

Sample Certificate



Passing audit verification results do not guarantee “safe” food. The purpose of the Federal-State Inspection Service’s Audit Verification Program is to demonstrate that the participating company was adhering to generally recognized Good Agricultural Practices and Good Handling Practices when the audit was performed. This is a voluntary program established to attest to the participants adherence to the Food and Drug Administration’s “*Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables*,” and does not guarantee a safe product.

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Program Benefits include:

- Independent third-party audits are performed by Federal and/or Federal-State Inspection Service staff.
- USDA oversight ensures integrity and uniformity throughout the nation.
- Auditors are licensed fresh fruit and vegetable inspectors, and are trained in auditing and program specifications.
- Services are available in throughout the country, including shipping and packing facilities.
- Passing audit results may be posted on USDA’s website and accessible to participants and their customers.
- Successful participants receive a USDA certificate that is suitable for display.

Interested In the Audit Verification Program?

For More Information:

Visit:

The Fresh Products Branch website at:
[Http://www.ams.usda.gov/fv/fpbgapghp.htm](http://www.ams.usda.gov/fv/fpbgapghp.htm)

Contact:

Field Operations Section
Fresh Products Branch, FVP, AMS, USDA
Phone: (202) 720-2482 or (800) 811-2373,
or E-mail: fpb.info@usda.gov

Contact:

You can find a listing of USDA Inspection offices at:
<http://www.ams.usda.gov/fv/fpbstates/map.htm>



Good Agricultural Practices



Good Handling Practices

Commonly Asked Questions About the Program:

1. Where can I obtain a copy of the “*Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables*”?

Copies are available by contacting the Food and Drug Administration’s Food Safety Initiative Staff at (301) 436-2428 or <http://www.fda.gov>.

2. Is additional information available so I can learn more?

Yes. There is a growers guide entitled “Food Safety Begins on The Farm” compiled by the National GAP Program. To order the guide, visit the following website: <http://www.gaps.cornell.edu>.

In addition, contact your local State University Cooperative Extension Educator’s office for specific information on local practices, outreach and educational opportunities.

3. Is the USDA’s Federal-State Inspection Service Audit Verification Program currently available in the State where my business is located?

Audit services are available anywhere in the United States. If your business is not located near an inspection office, an auditor from a nearby office will travel to your facility. This voluntary service is provided for a fee, on a first-come, first-served basis.

4. **How will my customers know that my company has met the requirements of the program?** With the participant’s permission, passing audit results are posted on USDA’s website and are accessible by you and your customers. In addition, organizations with passing results are acknowledged with an official USDA certificate verifying that the organization passed the applicable elements of the audit.

5. **Who performs the audits?** Audits are performed by trained Federal and Federal-State Inspection Service staff. Auditors are licensed fresh fruit and vegetable inspectors, and are trained in the technical specifications of the GAP&GHP Audit Verification Program. AMS has worked with the States to develop the program, and with AMS’ involvement and oversight to ensure program integrity, uniformity, and consistency nationwide.

6. **What is a “passing score” on an audit?** A score of eighty percent (80%) per element is passing. However, a higher “passing” percentage may be applied based on the customers specifications. In addition to the individual elements of the audit, the questions in the “General Questions” section must be passed by the participant. Audit results are valid for 1 year.

7. What will I be audited against?

Audits are based on questions derived from the FDA guidance document. They are not intended to require certain activities, only to determine if a participant is adhering to generally accepted practices. Questions are separated into the following categories:

- General (including personnel hygiene and practices)
- Farm Review
- Field Harvesting and Field Packing Activities
- Packing House Facility
- Storage and Transportation
- Trace-back
- Food Security

The FDA guidance document identifies the following areas that participants should demonstrate control of in their operations to minimize microbial hazards in fresh fruits and vegetables:

- Water
- Manure and Municipal Bio-Solids
- Worker Health and Hygiene
- Sanitary Facilities
- Field Sanitation
- Packing Facility Sanitation
- Transportation
- Traceback



History of the Program:

- The New Jersey Department of Agriculture made the initial request to develop a GAP & GHP Audit Verification Program as a result of New Jersey growers and packers being asked by retailers to demonstrate their adherence with GAPs & GHPs.
- USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) responded favorably to this request and to a similar request from the Association of Fruit and Vegetable Inspection and Standardization Agencies (AFVISA), a group of State Program Managers who represent the interests of inspection programs at the State level.
- AMS, along with the States developed an audit-based verification program that attests to participants’ voluntary adherence to the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) “*Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables*” (FDA guidance document). Participants are audited against a checklist that demonstrates adherence with GAPs & GHPs.
- Primary users include fresh fruit and vegetable growers, packers, shippers, and others in the marketing chain.
- Passing audit results do not guarantee “safe” food. They do however, demonstrate that participants adhere to generally recognized Good Agricultural Practices & Good Handling Practices.

