

Technical Working Group (TWG)

Sponsor

Produce GAP Harmonization Initiative (“GHI”) Steering Committee

Sponsors’ Direction to the TWG (“Vision”)

Develop a harmonized food safety standard and checklist and a globally-acceptable auditing process for GAP audits necessary to protect consumers from potential hazards that may contaminate produce at that stage of the supply chain, and to build efficiencies into the supplier audit process. The overall goal is one audit by any credible third party that can be acceptable to all buyers.

- Focused on food safety practices of pre-farm gate produce operations (as defined by the scope of the FDA GAPs);
- With clearly defined requirements that minimize opportunity for misunderstanding, misinterpretation and “standards creep” by operations and auditors;
- Globally recognized, but specifically applicable to North America operations;
- Requirements that are risk-based, science-based, attainable, auditable and verifiable;
- Considering all microbiological, chemical and physical hazards reasonably likely to occur, consistent with potential hazards addressed in FDA regulatory guidances;
- Scalable to all size fresh produce operations;
- Considerate of regional- and commodity-specific food safety needs;
- Sufficiently non-prescriptive to be accepting of equivalent food safety practices;
- Acceptable to a critical mass of customers requiring general produce food safety audits;
- Freely accessible by everyone, including any 1st, 2nd or 3rd party auditor; and
- Flexible to adapt as science reveals better practices and limits.

Goal & Priorities

The desired outcomes from the TWG are:

- Conduct multiple facilitated sessions to develop and establish the harmonized standard
- A draft harmonized standard drawn from all major existing pre-farm gate food safety standards
- Review and amend to meet the needs of all commodities, applicable regions (including Mexico and Canada), growing practices and size operations.
- Assure transparency, access and outreach is available to all pre-farm gate stakeholders, throughout the process.
- Develop the standard so that it would be globally acceptable.
- Deliver a final recommended harmonized standard to the Steering Committee.

November 2009

Deliverables:

- Identify the standards that should be considered for harmonization.
- Identify the categories that need to be included in the standard.
- Identify a process to merge the content of the categories of the various standards.
- Identify hosts, venues and dates for future TWG meetings.

Timeline:

- November 18 2009 through October 2010

Milestones

TBD

Assumptions

- Critical mass of key stakeholders from the produce industry, government, customers and produce associations will engage.
- All participants will be working towards a harmonized standard.
- A single standard for all regions and commodities can be achieved
- The Steering Committee will back the output of the Technical Working Group.
- Customers will recognize the “new” harmonized standard
- The auditing process will be developed subsequently
- Regulatory standards will not conflict with the harmonized standard

Risks

- Not having a critical mass of stakeholders involved in the development of the harmonized standard
- Participants do not adequately represent the stakeholders
- Disingenuous participation
- Auditing process cannot be developed to effectively capture the standard