been implemented and is being followed throughout the growing and packing season.
- A written food safety plan must be available for review prior to initiation of an audit.
- The sections of the checklist audited will be determined by USDA in collaboration with the participant.
- A participant’s results will only be posted when all scopes audited receive a passing score, or any score if specifically requested in writing by participant.
- If deficiencies are found that result in a failure of the audit, corrective actions will be required in order to request continuance on the program.

For further information on the GAP&GHP program contact Michael Morrelli Head of The FPB’s Field Operation Section at 800-811-2373 or (202) 720-2482.



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