

# Navigating Farm Produce Safety Programs

As a buyer, you rely on your suppliers to provide safe high quality food. Farms have various options for demonstrating their safe produce production and handling practices.

## Farm Produce Safety Plan or Manual

A farm produce safety plan or manual is a written document that contains the farm's policies and procedures for minimizing risks to produce safety in their operation.

A farm produce safety plan or manual is a requirement of some, but not all, produce safety assurance programs.

## Michigan Produce Safety Risk Assessment

The Michigan Produce Safety Risk Assessment Program is a free program offered through local Conservation Districts. Trained Produce Safety Technicians assist farms in completing a risk assessment and on-site farm review. Farms who complete the program can receive a certificate of completion.

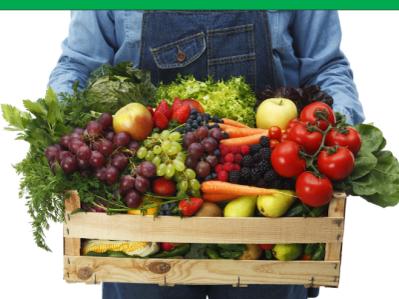
Michigan's Produce Safety Risk Assessment is aligned with the FSMA Produce Safety Rule requirements, but is small farm scale-appropriate to encourage more farmer adoption of cost-effective produce safety management practices that can be implemented and maintained by producers not currently seeking a certified produce safety audit

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### Michigan's Produce Safety Risk Assessment

For fruit and vegetable producers

A voluntary and confidential produce safety program that provides confidence that inspected practices are consistent with the current U.S. Food and Drug Administration Produce Safety Rule and provides recognition with a certificate of program completion.



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Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)

The FSMA Produce Safety Rule is the first federal regulation of produce. The rule requires farms covered by the rule to comply with produce safety practices and undergo periodic government inspections.

# Produce Safety Certifications and Audits

The following programs are all voluntary produce safety certification and audit programs that are generally pursued upon request or requirement from a buyer.

## USDA GAP Certification

GAP stands for "Good Agricultural Practices". USDA offers a number of audit services to certify that farms are following the industry best practices for produce safety. Farms have the option to achieve USDA GAP Certification through an individual or group process. The group process is referred to as USDA GroupGAP, but the audit standards are exactly the same for both processes. In Michigan, USDA GroupGAP audits are coordinated through the [Michigan GroupGAP Network](#).



### USDA GAP & GHP Certification

For this certification, USDA maintains a standard checklist of Good Agricultural Practices and Good Handling Practices for produce. Points are assigned to each practice. No partial points are awarded; the farm either earns all the points for a particular practice or receives a zero, unless the practice does not apply (N/A). In order to pass each scope of the audit, farms must earn 80% of the points possible, subtracting the number of N/A points.

For more information [view the USDA GAP & GHP Checklist](#).

### USDA Produce GAPs Harmonized Certification (aka. Harmonized GAP)

The Produce GAPs Harmonized standards are the result of an industry effort to create a single audit program to reduce the need for farms to undergo multiple produce safety audits to serve the needs of different buyers. The goal of the harmonized certification standard is "One audit by any credible third party, acceptable to all buyers." The Harmonized standard itself does not include a scoring system. Therefore, each auditing organization determines their own scoring approach, for example points-based, pass/fail, etc. When USDA performs a Harmonized GAP audit, each practice is scored as "Compliant," "Corrective Action Needed," "Immediate Action Required," or "N/A".

For more information [view the USDA Harmonized GAP Checklist](#).

### USDA Harmonized GAP Plus+ Certification

USDA also offers a Harmonized GAP Plus+ Certification that meets GFSI technical equivalence requirements (refer to GFSI section later in this document).

For more information [view the USDA Harmonized GAP Plus+ Checklist](#).

Other USDA GAP certifications include commodity-specific USDA GAP Certifications for mushrooms, leafy greens, tomatoes and cantaloupes. These audits would typically be reserved for large operations that specialize in those commodities.

# Third Party GAP Certifications

Third parties may audit to the Produce Harmonized GAPS Standard or any other standard. Several third parties maintain their own GAP standards. Examples of third parties offering GAP audit services include Primus, SCS Global Services and NSF.

## Global G.A.P.

Global G.A.P. maintains over 40 standards for certifying crops, livestock and aquaculture (fish farming). Among these, they offer audits for the Produce Harmonized GAPS standard.

## SQF (Safe Quality Food)

The SQF Food Safety Code for Primary Production is the standard used for SQF certification of farms. SQF is based on the principles and guidelines of HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points). SQF maintains a standard checklist for the audit based on the Code. Individual aspects of the audit is rated either 0, 1, 10, or 50 with 0 indicating "meets criteria" and 50 indicating a "critical non-conformity". Scores are calculated by subtracting the total aspect scores from 100. Certificates are issued to farms that score between 85 and 100.

For more information [view the SQF Food Safety Code for Primary Production Checklist.](#)

## GFSI (Global Food Safety Initiative)

GFSI is not a produce safety standard but rather a recognition of produce safety certifications that meet a set of benchmarks. The idea is to determine which certifications are equivalent while leaving producers choice.

GFSI recognized third party produce safety certifications include: PrimusGFS, SQF and Global G.A.P. For more information [view the GFSI Benchmarking Standards.](#)

Technical Equivalence is a category of the GFSI benchmarking process dedicated to government-owned standards, including USDA Harmonized GAP Plus+.

For more information [view the GFSI Technical Equivalence Standards.](#)

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