



Removing **Barriers** to **USDA GAP Programs**

NASDA
FOUNDATION

STAKEHOLDER **TOOLKIT**

December 2022

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INTRODUCTION

This toolkit was designed by the NASDA Foundation to address barriers to USDA GAP Audit Programs.

WHY: The NASDA Foundation partnered with the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to garner more participation in USDA Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Programs. Beginning in 2019, researchers at Michigan State University entered into a cooperative agreement with USDA AMS to explore "buyer acceptance" to GAP and identified barriers encountered by growers, educators, buyers, auditors, and other technical assistance providers to the USDA GAP programs. The findings from that project served as the starting point for the NASDA Foundation to create toolkits to address and clarify those known barriers. The Grower and Stakeholder toolkits were developed as resources for growers and our partners. The Grower toolkit will aid growers in determining their GAP needs, provides important contacts, and highlights available training and mentoring resources available. The toolkits are to be implemented via education and outreach to socially disadvantaged and underserved growers.

WHO: Stakeholders include state departments of agriculture (SDA), cooperative extension, and non-government organizations (NGO). We propose a partnership model where these three organizations serve the small, socially disadvantaged, and underserved growers in their states. The NASDA Foundation believes that by partnering with cooperative extension and the NGOs who have already established connections with growers, states can build beneficial relationships with growers to demonstrate their commitment to grower prosperity and well-being. There is a need to advance equity and diversity to local food markets by engaging with socially disadvantaged producers on USDA GAP Programs.

WHAT: This Stakeholder Toolkit was created to help develop partnerships between state departments of agriculture, cooperative extension, and non-government organizations with the goal of presenting effective GAP education and outreach to socially disadvantaged and underserved growers. USDA defines **socially disadvantaged** and historically underserved growers as farmers who have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudices because of their identities as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities. Those groups include African Americans, American Indians or Alaskan natives, Hispanics, and Asians or Pacific Islanders. This toolkit is a guide to addressing barriers to USDA GAP audit programs and is intended to complement the Grower Toolkit. The two documents provide an overview of GAP programs, funding opportunities, and marketing and technical assistance resources.



PARTNERSHIPS

STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS

Organizations form partnerships to better serve their constituents and, to better serve their communities, partnerships pool resources, like funding, technical support, business development, and mentorship. Helping organizations form those connections is essential to ensuring the right partnerships are being made to provide outreach and education on USDA GAP Programs for all growers.

State departments of agriculture (SDA) play a vital role in connecting with farmers and ranchers. SDAs can often help growers with business development, marketing, regulatory components and financial aid. Socially disadvantaged and underserved small growers benefit from well-established relationships with their state departments of agriculture. However, these relationships may not always exist. But cooperative extension and NGOs often have trusted and established relationships with growers they provide technical assistance to and on a daily basis.



The best method for SDAs to establish or continue to foster relationships with small disadvantaged and underserved growers is through relationships with those entrusted organizations who partner with growers on a day-to-day basis. With this model, three organizations working together will aid socially disadvantaged and underserved growers more effectively. The model also allows SDAs the opportunity to build valuable relationships with growers.

This model was based on two successful partnerships with **1890** institutions. The first was from the joint effort between the Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services and Virginia State University cooperative extension to aid their small producers pursue GAP certification. The second was from a GAP audit in Georgia where Fort Valley extension and McIntosh S.E.E.D., an NGO, were providing both technical and financial assistance to the grower. The abilities of partners may vary by state and organization; so careful selection of partners is key to success.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) can be an outstanding foundational tool for forming a partnership. A MOU [template](#) has been provided to outline the generic roles and responsibilities of the parties involved. The MOU can determine how each partner can contribute to education and outreach for USDA GAP Programs. Education and outreach will be dependent on the resources and abilities available.

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The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) is aware that black and brown farmers of Virginia are underserved and operate at a disadvantage when compared to others. VDACS wanted to assist the identified farmers and help them succeed. The natural partner for this was Virginia State University (VSU) through their Small Farm Outreach Program. As a result, VDACS and VSU entered into a formal MOU to begin a new, added partnership to focus specifically on assisting these farmers. VSU has existing relationships with these farmers and are trusted by these farmers so VDACS wanted to build upon those relationships to make sure that these farmers were aware of the many programs and services that VDACS and other agencies have that are available to farmers. Additionally, VDACS is working through their VA Grown marketing program to make resources for these farmers. **“The MOU is just the beginning, but together we can make a difference in this important, but often overlooked group of farmers.”**



Rob Davenport, Director, *VDACS Division of Marketing and Development.*





It's not difficult to make the most of limited time and maximize resources, when the organizing partners are focused on the common goal – **inform and benefit the growers.**"

Damali Wynter, Assistant Commissioner, *NY State Department of Agriculture & Markets.*



ASSESSING RELATIONSHIPS

An Organizational Readiness Assessment (ORA) tool can serve as a helpful guide for assessing your organization's readiness for partnering, defining your goals, and identifying prospective partners.

Recommended data collection, analyses and interpretation: There are 10 items that should be addressed through the ORA. The items are designed to be an organizational self-assessment of key willingness and capacity to engage in a partnership. For each item members of your organization are to consider, discuss and agree on the current readiness of your organization to partner with a specific person, group, or other organization. The items are grouped as follows: **A- Organizational Importance, B- Organizational Negotiation,** and **C- Organizational Responsibility.** Each item is to be scored as YES (checked or '1') or NO (unchecked or '0') with a score range of A 0-2, B 0-4, and C 0-4. A simple majority score overall and within each group indicates your group level of readiness.

Assess your own readiness for partnering:

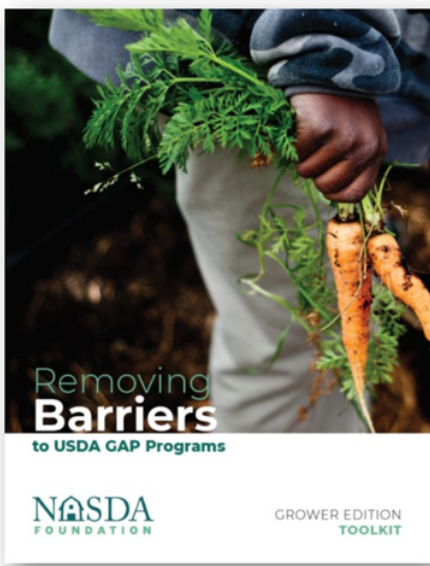
- We are willing to model the principles and values behind partnering. (C)
- We are open to learning new skills and behaviors such as decision-making and teamwork. (B)
- We will listen to others and work toward partnering communications. (B)
- We are open to people who have ideas that we might not agree with. (B)
- We are willing to check our own agenda and to do what is best for the partnership. (B)
- We are ready to identify common goals and objectives. (C)
- We have a strong group of people to bring to this partnership. (A)
- We understand what we can bring to this partnership. (A)
- We agree to be a partner and to learn our roles and responsibilities. (C)
- We agree to come with a sense of humor. (C)

THE GROWER TOOLKIT

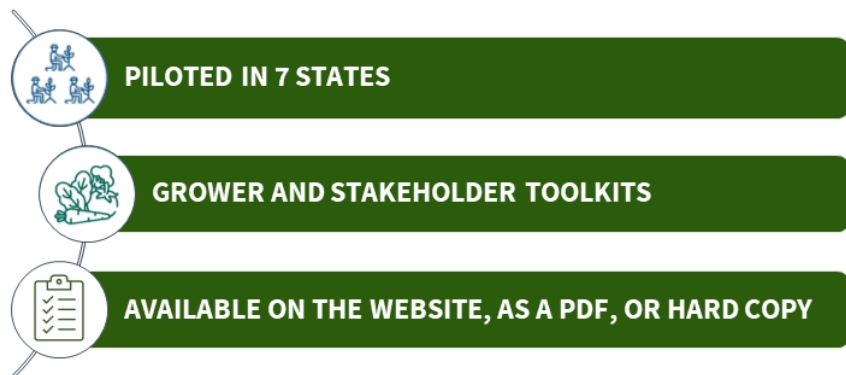
The Grower Toolkit was designed as a resource for growers about USDA GAP Programs and is intended to be presented to the grower through the education and outreach efforts conducted by state departments of agriculture, cooperative extension, or non-government organizations. The purpose of the toolkit is to address barriers identified that impact participation in USDA GAP certification programs, especially by socially disadvantaged and historically underserved growers.

USDA Agricultural Marketing Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Removing Barriers to USDA GAP Programs



The toolkit was designed for USDA GAP Audit Programs, specifically GroupGAP. It provides important contacts, highlights available training and mentoring resources, defines key terms, and addresses misconceptions to clarify the details of GAP certification.



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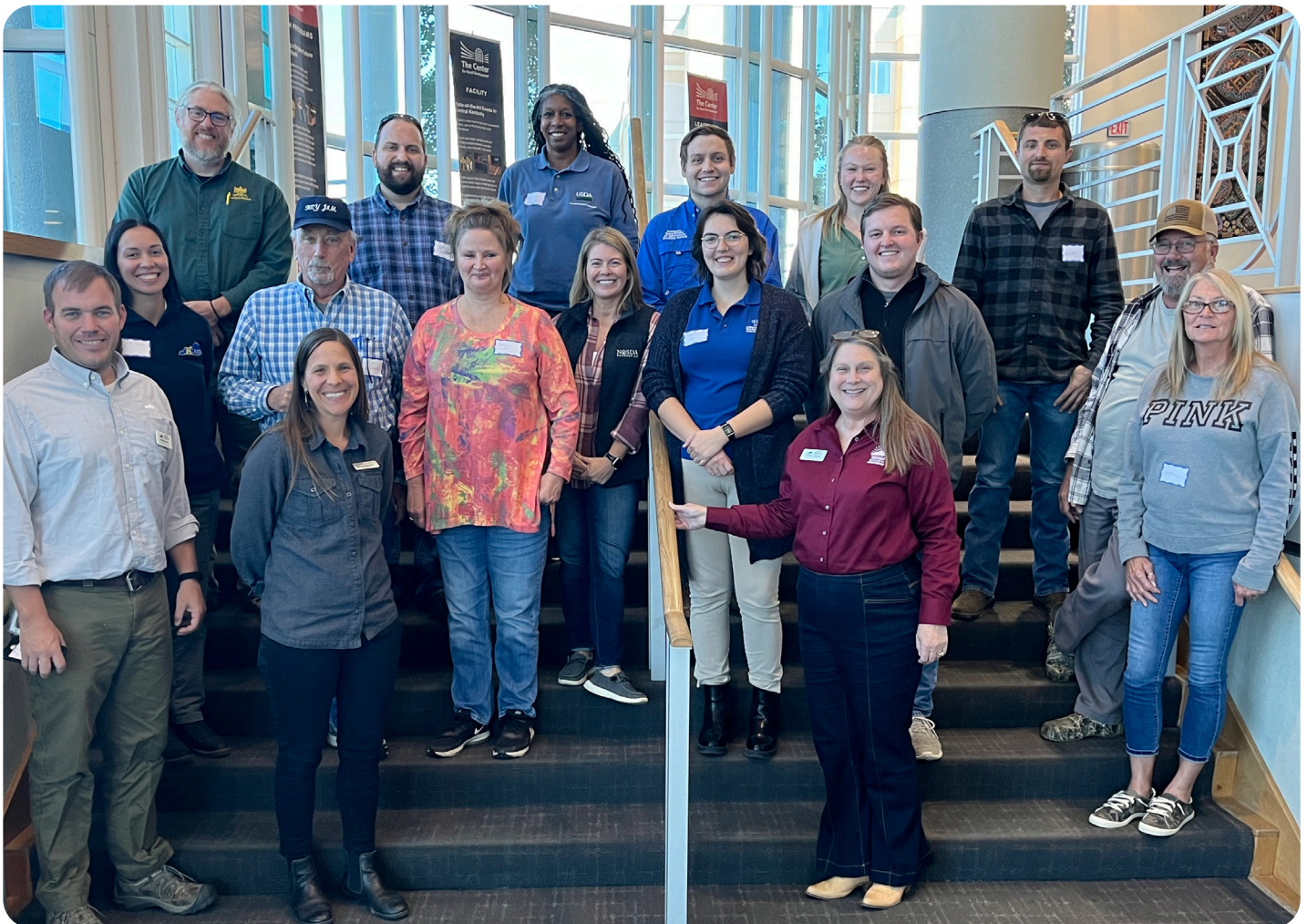
“The Grower and Stakeholder GAP Toolkit and the pilot informational session spearheaded by the NASDA Foundation will address a long-standing unmet need to bridge the knowledge and awareness gap on adopting GAP programs by socially disadvantaged farmers. Our pilot program in Chicago was a success. **It established a new avenue of engaging minority farming communities and created significant interest in the participants.**”



Pratik Banerjee, Associate Professor of Food Safety, Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition, College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

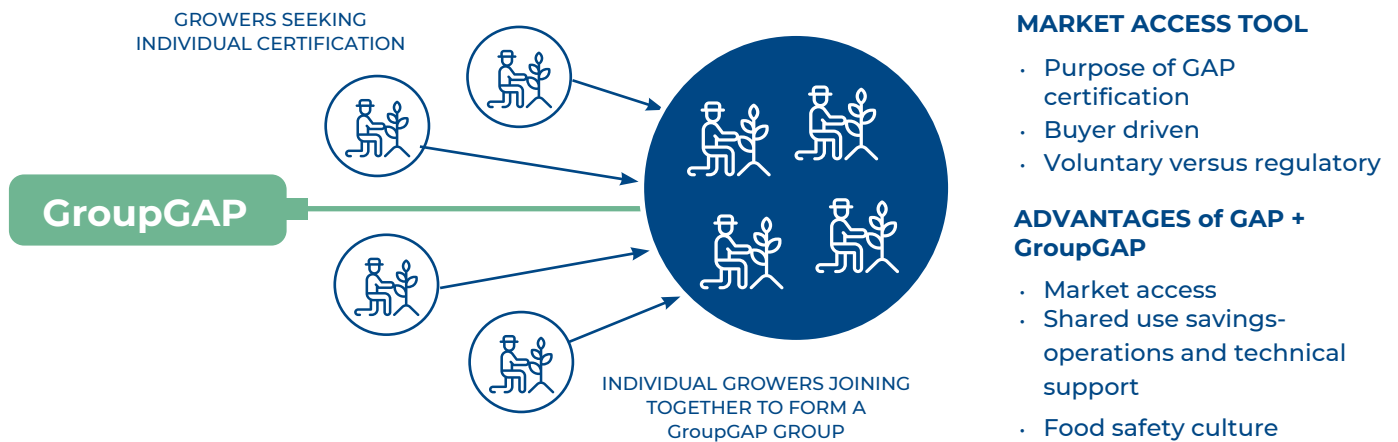
Consumers are demanding to know more about food safety practices than ever before, and many growers and handlers are now being required to demonstrate a commitment to food safety through third-party audits, known as GAP certification. By incorporating good agricultural practices on their farms, growers can mitigate food safety risks while working to expand their business and access new markets. Although the USDA GAP audit is part of a voluntary program and does not have a regulatory function, it may help farms prepare for potential regulation from the Food Safety Modernization Act.

Therefore, growers interested in pursuing GAP certification may be asking themselves questions about how it will benefit their farm, where they go to start the process, what they do first, and who can help them. The grower toolkit provides the information that will walk growers through addressing these questions and guide you as a stakeholder to assist them. It defines the GAP standards and audit options, including GroupGAP, provides key information to clarify the purpose and value of GAP certification, breaks down audit costs and variables, addresses misconceptions, provides important contacts, and highlights available technical assistance training and resources. It specifically addresses programs and certification under USDA authority; it does not address private third-party audit entities.



Somerset, Kentucky Grower Meeting, October 2022

THE GAP AUDIT PROGRAM



The main purpose of GAP certification is that it serves as a **market access tool** for growers. Certification allows growers to demonstrate that they are producing and handling food in a safe manner to reduce the risk of foodborne illness originating from their farm and reducing their chances of economic loss. It is a buyer driven program, meaning that the buyer wants to source products from growers who have some form of food safety certification.

Since it is also a voluntary program, there are associated costs. To show the value of certification, it is important to be able to explain how GAP certification can benefit growers, as well as help them achieve certification.

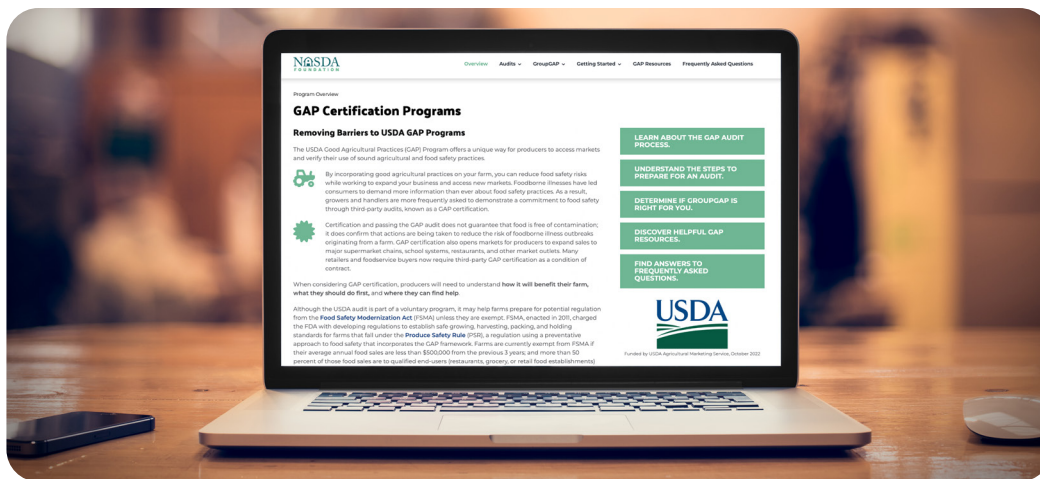
The advantages of GAP or GroupGAP certification are that:

- It makes food safety certification accessible for small producers and opens new doors to **larger, more stable and more profitable markets**. Certified growers have opportunities to distribute to local markets, such as colleges/universities, community organizations, corporate cafeterias, early childcare, eldercare facilities, hospitals, school districts/school food authorities, restaurants, retailers, prisons, and food distributors.
- It allows for cost and labor savings. Growers who utilize the same bins, boxes or other production equipment can facilitate bulk purchasing of these items, and standardized forms can be shared.
- It also allows for cost savings with technical assistance providers. Growers can share costs for a facilitator or auditors under the GroupGAP model which reduces the individual producer's financial burden.
- GAP certification can create and reinforce a network-wide culture of food safety with a built-in community for learning and support. Food safety compliance becomes more deeply embedded in an organization's values and practices by increasing producer knowledge and personal investment in food safety issues.

IMPLEMENTING GAP EDUCATION AND OUTREACH USING THE TOOLKITS

ACCESSING THE GROWER TOOLKIT

The Grower toolkit is available in pdf formats for printing in both English and Spanish. Additionally, the pdf has been formatted into a user-friendly interactive [online tool](#). All resources can be found on the NASDA Foundation's GAP Certification Program page.



STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION



Develop a team comprised of SDA, cooperative extension and NGO representatives for the target audience. Abilities of partners may vary by state and organization, so carefully select those who are committed to the partnership and program objectives. Determine the roles and responsibilities of each organization, as well as program objectives. Consider implementing an MOU as previously discussed to conduct GAP education and outreach activities.



Train the trainers. Each organization should be trained on the Grower Toolkit to keep messaging consistent. One of the barriers identified in GAP programs was clear communication of the programs and GAP standards. Therefore, consistent language and representation of the program is imperative. This Stakeholder Toolkit should also be reviewed as it provides additional resources not identified in the Grower Toolkit. A [recorded train-the-trainer video](#) and a [stakeholder presentation](#) are available for your use on the NASDA Foundation website.



Plan and Schedule grower outreach. Invite growers who want to know more about GAP certification to educate them on USDA GAP programs. Highlight additional resources, especially GAP funding opportunities, that are available in this toolkit. Ensure growers observe a united SDA, cooperative extension, and NGO team.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Invite additional organizations who support or are involved in GAP activities; state or federal auditors; local USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) representatives able to discuss the reimbursement program; and potential buyers.

- Logistics

- Meeting Timing

- The time of year or season, and time of day is important so that you reach as many growers as possible for an in-person meeting.
 - Combine this training with another event – an Ag Summit or program that has additional information/activities to offer a grower to make it worthwhile to attend.

- Meeting Location

Plan a location that is central to your target audience for the in-person meeting; remember that you are taking the program to the growers. You can offer a virtual option to garner more participation if it suits your program needs. Facilities need to be easily accessible and able accommodate your outreach activities.

- Incentives

Offer refreshments or a meal as a bonus to growers who attend. If your organization has swag, consider having those promotional items available to remind growers who they can reach out to for assistance. Also, provide a networking opportunity during the event for growers to make connections with the partner organizations, other attendees or special guests (buyers or other local technical assistance providers).



Chicago, Illinois Grower Meeting, June 2022.

RECOMMENDATIONS (CONTINUED)

Marketing/Promotion

- Design an invitation and message to promote your event
- Reach out to agricultural associations or grower groups, and utilize the partner network to not only promote the program but to invite growers.
- Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) is a good method of advertising your grower meeting. This method of promotion often draws in a younger demographic.
- Examples available to modify to meet your needs.

- [Invitation](#)
- [Announcement](#)
- [Press Release](#)



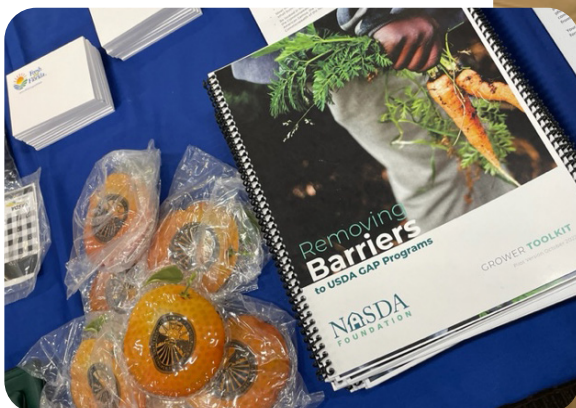
Grower Participation/Engagement

If your target audience is socially disadvantaged and historically underserved growers, consider alternative ways to draw them in for an outreach event. They may not already attend traditional agricultural meetings. Welcome groups/partners/organizations who represent the target audience to connect with and engage the growers.

Materials for Meeting

Know your audience; know if they are beginning or experienced farmers. If they are unfamiliar with good agricultural practices in general, consider having extension provide a short presentation addressing GAPs and industry best practices for handling produce prior to covering USDA GAP Audit program.

- [Presentation](#)
- [Toolkits: English](#) and [Spanish](#)
- [Survey](#)



Murfreesboro, Tennessee Grower Meeting, September 2022

TIMELINE TOOL

TIMEFRAME	TASK(S)	MATERIAL(S)
Program onset	<p>ID partners and establish team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the NGO listing resource to ID potential partners <p>ID target audience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which population of growers is in your area? What are their specific barriers and educational needs? <p>Determine partner roles and responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As outlined in the Stakeholder Toolkit, an MOU can be a valuable tool <p>ID key events/programmatic outreach meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the execution recommendations in the Stakeholder Toolkit to ID local and regional events with potential to reach your target audience 	<p>MOU</p> <p>Stakeholder Toolkit</p> <p>Grower Toolkit</p>
Programmatic outreach planning – up to 12 months prior	<p>Advertise program/event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the template advertising materials for social media and/or industry publications Raise awareness using a Press Release <p>Work with NGO(s) on outreach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> These are the groups who have the direct connection to your audience. Tap into this! <p>Train the partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct partner training on GAP education and outreach 	<p>Stakeholder Toolkit</p> <p>Grower Toolkit</p> <p>Outreach Materials</p> <p>Press Release</p> <p>Stakeholder Training Video</p>
Program/Event	<p>Grower education and outreach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribute the Grower Toolkit to your audience. Be sure to focus on those barriers that are most applicable to them. <p>Collect programmatic impact data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding the impact of your programming is crucial. Use the pre-and post-questionnaire to measure your impact and inform future programming. 	<p>Grower Toolkit</p> <p>Program Survey</p>

GROWER ASSISTANCE RESOURCES

GAP certification may not be applicable or appropriate for every farmer, but having the certification allows growers to reduce food safety risks on their farms. It is a buyer-driven program that often bypasses the small farmer. Small growers, especially socially disadvantaged and underserved growers, find it difficult to obtain contracts for several reasons.

- Inability to verify to buyers that they are using best industry practices.
- Lack of volume to meet buyer demand or higher price point.
- Not all buyers accept a USDA GAP audit.

Growers who do not have buyers requiring GAP certification and are not required to be certified by food safety regulations, will often not see the benefit of the cost, time, and record-keeping commitments. Therefore, educating growers that USDA GAP certification has many benefits like increased market access, reducing their economic risk, and improved food safety culture, is essential.

Additionally, there may be a break-even or minimum number of group members for GroupGAP participation to be cost effective. Cost savings will depend on the size of the group, size of the farms, distance between farms, as well as other variable factors. The more opportunities to share costs among a group lowers the cost for the individual grower. **While GroupGAP may not work for every grower, there are many grower communities who would benefit from participation**, including growers who have access to shared-use land, and growers in close proximity or communities with shared cultural beliefs.

Many growers are interested in the improved business opportunities and increased market access that USDA GAP certification may provide. One important way to help growers is to fund their certification and training resources.

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“Glad to have been a part of the TN GAP Pilot State Grower Meeting yesterday. Now I understand GAP certification, but I also understand AG Enhancement funds and obtaining Group GAP. I cannot wait to share with other farmers that are trying to stretch their distribution reach, presence, AND availability through contracts and partnerships requiring GAP.”

Instagram User “Agricores”



Nadine's Kitchen

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE



The expense of certification is a major barrier limiting participation in USDA GAP programs by socially disadvantaged and underserved growers. The way the expense is conveyed to growers is vital to participation in the USDA program. It is essential for states and other organizations to research funding opportunities to determine how they can financially support socially disadvantaged and underserved growers through the process.

Federal Funding Opportunities

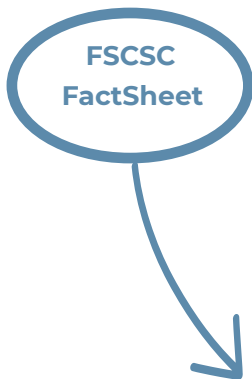
There are many federal grant opportunities available that will support GAP activities.



Visit USDA's Grants, Loans and Other Support website for more information.

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/local-regional/food-sector/grants>

The new **Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops (FSCSC) Program** provides assistance to specialty crop growers who incur eligible on-farm food safety program expenses in 2022 and 2023. The Farm Service Agency (FSA) will oversee the program and issue reimbursements. For more information, view the **FSCSC FactSheet** or contact your local FSA county office.



USDA Farm Service Agency
 U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

FOOD SAFETY CERTIFICATION FOR SPECIALTY CROPS



Overview

The Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops (FSCSC) Program provides assistance to specialty crop operations that incurred eligible on-farm food safety program expenses in 2022 and 2023.

These operations incur significant costs to comply with regulatory requirements and market-driven food safety certification requirements each year with little opportunity to recover increased costs.

Who is Eligible?

To be eligible for FSCSC applicants must meet the following:

- Be a specialty crop operation;
- Have obtained or renewed a:
 - 2022 food safety certification that was issued between June 21, 2022 and December 31, 2022; or
 - 2023 food safety certification issued during calendar year 2023; and
- Have paid eligible expenses;
- Meet the definition of a small business or very small business; and
- Be located in the United States, District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, or the

PROGRAM YEAR	ELIGIBLE CERTIFICATION DATE	APPLICATION DEADLINE
2022	June 21, 2022 - December 31, 2022	January 31, 2023
2023	January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023	TBD

What Expenses are Eligible?

Specialty crop operations for developing or updating certification, testing, and safety management systems are eligible for reimbursement of eligible expenses.

What Expenses are Ineligible?

Expenses for the purchase of food safety equipment, the purchase of food safety training, and the purchase of food safety certification are not eligible for reimbursement.

USDA Farm Service Agency
 U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops



Assistance available to specialty crop operations that incurred eligible on-farm food safety program expenses in 2022 & 2023.

Eligible Expenses include:

- Development of or maintaining/updating a food safety plan
- Food safety certification and upload fees
- Microbiological testing for products, soil amendments and water
- Training

FSA will accept FSCSC applications for calendar year 2022 through January 31, 2023.

The **USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA) Harmonized GAP Assistance Program** that is also available in select states.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE (CONTINUED)

Additional federal funding opportunities include:

Farmers Market and **Local Food Promotion Program** (implemented as FMPP and LFPP)

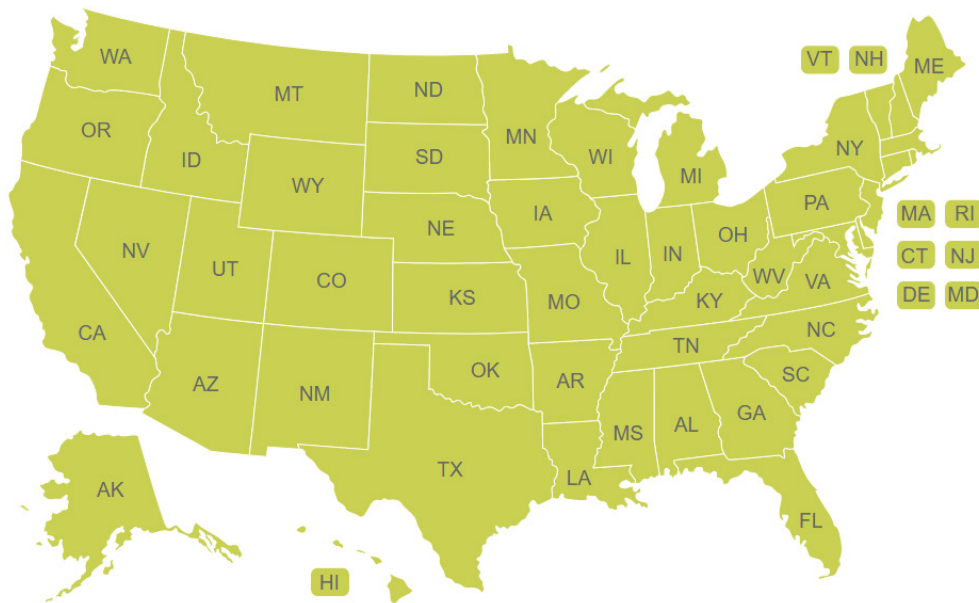
Regional Food System Partnerships

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (implemented as SCBGP and SCMP)

Urban Agriculture and Innovation Production Competitive Grants | Farmers.gov

State Funding Opportunities

In many cases, states offer cost-share programs, providing financial assistance for small farmers. We recommend growers follow up with their **State Departments of Agriculture** to determine if cost-share or other financial assistance is an option in your state.



Chicago, Illinois Grower Meeting, June 2022

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Many organizations offer technical assistance. As one of the collaborating partners for GAP education and outreach, growers are advised to reach out to each of you for additional resources and assistance.

STATE DEPARTMENTS OF AGRICULTURE

Some states have marketing or business development programs to connect growers and buyers.

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

For GAP technical assistance, contact cooperative extension at land-grant universities and colleges in your state. Each state is different, but many academic institutions have a food safety, or produce, specialist who can answer your questions and walk you through the GAP process.



GAP contacts at **colleges and universities** across the nation can be found at the link below. They have the ability to provide assistance with the GAP certification process.

<https://www.nasda.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/ExtensionList.pdf>

NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS (NGOs)

Non-government organizations or non-profits specializing in farming and sustainability are often able to provide technical and financial assistance regarding GAP programs and are willing to walk growers through the process step-by-step.



Several national **NGO contacts** for small, socially disadvantaged and underserved growers across the nation can be found at the link below. These NGOs specifically provide GAP resources.

<https://www.nasda.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/NGOContactList-JFS.pdf>

Many resources and technical assistance ACTIVITIES are provided BY EXTENSION AND NGOs. Opportunities available for growers include:

- **Food Safety Modernization Act Compliance Training - Produce Safety Rule and Preventative Controls**
- **GAP Audit Certification Mentoring and Training**
- **GAP Preparedness Training - Food Safety Plan Writing**
- **Quality Management Systems Training**
- **Risk-Based On-Farm Food Safety Principles**
- **Grant Writing**
- **Production & Marketing Knowledge and Skills**
- **Direct Market Training**
- **Opportunity to Connect with Other Growers**



FOOD SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP NETWORK

Additionally, the [Wallace Center](#) and Food Systems Leadership Network catalogues a significant amount of GAP related resources.

The Food Safety and Quality Community of Practice (formerly called the GroupGAP Community of Practice) is a place where individuals working to provide scale-appropriate and culturally-appropriate food safety technical assistance, training, and certification to local farms and food businesses come together to talk about best practices, lift up good ideas, work through common challenges, and build the relationship.

Join the Food Safety and Quality Community of Practice Discussion Group

<https://foodsystemsleadershipnetwork.org/groups/food-safety-and-quality/forum/>

Monthly Call Series

https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/tZYqfuGtqTgqHdExCSGQRxVLIYzTRIUIJ_rEM

Quality Management Systems Training for Food and Farm Businesses (NEW and FREE)

<https://foodsystemsleadershipnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Quality-Management-Systems-A-Guide-for-Food-Farm-Businesses.pdf>



CONNECTING BUYERS

One of the major ways SDA Business development or marketing divisions can aid growers with certification is to connect them to local or regional buyers. Smaller growers will not necessarily have those networks. Since the purpose of GAP certification is to increase a grower's market access, the development of those buyer-grower networks is incredibly important.

Remember that GAP certification is a voluntary program; growers who are not required by a buyer to obtain certification, may not pursue it or find benefit from it. Advise growers to have a contract with prospective buyers prior to planting. The buyer will identify the GAP standard they will accept, called buyer acceptance.



MARKETING RESOURCES

The [North American Agricultural Marketing Officials](#) (NAAMO) is a great resource and organization to connect with for marketing resources..

[USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service](#) offers several resources for assisting growers and stakeholders who are interested in **aggregating, processing and distributing** their products. These resources connect growers to consumer outlets. Aggregation resources include information on food hubs, cooperatives, and the Farm to School Program. Distribution resources include local food directories

Distribution through the [USDA Farm to School Program](#), or local school programs, may provide an ideal opportunity for small, socially disadvantaged, and underserved growers. A locally sourced food supply benefits the school programs and allows growers to contribute to their communities. Local distribution may also assist in keeping transportation costs low.

KEY TERMS

■ **AUDIT (Food Safety/Producer Farm)**

The objective of a food safety/producer farm audit is to review a food safety system and documentation to ensure that appropriate risk mitigation practices are in place and followed.

■ **BUYER ACCEPTANCE**

Buyer acceptance refers to whether a buyer will accept USDA GAP and/or other third-party audit certification schemes from their suppliers.

■ **FOOD SAFETY MODERNIZATION ACT**

The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) shifts the focus from responding to foodborne illness to preventing it. Enacted in 2011, seven major rules to implement FSMA were finalized, which includes the Produce Safety Rule. Rules were designed to take clear specific actions that must be made at different points in the global supply chain for both human and animal food to prevent contamination.

■ **FOOD SAFETY PLAN**

A food safety plan is a written document that addresses audit checklist questions to show a grower's understanding of on-farm food safety risks and practices, and to document what the operation is doing to mitigate the identified contamination risks.

■ **GAP AUDIT PROGRAM**

Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) are voluntary, third-party (USDA) audits that focus on the use of best agricultural practices to verify that fruits and vegetables are produced, packed, handled, and stored in the safest manner possible to minimize risks of microbial food safety hazards.

■ **GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES**

Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) are best practices that target specific risks identified by an on-farm risk assessment and are designed to minimize the risk of foodborne illness caused by contaminated fresh produce.

■ **GROUP**

Under GroupGAP, a group consists of producers and/or supply chain partners, that may include food hubs or other marketing organizations.

■ **GroupGAP AUDIT PROGRAM**

The USDA GroupGAP Audit Program is a certification option that allows individual farmers to certify their practices together as part of a centrally-managed group, meeting the latest FSMA requirements and certifying to GAP, Harmonized GAP, or Harmonized GAP Plus+ GFSI Equivalent audit standards.

■ **HARMONIZED GAP AUDIT PROGRAM**

Harmonized Good Agricultural Practices (HGAP) audits are one of USDA's audit services. This audit service includes requirements which address the minimum requirements of the Producer Safety Rule, as well as industry best practices and Good Agricultural Practices.

■ **HARMONIZED GAP PLUS+ AUDIT PROGRAM**

Harmonized Good Agricultural Practices Plus+ (HGAP Plus+) audits are one of USDA's GAP audit services. This audit builds on the requirements of the HGAP audit and has been recognized for technical equivalence by Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI).

■ **ON-FARM RISK ASSESSMENT**

An on-farm risk assessment identifies food safety contamination hazards present on a grower's farm.

■ **PRODUCE SAFETY RULE**

The **Produce Safety Rule (PSR)** is one of the seven food safety regulations that are part of the Food Safety Modernization Act. The PSR sets a series of standards for the safe growing, harvesting, packing, and holding of produce grown for human consumption. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is responsible for the oversight and enforcement of the PSR.

■ **QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

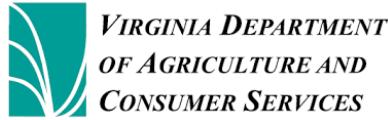
A Quality Management System (QMS) is a collection of business processes focused on achieving a quality policy and quality objectives to meet your customer requirements. A QMS addresses a group's organization structure, policies, procedures, and the resources needed to meet a business's goals; for example, group food safety certification.

■ **SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED AND UNDERSERVED PRODUCERS**

A farmer who has been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudices because of their identity as a member of a group with out regard to their individual qualities. Those groups include African Americans, American Indians or Alaskan natives, Hispanics, and Asians or Pacific Islanders.

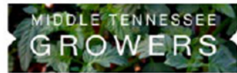
THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

Thank you to our state partners who participated in the Foundation's GAP Education and Outreach pilot.



Agriculture and Markets

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