



# **PRODUCE GAPs HARMONIZED FOOD SAFETY STANDARDS for FIELD OPERATIONS and HARVESTING and for POST-HARVEST OPERATIONS**

## **A PRIMER FOR GROWERS**

Why get certified with the Produce GAPs Harmonized Food Safety Standards?

Supermarkets, retailers, food service business and consumers everywhere are looking for fresh produce commodities that are produced minimizing food safety risks. Under the Produce GAPs Harmonization Initiative, an all-industry effort including many key stakeholders, the "one audit by any credible third party, acceptable to all buyers" concept was developed. The Produce GAPs Harmonized Food Safety Standards will bring market recognition to your operation and readiness to meet FDA's Food Safety Modernization Act rules.

Producers of fresh produce of any size of on-farm operation in the U.S. may be certified.

### **WHAT THE STANDARDS COVER**

The standards cover on-farm and post-harvest activities with main sections addressing the following issues:

**FIELD OPERATIONS AND HARVESTING.-** Management Responsibility / Food Safety Plan / Documentation and Recordkeeping / Worker Education and Training / Microbiological Sampling and Testing / Traceability / Recall Program / Corrective Actions / Self-Audits / Field Production / Field History and Assessment / Worker Health, Hygiene and Toilet, Handwashing Facilities / Agriculture Chemicals, Plant Protection Products / Agricultural Water / Animal Control / Soil Amendments / Vehicles, Equipment, Tools, and Utensils / Preharvest Assessment / Water and Ice / Containers, Bins, and Packing Materials / Field Packing and Handling / Postharvest Handling and Storage / Transportation (field to storage or packinghouse) Equipment Sanitation and Maintenance.

**POST-HARVEST OPERATIONS.-** Management Responsibility / Food Safety Plan or Risk Assessment / Raw Material Sourcing / Documentation and Recordkeeping / Worker Education and Training / Traceability / Recall Program / Corrective Actions / Self-Audits / Agriculture Chemicals, Plant Protection Products / Water and Ice / Containers and Bins / Facility, Equipment and Tools / Storage / Waste Material / Outside Grounds / Glass Control / Leaks and Lubrication / Equipment and Utensil Construction / Temporary Repairs / Worker Health, Hygiene and Toilet, Hand Washing Facilities / Temperature Control / Packing and Handling / Pest and Animal Control / Sampling and Testing / Packinghouse / Transportation (to customer) Temperature Control and Equipment Sanitation and Maintenance.

This document is not intended as a substitute for a complete reading and understanding of the standards that may be downloaded free of charge at <http://www.qcsinfo.org>

**QCS is an ISO Guide 65 accredited certifying agent. QCS cannot provide consultation services to our clients, other than to ensure compliance with the Produce GAPs Harmonized Food Safety Standards.**

#### **For additional information contact:**

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## **WHAT TO EXPECT (a sample of key points)**

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- Records demonstrating compliance must be available for no less than 90 days for an initial inspection and maintained for two or more years thereafter. Accurate record keeping is a very important tool to demonstrate compliance with the standard.
- A food safety policy and food safety plan that covers the operation.
- A self-audit or internal audit to check compliance with the standard is required annually.
- For an initial audit the auditor must audit all your production processes including harvesting of the product(s) seeking certification.
- Training of workers in food safety procedures, sanitation and personal hygiene is required.
- A traceability program must be established and a trace back and trace forward exercise performed annually.
- Recall procedures must be in place and tested annually.
- The operation will have verification that the number of toilet facilities and their location relative to employees meets the more stringent of federal, state, or local regulations.
- Agricultural chemicals must be registered for such use as required by prevailing regulation, and used in accordance with label directions.
- A water management plan and water testing procedure must be available.