

GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES (GAP)

In October 1998 the U.S Department of Agriculture and the U.S Food & Drug Administration, in response to food safety concerns, issued guidance documents for the fresh fruit & vegetable industry that provide guidance for reducing the possibility of contamination of fresh produce by microbial organisms. Shortly thereafter, many wholesale produce companies began to seek assurances that fresh produce suppliers were following the Good Agricultural Practices that these documents recommended.

In January 2002, the USDA implemented the USDA GAP & GHP audit verification program.

This program is an audit based service. It is provided in order to assess a company's efforts to minimize the possibility of contamination of fresh fruits and vegetables by microbial contamination. Audits are intended to occur on a scheduled basis at a minimum of once a year. The responsibility for continuing product safety and the continued observance of practices leading to a minimized possibility of microbial contamination rests with the company.

Auditors for this program are licensed by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service [AMS], Fresh Products Branch.

The mission of this program is to provide a uniformly applied national program for the U.S fresh produce industry for purposes of verification with GAP & GHP.

For details and an application form for GAP, contact Massachusetts Department of Agriculture:
http://www.mass.gov/agr/farmproducts/gap_ghp.htm