



Program Details

Many producers are aware of “Good Agricultural Practices,” or GAP audits. The USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Specialty Crops Inspection Division (SCI) performs GAP audits, which are voluntary, third-party services that verify that farms are following industry-recognized food safety practices and recommendations from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

The GroupGAP Program enables growers to collectively address food safety concerns and become certified as a group. The program’s systematic approach to food safety includes several components that will increase retailers’ confidence in growers’ products. Small growers in the GroupGAP pilot program developed robust food safety systems. This includes working with food hubs and other grower groups to pool their resources to establish food safety best practices, lead food safety trainings, develop quality management systems, and pay for certification costs. In addition to regular audits from USDA inspectors, the groups also performed their own internal food safety inspections of their growers.

The pilot participants demonstrated an overall commitment to develop a culture of food safety and quality within the grower community. All of this was accomplished using a transparent process.

The GroupGAP Program will continue this momentum, creating new opportunities for the retailer community and the entire supply chain. Expanding the number of GAP-certified small farmers will help retailers meet the increasing demand for locally-sourced food. With the GAP Program set to be adjusted to support FSMA rules, retailers can be assured that their suppliers are FSMA-compliant. The program expansion could also increase the total number of growers in the supply chain who are GAP-certified, a win for the entire industry and American consumers.

GroupGAP Program participants are expected to do the following:

- Attend all of the following GroupGAP Farmer Trainings:
 - Developing a Farm Safety Plan: Friday, February 26, 1pm-3pm, Allen Market Place
 - Farm Safety Plan Reviews (Q+A): Friday, March 25, 1pm-3pm, Allen Market Place
 - GroupGAP training: Friday, May 6, 3pm-5pm, Allen Market Place
- Submit required documents and records by requested deadlines.
- Participate in a GAP Analysis site visit on my farm by an internal farm auditor.
- Participate in an internal farm audit and an unannounced audit of my farm by an internal farm auditor.
- Participate in an official audit and/or an unannounced audit of my farm by a USDA GAP auditor if my farm is one of those selected at random from the group.
- Attend Debriefing Meeting.
- Communicate & provide feedback in a timely manner to the GroupGAP Food Safety Team.
- Comply with food safety regulations including completing regularly scheduled monitoring tasks requiring an estimated 5-15 minutes daily (daily, weekly, monthly), performing scheduled water sampling, etc.
- Share the cost of the audits of those selected by USDA to represent the group, as well as the group’s QMS audit (estimated costs may reach \$500.00).
- Agree to make necessary food safety upgrades and/or accommodation at my farm (at my own expense) in order to meet GroupGAP standards.
- Make a reasonable effort to become certified under USDA GroupGAP during the 2016 growing season.
- Share knowledge and implementation of food safety practices with other farmers in the group.

What you can expect from the Program:

- Technical assistance in any of the above items.
- Access to templates, forms, and other documents to aid in GroupGAP compliance.
- Collaboration and knowledge sharing with other farmers in the group.
- Assistance in communicating with buyers regarding GroupGAP certification.

GroupGAP Application

Thanks for your interest in GroupGAP Certification! Please complete this application and submit to Allen Market Place Exchange Manager: exchange@allenneighborhoodcenter.org, 517-999-3923.

Mailing address: Allen Neighborhood Center, 1611 E. Kalamazoo St. Lansing, MI 48912

Deadline: Friday, February 12.

Name: _____

Farm Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ Zip Code: _____

Email: _____

How long have you been farming? _____ years _____ months

How many acres of specialty crop do you grow? _____ acres

Have you had food safety training? Yes or No

If yes, please describe:

Do you currently have a farm food safety plan? Yes or No

If yes, please highlight what is included, generally:

If no, are you willing to develop one? Yes or No

If yes, why?

Do you see a demand for food safety certification in your current market(s)? Yes or No

Do you anticipate you will need food safety certification in the next few years? Yes or No

Where are you currently selling your produce?

What crops are you interested in certifying? _____

Do you already have a buyer requesting food safety certification? Yes or No

Do you intend to expand where you are selling your product to other institutional markets?

Yes or No

Do you think GroupGAP will provide you additional outlets to sell your product? Yes or No

Do you have access to a computer and the internet? Yes or No

If yes, are you comfortable communicating via email? Yes or No

Where do you see your business selling products in five years? Please describe.

