

Introduction

This Training Manual is intended to help New Jersey Wholesale Distributors/Terminal Warehouses conform to Good Agricultural and Good Handling Practices (GAP/GHP) and prepare for a successful United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) GAP/GHP audit. Good Agricultural and Handling Practices are common sense. Many practices are already occurring at produce operations. The next step is to document what is already occurring. The objective of this Training Manual is to help operations review their practices and help them identify areas where improvement may be needed. The guidance offered in this Training Manual will help you create a plan that addresses all parts of the audit. It is not a guarantee of a passing score; however, it will aid in helping you ultimately achieve that goal.

Because the GAP/GHP audit is important, this Training Manual is arranged according to the specific sections of the audit on which your Wholesale Distribution Center/Terminal Warehouse (WDC/TW) may be assessed. They include "General Questions" and "Part 6 Wholesale Distribution Center/Terminal Warehouses". The operation must be certified in both parts to pass the audit.

During a GAP/GHP audit, you will be asked to explain and demonstrate how your WDC/TW complies with each of these areas. Documentation will be required in some instances, as indicated by the letter "D" in the same line as the audit questions. A document may be a combination of standard operating procedures (SOP) that explains the company policy and the log that shows the actions taken. An "R" requires a log showing the action and a "P" requires a policy/standard operating procedure must be documented in the plan. Examples of the required documents are included in each section and on the enclosed CD which can be modified to fit individual operations.

Any question in the audit where N/A is shaded out must be answered either yes or no. Any shaded box in the "NO" column must be answered "YES" or the points are lost.

Two areas which must be completed before requesting an audit are:

- a) Developing a written food safety plan to explain your food safety program - the plan should contain everything that is included in the operation's food safety program, but do not include anything which can not be accomplished.
- b) Designating a lead person in your organization - one individual in the organization must be designated by name to implement and oversee the food safety program. An alternate can be listed in case the primary person is not available.

During an audit, the following conditions will result in an automatic "unsatisfactory" assessment and the audit will be stopped:

- a) "An immediate food safety risk is present where produce is grown, processed, packed or held under conditions that promote or cause the produce to become contaminated." Examples of this would be the use of non-potable water in the product washing process or a leaky sewer pipe in the production or storage area.
- b) "The presence or evidence of rodents, or an excessive amount of insects or other pests in the production area during packing, processing or storage." This can be evidence on the floors, outside buildings or other places in the production or storage areas when the pest may come in contact with the produce.
- c) "Observation of employee practices (personal or hygienic) that jeopardize or may jeopardize the safety of the produce." Examples include putting used toilet tissue on the floor or in a container in the lavatory; observing that employees do not wash their hands after toilet use; eating on the grading line, etc.
- d) "Falsification of records"
- e) "A documented (written) food safety program is not in place"
- f) "The operation has not designated someone to implement and oversee the food safety program."

Getting Started

A documented food safety program that incorporates what the WDC/TW does to implement the program is the first step to complete before considering an audit. Your Food Safety Plan tells the auditors what you have been doing, outlines procedures and has examples of all forms used to verify GAPs. Things to include are:

First, develop a Mission or Vision Statement. Write it down and place it at the beginning of your plan. This statement should address briefly and generally your company's commitment to food safety, food quality, food sanitation and worker hygiene.

Note: Statements in bold are examples of wording that may be used in the food safety plan.

Example: Management and employees of Fruit and Vegetable Wholesale Incorporated are committed to distributing and marketing a safe product through good agricultural and handling practices that focus on principles of food safety and quality.

Second, create a Table of Contents that corresponds to the specific sections of the audit. These sections are noted on page 1 of this Training Manual under "Introduction."

Third, for each section (Part) in the Table of Contents for which you will be audited, explain in writing as clearly as possible how your company complies with that section. Make sure standard operating procedures are used and examples of the corresponding document forms are included in each section.

Fourth, draw a diagram of the interior and exterior of the facility to indicate product flow location, cold rooms, repacking areas, etc. This same diagram can be used to show rodent trap locations.