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## **GLOBALG.A.P. streamlines food-safety audits, reduces fatigue**

By

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With the increasing importance of food safety, traceability, and social and environmental responsibility, produce shippers must look to integrated solutions to certify their operations. The time, energy, and associated costs of reaching and maintaining food-safety certification are overwhelming for many in the industry. GLOBALG.A.P. North America serves the unique needs of farmers and buyers in Canada and the United States to protect their brand and mitigate their risk. “We engage suppliers and buyers in the U.S. and around the world to define the most practical and relevant production criteria and audit systems, and deploy with the highest levels of integrity to meet market needs,” said Roberta Anderson, executive vice president of GLOBALG.A.P. North America.



# GLOBALG.A.P.

“The GLOBALG.A.P. certification programs allow produce shippers to expand their sales and markets,” she continued, saying that buyers worldwide recognize GLOBALG.A.P. for leading food-safety and responsible production standards. By achieving certification, farmers and packers can demonstrate their commitment to safe and responsible food production.

In North America, GLOBALG.A.P. has three main options for certification of fruit and vegetable production and packing. First is the Integrated Farm Assurance (IFA) standard, which covers traceability, food safety, environment and worker health and safety. “This is a GFSI recognized and globally accepted certificate,” explained Anderson. “Some farmers in the USA may prefer to use the Harmonized Produce Safety Standard (HPSS), which is also GFSI recognized, and focuses only on food safety and traceability.” HPSS uses verbatim the language from the United Fresh GAPs Harmonization Initiative and is aligned with the FSMA Produce Safety Rule.

“A new offering we have is our Produce Handling Assurance (PHA) standard, which is a standalone post-harvest audit for pre-process activities such as cooling, sorting and packing,” she said. “You can combine the PHA audit with either IFA or HPSS farm audits, which can mean time and cost savings.” GLOBALG.A.P. is on track to have PHA be GFSI recognized in May 2021. Other options that may be of interest include standards specific to Crops for Processing (e.g., juice) or Chain of Custody, or one of the company’s many certificate add-ons specific to topics like water use, social responsibility, or FSMA. GLOBALG.A.P. is also experienced in developing custom add-ons to meet specific market requirements.

Maintaining certifications required by the market can be a daunting and time consuming task for farmers, so the company is leading the way in reducing “audit fatigue.” GLOBALG.A.P. offers the only set of food-safety standards that allows farmers to streamline their audit process and decrease costs while increasing their reach to a global buying audience, including Europe. Since GLOBALG.A.P. certification programs are accepted by so many different buyers across the globe, farmers can have one audit that will allow them to ship their products anywhere.

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“With two GFSI recognized options for farm certification in North America, and with the recent addition of the Produce Handling Assurance (PHA) certification, farmers can now combine their farm and post-harvest handling audits, further reducing associated time and costs,” outlined Anderson, who said that GLOBALG.A.P. also offers group certification (known as “Option 2”), which allows farmers to work together under a management system with a single certificate. “This reduces the need for third-party audits of each location every year, while ensuring a robust internal audit system,” she explained. The result is significant cost savings to groups while maintaining the high level of assurance expected by the market.

Farmers and packers looking to get GLOBALG.A.P. certified should start by reaching out to a Certification Body. “In North America you can choose from a large pool of accredited Certification Bodies — at this time, GLOBALG.A.P. approves over 20 third-party organizations to operate in the U.S., nearly double the options available with other standards,” said Anderson.

The Certification Body will guide operators through the process of the application and audit. If producers need additional help preparing, GLOBALG.A.P. also works with a network of qualified consultants, known as Farm Assurers, who can, for a fee, provide operational support.

“All of GLOBALG.A.P.’s forms and documents are freely available to the public on our website,” she concluded, “and we aim to make the process as transparent and painless as possible.”

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