

Food Safety Audit Verification Program for Fresh Produce

The South Carolina Department of Agriculture “Food Safety Audit Verification Program” certifies that fruit and vegetable grower/packers meet new food safety guidelines. This program is an audit based verification service that reviews participants’ adherence to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s “Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables”, Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP).

Participation by grower/packers is voluntary. The program is offered through the SCDA Fruit and Vegetable Grading and Inspection Service in cooperation with the USDA-Federal-State Inspection Service.

The Fresh Produce Audit Verification Program is being initiated as a result of retailers and other buyers asking South Carolina grower/packers to demonstrate adherence with “food safety” practices. Grower/packers who participate and pass the audit receive certification that they meet GAP standards.

The audit program is a fee-based service. Participants are charged a fee based on the time required to conduct the audit and travel expenses of the auditor.

Grower/packers who successfully pass the Good Agricultural Practices audit receive a USDA/SCDA certificate and are listed on USDA and SCDA websites.

For more information or to request a food safety audit, contact Jack Dantzler, Director of Grading and Inspections, Lead GAP Auditor, at jack.dantzler@ams.usda.gov.

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 SC Fruit and Vegetable Grading and Inspection Service at 803-737-4597.

2. 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 the USDA and SCDA websites and are accessible by you and your customers. In addition, organizations with passing results are acknowledged with an official USDA certificate verifying that the company passed the applicable elements of the audit.

3. Who performs the audits?

Audits are performed by trained Federal-State Inspection Service staff. Auditors are licensed fresh fruit and vegetable inspectors, Audit Verification Program. The USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service, has worked with the states to develop the program and with AMS’ involvement and oversight to ensure program integrity, uniformity, and consistency nationwide.

4. What is a “passing score” on a GAP/GHP audit?

A score of eighty percent (80%) per element is passing. However, a higher “passing” percentage may be applied based on the customer’s 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. Harmonized GAP/GHP audits are not scored using a percent based system.



5. 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

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
- Packing Facility Sanitation
- Transportation
- Trace-back

6. Is additional information available on the GAP audit checklist and scoresheet?

The audit checklist and scoresheet are available at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/fv/fpbgapghp.htm>.

7. Is additional information available on GAP or food safety training?

The SCDA F & V Inspection and Grading Service has additional information and GAP training for producers. Matthew Wannamaker, SCDA F & V Food Safety Coordinator is available for GAP Preparation and Training.

Contact Info: mwannamaker@scda.sc.gov
803-737-4373 (ofc) 803-609-5388 (cell)

The Clemson University Cooperative Extension also has information available on “Good Agricultural Practices” and developing a food safety program.

Program Benefits

- Independent third-party audits are performed by 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 throughout South Carolina, including shipping and packing facilities.
- Passing audit results are posted on USDA and SCDA websites and accessible to participants and their customers.
- Successful participants receive a USDA certificate that is suitable for display.

Sample Certificate

Issued for Passing Audit Verification Results

United States Department of Agriculture

*This is to verify that The John Doe Company of Any town of USA
has successfully passed the applicable elements of the*

USDA Federal-State Audit Program

**GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES AND
GOOD HANDLING PRACTICES**

Valid Through
Sample Only

SAMPLE CERTIFICATE
United States Department of Agriculture

Passing audit verification results does 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 when the audit was performed. This is a voluntary program established to attest to the participant's 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.

Interested in the Audit Verification Program?

For more information, visit the:

South Carolina Department of Agriculture
www.agriculture.sc.gov

USDA Grading, Certification, and Verification
<http://www.ams.usda.gov/amsvl0/fv>

To schedule a GAP Audit, contact:

Jack Dantzler
Director of Inspections and Grading
Lead GAP Auditor
jack.dantzler@ams.usda.gov

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Columbia, SC 29211

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FOOD SAFETY

Audit Verification Program *for* Fresh Produce



GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES GOOD HANDLING PRACTICES

South Carolina Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Services Division
Cooperative Grading Service