USDA 3rd Party Audit Verification Programs

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Good Agricultural Practices &
Good Handling Practices Program

ASQ- Certified Quality Auditor
USDA Food Safety Inspection Service FSIS has regulatory authority over meat, poultry and eggs.

FDA has regulatory authority over all other foods including fruits and vegetables.

USDA Ag Marketing Service has no regulatory authority, and is a totally user fee based service to the industry.
USDA AMS

- Agricultural Marketing Service-authorized by Secretary of Agriculture to provide inspection and grading services.
  - Develops US Grade Standards
  - Cooperative Agreements with 48 states
    - License state inspectors to inspect on USDA behalf
What is a 3rd Party Audit?

- Can simply be defined as a neutral party mutually chosen by 2 companies to audit a defined process or procedure.
3rd Party Audits

- Auditors will not give advice on how to answer a question, but can refer you to the experts. i.e. Extension Service, researchers, 1st party requirements, etc…

- A grower/owner knows best their operation, not an auditor, therefore food safety plan needs to be the grower/owners not the auditors.
3rd Party Audits

- ISO International Standards Organization
- ISO 9000
- ISO 22000
What is a 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Audit?

- There are many companies that offer 3<sup>rd</sup> party audits
- Primus Labs
- AIB
- Many others
- USDA
In many cases USDA is already on the farm or in the packing facility providing impartial, unbiased, 3rd party grading services.

USDA graders are already familiar with fruits/vegetables/nuts.

Highly professional, well trained auditors.

Some foreign governments and the US Government will only accept USDA audits.

Commodity Procurement Domestic Feeding Programs require a USDA audit.
USDA Audit Verification Programs

- Partners in Quality
- Branch Internal Quality Management System
- Customer Assisted Inspection Program
- Identity Preservation Program
- Good Agricultural Practices/Good Handling Practices
USDA AMS Auditor Requirements

- Licensed Fruit and Vegetable Inspector
- 40 hours of area specific classroom training
- 40 hours of ISO 9001:2000 Lead Auditor training
- Required to perform 5 audits in an audit team
- Minimum 1 audit as lead auditor
Why USDA?

Our state cooperators were receiving requests from Industry to provide this type of service.
At the request of the NJ Department of Agriculture in 1999, the USDA started the development of a GAP/GHP program. 2001, the current audit verification program was implemented. Completely voluntary program.
GAP/ GHP

- GAP/GHP Program development was a joint effort
  - Fresh Products Branch
  - AFVISA- State Inspection Agencies
  - National GAPS Program

Based on FDA Guidance Document
There are 7 sections to the GAP/GHP matrix. The auditee can choose which sections are applicable to their facility and be audited on those sections.

(May also depend on the 1\textsuperscript{st} party requirements.)
GAP/GHP

- Starting in 2002-2003, FDA had notified several sectors of fruit and vegetable industry that they need to improve on food safety voluntarily, and if they didn’t FDA will put regulations in place.
- Melon, Tomato and Lettuce growers in particular.
- Joint effort underway with industry, university and trade groups to develop Guidance Documents to assist growers with GAP/GHP practices.
Current Activities

- As a result of the spinach outbreak in fall of 2006, California Department of Agriculture introduced a Marketing Agreement.
- Signatories of the Agreement would agree to abide by the regulations outlined in the Agreement.
- Part of the Agreement would be any supplier to these facilities would be required to meet stringent GAP requirements.
Current Activities

- In Fall of 2006, several major retail chains sent a letter to the major trade organizations demanding that growers adhere to GAP principles.
- January 2007 - GAP is on agenda of the Fruit and Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee, which recommends action items to the Secretary of Agriculture.
- January 2007 - Letter from AFDO recommending partnership with AMS.
Current Activities

- Review of our current audit checklist for GAP/GHP
  - AFVISA
  - Industry
  - National GAPS Program
  - USDA Agricultural Research Service Food Safety Unit
Current Activities

- Working with Processed Products Branch Qualified through Verification (QTV) program
- Tiered GAP system- multiple audits levels
- Outreach activities
- Potential National Marketing Order for GAPs
- Auditor Training
- Food Chain
Remember:

- The foundation of the GAPs questions are changing as new research is being conducted.
- GAP checklist is a living, breathing document. What works today may not work tomorrow.