
The Harmonized Standard: *Myths, Legends, And Its Growing Role In The Marketplace*



Webinar Overview

- All phone lines are muted
- Submit questions in the chat box on left hand side of screen throughout
- Today's session will be recorded – an email link will be sent to registered attendees for playback



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Harmonization Initiative



Objective

- Gain an understanding of how the Harmonized Standard was developed
- Organizational structure and administration
- Current status
 - GFSI
 - Produce Safety Rule
- Future improvements and opportunities
- Questions



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United Fresh *Global Conference on Produce Food Safety Standards, April 2009*

- Produce GAP standards used in various audits seem to be at least 90% the same, providing a clear opportunity for harmonization.
- Inclusion of non-food safety standards (social, environmental issues) = obstacle to harmonization, particularly in North America
- Bringing key stakeholders together to develop and endorse commodity-specific standards (leafy greens, tomatoes) = good model for building consensus on general GAP standards.



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Process to Harmonization

Identified a small but influential **Steering Committee** of major industry representatives with the ability to drive broad industry acceptance of common standards:

- comprised of business leaders
- with **broad representation from the fresh produce supply chain**, including suppliers, distributors, retail and foodservice businesses that have a say in produce suppliers' pre-farm gate food safety requirements;
- who represent a critical mass of volume of produce purchased.



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Process to Harmonization

Identified a small but influential Steering Committee of major industry representatives with the ability to drive broad industry acceptance of common standards:

McDonald's

Yum Brands

Pro*Act

U.S. Foodservice

Darden

Jack in the Box

Sysco

Subway

Markon

River Ranch

Del Monte Fresh

Wegmans

Ahold

Kroger

H.E.B.

Safeway

Schnucks

Publix

Walmart

Food Lion

Supervalu

Costco

Chiquita Fresh

Sun World International

DiMare Company

Green Giant Fresh

Sunkist Growers

Castellini Co.

McEntire Produce

Dole Food Company

Tanimura & Antle

The Giumarra Companies

C.H. Robinson



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Vision of Harmonization

Develop a harmonized food safety standard and checklist for GAP audits, and globally-acceptable auditing process, necessary to protect consumers from potential hazards that may contaminate produce at that stage of the supply chain, and that will build efficiencies into the supplier audit process.

**One audit by any credible third party,
acceptable to all buyers**



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Technical Working Group

- Over 150 stakeholders, representing:
 - Customers, suppliers, government, audit companies, association staffs;
 - A broad scope of fresh produce commodities;
 - A broad scope of operation sizes; and
 - A broad scope of producing regions, including Mexico and Canada.
 - Open invitation for participation; no stakeholders excluded



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TWG Core

Amy Duda-Kinder, A. Duda & Sons, Inc.
Amy McLester, US Foodservice
Andrew Kesler, Jack in The Box Inc.
Ben Marchant, NCSI Americas, Inc.
Beth Bland, Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers
Bill Pool, Wegmans
Bob Blakely, CA Citrus Mutual
Bob Elliott, Sunkist Growers
Bob Mills, Misionero Vegetable
Butch Nottingham, VA Dept. of Agriculture
Chato Valdes, River Ranch Foods
Chris Christian, CA Strawberry Commission
David Gombas, United Fresh
David Middleton, NCSI Americas, Inc.
Debbie Carter, Northwest Horticultural Council
Donna Garren, The Consumer Goods Forum
Doug Rowley, Mountainland Apples, Inc.
Drew McDonald, Taylor Farms
Ed Beckman, CA Tomato Farmers
Edith Garrett, Danaco Solutions
Eric Ritchie, McCain
Erin Grether, United Fresh
Jean Hamil, A. Duda & Sons
John Gurrisi, Darden Restaurants
Tom Lovelace, McEntire Produce

Johnna Hepner, PMA
Ken Petersen, USDA
Kent Killebrew, Ahold USA
Kenyon Farley, Payson Fruit Growers
Laura Phelps, American Mushroom Institute
Mark Seetin, U.S. Apple Association
Martha Roberts, Univ. FL/FL Tomato
Mathilde J. Rivera T, Baja Growers
Megan Chedwick, Church Brothers
Michael Bentel, Naturipe Farms
Mike Letry, Darden
Mike Villaneva, LGMA
Milinda Dwyer, Costco Wholesale
Nigel Garbutt, Global G.A.P
Raina Nelson, Rosemont Farms
Randy Sodoma, Grant County Foods, LLC
Reggie Brown, Florida Tomato Exchange
Sarah Lockhart, Monarch Foods
Saul Morales, Sysco Corporation
Sharan Lanini, Chiquita / Fresh Express
Sonia Salas, Western Growers
Steve Warshawer, Wallace Center/NGF Network
Suresh DeCosta, McDonald's
Susan Pheasant, WA Horticultural Association
Tom Young, Del Monte Fresh Produce



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Standard Harmonized from

- CA LGMA
- Mushroom GAPs
- SENASICA
- Silliker
- USDA
- Tomato Food Safety Audit Protocol
- Community Alliance with Family Farmers
- California Strawberry Commission
- AFDO Model Code
- AIB
- CanadaGAP
- GLOBALG.A.P
- SQF 1000



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Process of Harmonization

- Identified commonly accepted GAP audit standards, open invitation to the standard owners, 13 standards included
- Identified 60 common audit categories; harmonized by selecting common, complete wordings
- First draft Harmonized Standard completed over 5 meetings
- Wording, format revisited for clarity, completeness, ease of use



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UNITED  FRESH
PRODUCE ASSOCIATION

Pilot Audits

- Apple grower, packinghouse in WA - done
- Potato grower, packinghouse in ID - done
- Leafy green harvesting in CA - done
- Leafy green grower in AZ - done
- Mushroom grower in PA - done
- Citrus growers in FL - done
- Small growers in NY - done
- Citrus growers in CA - done
- Blueberry grower in CA - done
- Tomato greenhouse in CA – done
- USDA audits using standards – done



Field Operations and Harvesting Standard Completed July 2011

	Requirement	Procedure	Verification	Corrective Action
1.	General Questions			
1.1.	Management Responsibility			
1.1.1.	A food safety policy shall be in place.	A written policy shall outline a commitment to food safety, in general terms, how it is implemented and how it is communicated to employees, and be signed by Senior Management.	The auditor observes the food safety policy, observes that it is signed by Senior Management, and observes that it has been communicated to all employees in a manner that can be understood.	The operation creates or revises the policy, or its communication to employees, to be in compliance.
1.1.2.	Management has designated individual(s) with roles and responsibilities for food safety functions.	The food safety plan shall designate who has the responsibility and authority for food safety, including a provision for the absence of key personnel. Twenty-four hour contact information shall be available for these individuals in case of food safety emergencies. These roles and responsibilities shall be communicated within the organization.	Auditor observes that the food safety plan has identified individual(s) for key food safety activities. Auditor verifies that procedures include provisions for when the identified individual is not present.	Operation identifies individual(s) for key food safety activities in the food safety plan. Operation identifies actions to be taken when the identified individual(s) are not present.
1.1.3.	There is a disciplinary policy for food safety violations	There shall be a policy that establishes corrective actions for personnel who violate established food safety policies or procedures.	Auditor observes the policy and checks for examples of enforcement	The operation creates or revises the policy, or its communication to employees, to be in compliance.
1.2.	Food Safety Plan			
1.2.1.	There shall be a written food safety plan that covers the operation.	The food safety plan shall identify all locations of the operation and products covered by the plan. The plan shall address potential physical, chemical, and biological hazards and hazard control procedures,	Auditor shall observe the food safety plan and verify that the plan has considered potential biological, chemical and	Operation develops or completes a food safety plan for all locations of operation.

Identifying who “owns” the standards

- United Fresh is Secretariat
 - Responsible for standards policies and maintenance, coordination of support committees, communication through webpage, point of contact for questions
- Industry represented by Technical Working Group (TWG) – membership to remain open
- A new call for TWG volunteers is underway with a renewed commitment from previous TWG members



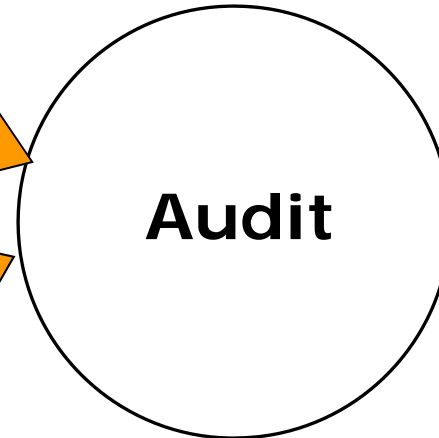
Managing how the standards are used by audit organizations

- Official versions of standards freely accessible on United Fresh website
- United licenses audit organizations
 - Standards are to be used verbatim (no changes in wording permitted)
- Questions regarding interpretation to be addressed by “Calibration Committee”
- Requests to change wording considered by TWG by established process





Each licensee issues their own certificate based on their own compliance/evaluation criteria



Calibration Committee

- Comprised of subset of TWG
 - Reps from auditor organizations
 - Subject matter experts
- Responsible for
 - real-time dispute resolution on interpretation questions
 - development of official auditor training materials
 - Conduct training
- Currently meeting every month or two



Process to resolve disputes on interpretation of the standards

- First, responsibility of audit organization
- If unsuccessful, becomes responsibility of Calibration Committee
- Decisions to be reached by consensus of the Committee
- Thematic issues will be addressed through FAQs, guidance documents etc.



Process to update, adjust the standards

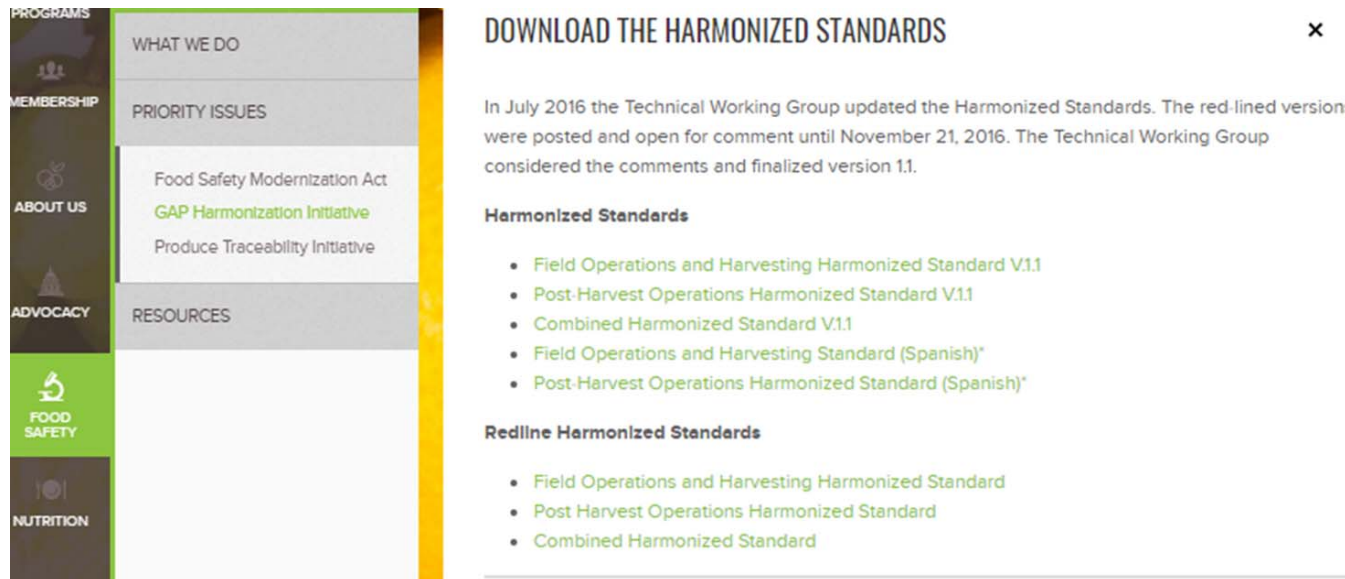
- Recommendations/requests submitted to United Fresh, posted on website for comment
- Reviewed by Calibration Committee for recommendation to TWG
- Considered and acted on by TWG
- All changes to the standards published as proposal on website, with industry notification and additional comment period before becoming final



The Harmonized vs. the Produce Safety Rule

Tune in tomorrow!

- July 2016 TWG update to the Harmonized
 - Redline published online for public comment
 - Comments considered
 - Final posted Jan 2017



The screenshot shows a website interface with a dark sidebar on the left containing navigation links: PROGRAMS, MEMBERSHIP, ABOUT US, ADVOCACY, FOOD SAFETY (highlighted in green), and NUTRITION. The main content area is titled 'DOWNLOAD THE HARMONIZED STANDARDS' and includes a close button (x). Below the title, there is a paragraph explaining the July 2016 update. Two sections follow: 'Harmonized Standards' and 'Redline Harmonized Standards', each with a bulleted list of document titles.

DOWNLOAD THE HARMONIZED STANDARDS x

In July 2016 the Technical Working Group updated the Harmonized Standards. The red-lined versions were posted and open for comment until November 21, 2016. The Technical Working Group considered the comments and finalized version 1.1.

Harmonized Standards

- Field Operations and Harvesting Harmonized Standard V.1.1
- Post-Harvest Operations Harmonized Standard V.1.1
- Combined Harmonized Standard V.1.1
- Field Operations and Harvesting Standard (Spanish)*
- Post-Harvest Operations Harmonized Standard (Spanish)*

Redline Harmonized Standards

- Field Operations and Harvesting Harmonized Standard
- Post Harvest Operations Harmonized Standard
- Combined Harmonized Standard



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USDA HGAP+ Relationship

- USDA AMS HGAP+ has aligned with the FSMA Produce Safety Rule; official acknowledgement from FDA
 - Rearranged the order of the questions
 - No word altering (as per the licensing agreement)
- Updated compliance criteria
- GFSI Technical equivalency *which is similar BUT NOT identical to benchmarking*
 - Note that audit process will differ for government bodies



“Globally recognized”

- Ensure standards meet GFSI guidance document to the extent practical
- Partner with audit processes that can be benchmarked/ evaluated successfully by GFSI
 - GLOBALG.A.P (July 2017)
 - USDA AMS
 - Require special “riders” to conform to full certification standard



Buyer-specific riders

- Already exist with other (GFSI) audits
- Initiative does not have the authority to limit riders
- Effort to limit riders will chase buyers to other standards
- Buyers encouraged to eliminate riders or bring to TWG for inclusion in standards
- Encourage use of riders as “specification” to be verified separately rather than repeat of full audit (reduce redundancy)



Current Status

- 3000 certificates/yr and growing
- Covers operations with “covered produce” and produce “rarely consumed raw”
- Appeals to smaller growers due to focus (not because it’s easy!)
- Renewed effort, support & engagement with licensees
- Direction from United Fresh BOD
- Limited training
- Limited published guidance



These produce-buying companies, and more, endorse* audits using the Harmonized Standards



*some conditions may apply; please check with your customer/buyer



Future Plans

- Provide Spanish versions of updated standard
- Revitalize/ augment Technical Working Group (contact us to participate!)
- Add'l updates warranted
 - Tomato Guidelines/ Metrics
 - GFSI
 - Others



Future Plans, cont.

- Development of guidance/ support in commonly misunderstood areas
 - Assessing water risk
- Discussion with other commodity groups



Summary

- Reputation as a “small grower” audit is evolving
- Produce Safety Rule & GFSI recognition = growing role in the marketplace
- Renewed investment in updates and training by United Fresh, supported by licensees
- Appeal to buyers: what would it take for you to accept the Harmonized?



www.unitedfresh.org

- Food Safety
 - Priority Issues

- The Standards
- Upcoming Training
- Frequently Asked Questions

The screenshot shows a web browser displaying the United Fresh website. The address bar shows the URL: <https://www.unitedfresh.org/food-safety/gap-harmonization-initiative/>. The page features a navigation menu on the left with categories like 'EVENTS & PROGRAMS', 'MEMBERSHIP', 'ABOUT US', 'ADVOCACY', 'FOOD SAFETY', 'NUTRITION', 'RESOURCES', and 'NEWSROOM'. The main content area is titled 'GAP HARMONIZATION INITIATIVE' and includes a detailed introduction, a list of priority issues (Food Safety Modernization Act, GAP Harmonization Initiative, Listeria Monocytogenes, Produce Traceability Initiative), and a list of resources. The resources list includes: 'UPCOMING HARMONIZED TRAINING', 'DOWNLOAD THE HARMONIZED STANDARDS', 'ENDORSEMENT OF THE HARMONIZED STANDARD', 'AUDIT ORGANIZATIONS USING THE HARMONIZED', and 'HARMONIZED STANDARD FAQs'. Each resource item has a plus sign to its right, indicating it is expandable. The page also features a search bar, a sign-in button, and a 'Growing up Fresh' logo.

Questions?



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