



## **News Release**

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### **Technical Working Group Releases First Draft Harmonized Standard**

#### *Industry-wide Group Leads Harmonization Effort*

ROSEMONT, Ill. – The Technical Working Group (TWG) of the Produce GAPs Harmonization Initiative released its first Draft Harmonized Audit Standard late last week at the group's meeting at the Rosemont, Ill., headquarters of U.S. Foodservice.

The draft represents another major step by the TWG toward establishing a single audit standard for an industry that has been plagued by myriad auditing bodies and standards.

"While it is still rough," said United Fresh Senior Vice President of Food Safety and Technology Dr. David Gombas, "this draft is ready for the industry to review for its applicability to the range of operation types, sizes, locations and fresh produce commodities grown and handled in North America."

Led by McDonalds' Suresh DeCosta, the TWG, which now numbers over 100 industry stakeholders, has chosen a process for the harmonization effort that began with the recognition that the many existing standards were developed with the best expertise available and have been accepted by at least some suppliers and customers. Given this acceptance, the TWG sought to consider each of those standards and select the wording that best met the spirit of harmonization. Thirteen standard owners submitted their standards for consideration and many of them joined the group to ensure the intent of their standards was understood.

"We are very interested in hearing from all stakeholders, from growers to retailers, ways to improve the standard" said DeCosta. "We are particularly looking for recommendations to improve its applicability to different size operations, different growing regions, different production practices and the widest range of commodities. If any company was wondering when it would be the right time to get involved, the time is now."

With the release of the Draft Harmonized Standard, members of the TWG will begin the process of editing and adjusting the document, to ensure that the standards are auditable, scalable, flexible, appropriate to the scope of regions, commodities and production practices that are to be included, as well as other applicable specifications.

A copy of the Draft Harmonized Standard is available from the United Fresh website at [http://www.unitedfresh.org/newsviews/gap\\_harmonization](http://www.unitedfresh.org/newsviews/gap_harmonization). All interested industry stakeholders are encouraged to attend the group's upcoming meeting, June 17-18 in Houston, Texas, and should contact Erin Grether at 202-303-3400, ext. 402 or [egrether@unitedfresh.org](mailto:egrether@unitedfresh.org) for more information.

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**United Fresh Produce Association** is the pre-eminent trade association for the produce industry in managing critical public policy issues; shaping legislative and regulatory action; providing scientific and technical leadership in food safety, quality assurance, nutrition and health; and developing educational programs and business opportunities for members to better meet consumer needs for increased consumption of fresh produce. Founded in 1904, United Fresh represents the interests of member companies from small family businesses to the largest international corporations throughout the global fresh produce supply chain, including growers, shippers, fresh-cut processors, wholesalers, distributors, retailers, foodservice operators, industry suppliers and allied associations. For more information, visit [www.unitedfresh.org](http://www.unitedfresh.org).