

**Produce GAPs Harmonization Initiative
Technical Working Group meeting**

December 16-17, 2009

Meeting Summary

Chairman Suresh DeCosta convened the meeting and asked for self-introductions. David Gombas briefed the group with the genesis of the Initiative and the Vision and Scope of Work as defined by the Initiative Steering Committee, and results from the November TWG meeting. Gombas noted that United Fresh now has a webpage dedicated to this Initiative: { HYPERLINK "http://www.unitedfresh.org/newsviews/gap_harmonization" }. In order to maintain transparency for the Initiative, this webpage is freely accessible by the public.

At the recommendation of the TWG, a “matrix” of audit categories had been developed and sent to the standard owners that were identified at the November meeting. As they would be most familiar with their standards and how they should be interpreted, the standard owners were asked to divide their standards across the categories of the matrix. Of the 18 standard owners approached, 10 replied in time for the meeting: Mushroom GAPs, AIB, GlobalGAP, CanadaGAP, Silliker, CA Strawberry, CA LGMA, SENASICA, AFDO Model Code for Produce Safety and USDA GAPs.

Attendees assembled into two breakout groups and worked on three categories each: Group 1 (Group leaders Sharan Lanini and Bill Pool) worked on Worker Health/Hygiene and Toilet/Handwashing Facilities, Animal Control, and Worker Education and Training. Group 2 (Group leaders Drew McDonald and Amy McLester) worked on Soil Amendments, Field History and Assessment and Ag Chemicals (pesticide, herbicide). The groups were at liberty to develop their own means of harmonization, but were again cautioned to be able to attribute their harmonized standards to existing standards and avoid creating new standards.

After the meeting adjourned the first day, GlobalGAP representative Dr. Elme Coetzer convened a meeting to describe the parallel efforts of a GlobalGAP National Technical Working Group for North America. The objective of this group will be to adapt the output from the Produce GAPs Harmonization Initiative into a GlobalGAP Fruit and Vegetable Interpretation Guideline for North America. Coetzer noted that GlobalGAP would like to have a guideline in place for use with the current version 3 of GlobalGAP’s standard but, because that would have to be ready in early 2010, the meeting attendees seemed more inclined to work on being ready for version 4. Gombas encouraged the meeting attendees to participate on the GlobalGAP National Technical Working Group, to ensure accurate interpretation of the harmonized standard.

Because the Steering Committee had indicated an importance for the harmonized produce food safety standard eventually to be globally recognized, such as by being benchmarked by GlobalGAP or the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI), the second day commenced with a presentation by Dr. Donna Garren on GFSI – what it is and how it works. The attendees then reconvened in their breakout groups.

Based on the output of the breakout sessions, the TWG made the following observations and recommendations:

- Some of the existing standards include general requirements which may not apply to all commodities, e.g. describing requirements for a compost operation as if all compost operations are commercial scale.
- Some of the existing standards include specific requirements which may not apply to all commodities, e.g. describing requirements for “agricultural chemicals” in the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) category, but not all agricultural chemicals are pesticides.
- Group 1 drafted harmonized standards for Animal Control and for Worker Health/Hygiene and Toilet/Handwashing Facilities by selecting one standard and amending it by incorporating pieces from other standards. However, they noted that they would have difficulty citing which pieces came from which standards.
- Group 2 compiled the submitted standards for their three audit categories into one table, which facilitated identification of the sources of the various specific requirements. They also amended the matrix of audit categories to distinguish general from specific requirement and other tools to facilitate harmonization. However, they did not have time to begin actual harmonization.
- The consensus appeared to be that Group 2’s compilation would be a good process for future justification of the harmonized standards’ contents, and should facilitate developing the harmonized standard.
- Both groups reported that, even with the standard owners dividing their standards across the matrix, the process of harmonizing was arduous. Group 2 found that working in small groups helped, but a lot of time was spent re-formatting the text instead of analyzing the contents.

Action Items:

- The remaining standard owners (those that did not submit in time for this meeting) will be contacted again and encouraged to provide their standards in a single column divided across the audit categories matrix, but without formatting (plain text) and without added detail.
- Then, prior to the next (February) meeting, TWG members should assemble the submitted standards into a table by audit category and sorted by general vs. specific requirements, so as to save time at the meeting. Several TWG members volunteered to undertake this pre-work.

Several TWG members volunteered to host future meetings; please mark your calendars:

- February 17-18, Weslaco Research and Extension Center, Weslaco TX
- March 10-11, Taco Bell, Irvine CA
- April 7-8, Darden, Orlando FL
- May TBD, US Foodservice, Rosemont IL

Also, April 19, immediately prior to the United Fresh annual convention at The Venetian in Las Vegas NV, there will be a joint meeting with the Steering Committee, so that the TWG can provide an update and discuss any issues. More information about all future meetings will be forthcoming.

Attendees:

Juan Anciso, Texas AgriLife Extension Service
Michael Bentel, Naturipe Farms
Megan Chedwick, Church Brothers, LLC
Elme Coetzer, GlobalGAP
Justin Colson, CE Farms
Suresh DeCosta, McDonald's Corporation
Andy Diercks, Coloma Farms, Inc.
Bob Elliott, Sunkist Growers
Donna Garren, The Consumer Goods Forum
Edith Garrett, Danaco Solutions
Dave Gombas, United Fresh Produce Association
Erin Grether, United Fresh Produce Association
John Gurrisi, Darden Restaurants
Valerie Hannig, The Oppenheimer Group
Kent Killebrew, Ahold USA, Inc.
Sharan Lanini, Chiquita/Fresh Express
Tom Lovelace, McEntire Produce
Drew McDonald, Taylor Farms/Taylor Fresh Foods

Amy McLester, US Foodservice
Raina Nelson, Rosemont Farms
Ken Petersen, USDA
Susan Pheasant
Laura Phelps, American Mushroom Institute
Patrick Pimentel, NSF Davis Fresh
Bill Pool, Wegmans
Eric Ritchie, McCain
Wally Sanford, Hearne Produce/AJ Piedimonte Farms
Mark Seetin, US Apple Association
Randy Sodoma, Grant County Foods LLC
Chato Valdes, River Ranch Fresh Foods
Mike Villaneva, California Leafy Green Products Handler Marketing Agreement
Steve Warshawer, Wallace Center/National Good Food Network
Brian Zomorodi, Ready Pac