



Steve Troxler
Commissioner

North Carolina Department of Agriculture
and Consumer Services
Division of Marketing

Tom Slade
Director

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N. C. Good Agricultural Practices Certification Assistance Program

The North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services has developed the Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Certification Assistance Program. This program will help North Carolina growers with financial support in obtaining a third party audit to verify they are following effective food safety practices.

Food safety has become an important marketing and health issue for the produce industry. Buyers are demanding assurances from growers that their produce is safe. It will become more difficult for growers to market their fruits and vegetables if they don't have a GAP program in place. The goal of this program is to increase the number of N.C. farmers following Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)/ Good Handling Practices (GHP) and using third party audits to verify their food safety program.

This is a cost share program designed to assist fruit and vegetable growers with the cost of a GAP/GHP audit. For farms that are being audited for the first time the NCDA & CS will pay up to \$600 of the cost of having a third party audit to verify a farm's food safety program. A farm that has been audited in previous years will receive a total of \$300 for certification costs. The total amount a farm can receive will be \$600 per year for first time audits or \$300 per year for subsequent audits. Funds will be paid to the auditor conducting the GAP/GHP audit to reduce the cost to the farmer by up to \$600 or \$300. Participating farmers will be responsible for paying the auditor for any balance due above the reimbursement threshold. Funding for this program comes from an USDA grant to the NCDA & CS. Funds are available on a first come first served basis until the funds are depleted.

To be eligible for assistance, North Carolina fruit and vegetable growers must meet the following requirements

- Growers must have a third party audit from an approved government agency or company that verifies Good Agricultural Practices/Good Handling Practices.
- GAP/GHP audits can be for Farm Review, Field Harvest and Field Packing Activities, Packing House Facility, Storage and Transportation.
- The GAP/GHP audit must be conducted in 2012.
- Submit an application form for approval to participate in this program to the NCDA&CS prior to receiving the GAP/GHP audit.

For additional information or to request an application for this program, contact Shirley Nicholson, 919-707 -3136 or email Shirley.Nicholson@ncagr.gov.

1020 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-1020

(919) 733-7887 • Fax (919) 733-0999 • www.ncdamarkets.org



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