



FOOD QUALITY ASSURANCE PROGRAM

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MDA Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Program for Fruit and Vegetable Producers

PURPOSE: Concerns with food safety and fresh fruits and vegetables have led wholesale buyers to require Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) audits and the federal government to include provisions that are similar to GAP programs in the Food Safety Modernization Act Produce Safety Rule. MDA offers a voluntary GAP program geared towards smaller and/or direct marketers to provide safe, wholesome fresh produce by covering the basic food safety requirements. This program may also be of assistance to larger farms and/or farms selling wholesale by providing a starting point for implementing a more comprehensive GAP food safety program. Many of the requirements are similar to those required by USDA GAP or private audit companies, however, the program is more focused on addressing the basic food safety risks with compliance options that are more suited to smaller farms. This program is funded by a USDA Specialty Crop Grant to minimize costs to producers.

Program Requirements:

Training

Mandatory for participation

Provided through University of Maryland and Maryland Department of Agriculture

Other training will be accepted such as food safety webinars and online classes as long as a certificate of completion is issued.

Self Assessment of Food Safety risks

University of Maryland self assessment

National GAP program self assessment

Written Food Safety Plan

Assistance with writing a plan can be obtained from a dedicated position at the University of Maryland, funded by a USDA Specialty Crop grant, that works one-on-one with producers on site to develop food safety practices, write plans and implement documentation of plan compliance. For assistance, please see the [GAP and FSMA Resources](#) document.

MDA GAP Auditors inspect to verify that the plan has been implemented

Recommendations for corrective actions/improvements are based on the inspection findings

Reinspect as necessary to verify corrective actions/improvements

For assistance, contact: Deanna Baldwin at address and phone number listed above.

Certification by MDA if inspection is passed

Basic Food Safety Plan Requirements:

Written plan that addresses:

Worker Hygiene

Disease

Clean Hands and Clothes

Restroom facilities

Smoking and eating

Cleanliness of contact surfaces

Bins, work surfaces, packaging, equipment

Post Harvest Sanitation

Waste

Manure use restrictions (application dates)

Pet, poultry and livestock access to fields and packing areas restrictions

Wildlife access to fields and packing areas – monitoring and preventive measures

Water

Microbial standards established as appropriate for intended use

Testing of water sources used for irrigation, pesticide application, post harvest required

Documentation that plan is followed such as logs and records of sanitary practices, such as water testing and treatment (if necessary), maintenance, and food safety trainings for workers.