Good Agricultural Practices and Good Handling Practices (GAPs)
GAPs Certification is...

- ...a quality assurance tool that works in all directions
  - A way for farms to communicate the safety of their product to their buyers
...a quality assurance tool that works in all directions
  ◦ A way for distributors to know that the farms they are buying from are reducing contamination risks
GAPs Certification is...

- ...a quality assurance tool that works in all directions
  - A way for consumers to know that the food they’re buying is protected from contamination
What is GAPs?

- Administered by USDA–Agricultural Marketing Service Program
- A Voluntary Third-Party Audit Verification Program
  - This third-party is typically the USDA-AMS, but some state agencies, including MDA (in SW MO), conduct audits
- Based on the FDA’s “Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables”
Parts of GAPs

- General Questions
- Part 1 – Farm Review
- Part 2 – Field Harvest and Packing
- Part 3 – House Packing
- Part 4 – Storage and Transportation
- Part 5 – Wholesale Distribution Center/Terminal Warehouses
All parties must complete the General Questions, but may choose which “part(s)” they want to be audited on.

Most farms seek certification on Parts 1 and 2
  - If they have a packing house, Part 3
General Questions

- Implementation of a Food Safety Program
  - Requires a Food Safety Plan
  - Requires a designated person to implement it

- Traceability
  - Requires a documented traceability program
  - Must have performed a “mock recall” of a product

- Worker Health & Hygiene
  - All staff must be trained in proper hygiene practices
Part 1 – Farm Review

- Multiple Questions covering:
  - Water Source and Use
  - Identification of Possible Water-Related Risks
  - Sewage Treatment
  - Animals/Wildlife/Livestock
  - Manure and Municipal Biosolids
    - Deals with the use of manure and compost
  - Land use history
  - Traceability
Part 2 – Field Harvest and Packing

- Field Sanitation and Hygiene
  - Pre-harvest assessment of crop production area
  - Toilet facility availability
  - Response procedure defined for events of contamination

- Field Harvesting and Transportation
  - Harvesting containers are cleaned and sanitized prior to use
  - Harvesting tools and equipment are kept clean
  - Policies and procedures have been defined for responding to contamination events
  - Product is uniquely identified to enable traceability
Part 3 – House Packing Facility

- **Receiving**
  - Storage and Handling procedures are in place

- **Washing/Packing Line**
  - Water quality and temperature are documented
  - Contact surfaces are sanitized regularly

- **Packing House Worker Health & Hygiene**
  - Facilities are clean
  - Hair nets/bear nets are worn

- **Packing House General Housekeeping**
  - Several structural guidelines

- **Pest Control**
  - Records are kept

- **Traceability**
  - Records are kept
Total points earned for PART 2 = ____.

Total Possible = 185 The total number of points possible for this section.
Subtract “N/A” - ____ Enter the additive number of N/A points (+ points) here.
Adjusted Total = ____ Subtract the N/A points from the Total possible points.
X .8 (80%) Multiply the Adjusted Total by .8 and show it as the Passing Score.
Passing Score ____ (please circle one) Pass / Fail

This program is intended to assess a participant’s efforts to minimize the risk of contamination of fresh fruits, vegetables, nuts and miscellaneous commodities by microbial pathogens based on the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s “Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables.”
Automatic “Unsatisfactory”

- Some observations by the auditor may result in an automatic “fail” in the certification process
  - An “immediate” food safety risk is present
    - As interpreted by the auditor
  - Presence or evidence of rodents, excessive amounts of insects, etc. in the production area
  - Employee practices (personal or hygienic) that may jeopardize food safety
  - Falsification of records
  - Absence of a Food Safety Plan and Plan Coordinator
Implementing a Food Safety Plan

What does it take?

- Total Management Commitment
- Produce Safety Assurance
- Hazard Identification
- Biological, Physical, & Chemical
- Education & Training

Good Agricultural Practices
Implementing a Food Safety Plan

Preparation of documentation, record-keeping, overall implementation of the food safety plan

Total Management Commitment

Produce Safety Assurance

Hazard Identification

Biological, Physical, & Chemical

Education & Training

Good Agricultural Practices
Implementing a Food Safety Plan

Total Management Commitment

Create awareness and “buy-in” from employees and visitors

Hazard Identification

Biological, Physical, & Chemical

Produce Safety Assurance

Education & Training

Good Agricultural Practices
Develop an awareness of possible threats and put “Standard Operating Procedures” in place.

Implementing a Food Safety Plan

- Total Management Commitment
- Produce Safety Assurance
- Education & Training
- Hazard Identification
- Biological, Physical, & Chemical

Good Agricultural Practices
Producers who seek, acquire, and maintain GAPs certification may be a step ahead
  ◦ Some sort of food safety plan will likely be required of most producers in the future

Open doors to markets that require GAPs

Assurance that the products you bring to market are not contaminated
Who Needs GAPs

- Producers with certain wholesale markets
- Producers who’s markets require food safety certification
- Producers who anticipate that their markets will soon require it
Steps in Becoming Certified

- Develop a farm food safety plan
  - There are resources to assist with this
- Name an individual to implement the plan
- Develop a notebook with documents necessary to log required activities
- Work through the USDA–AMS Audit Verification Checklist to make sure that you’re addressing all needs
Steps in Becoming Certified

- This process can seem overwhelming, and it can take considerable time to prepare yourself for your first audit.
- Because the audit itself must take place while the crop is in the ground/during harvest, winter is the best time to prepare for it.
- Extension specialists across the state are happy to assist with all aspects of the process.
Studying Up…

- **USDA–AMS Fresh Produce Audit Verification Program Homepage:**
  - Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables
  - USDA Audit Checklist

- **National GAPs Program:**
  - [http://www.gaps.cornell.edu](http://www.gaps.cornell.edu)
    - Growers’ Guides
    - Workbooks
    - Training Videos for Employees
    - Signs for Posting around the Facilities
Questions?

Thank You

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