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The Updated USDA GAP Audit: What's New?

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The GAP/GHP (Good Agricultural Practices/Good Handling Practices) Audit Verification Program is a volunteer program designed to minimize the unintentional microbial or chemical contamination of potatoes before reaching the consumer. Many potato processing and fresh pack companies in Idaho are requiring farming operations that supply produce to their company be GAP (Good Agricultural Practices for Food and Farm Safety) certified. This certification process consists of an auditor visiting a participating farm/storage operation and answering a specified checklist of questions designed to assess the operation's efforts to minimize the possibility of contamination of potatoes. The University of Idaho (UI) developed a Potato GAP Organizational Manual in 2007 to coordinate standard operating procedures (SOP) and associated documentation with the requirements of the USDA GAP Audit Checklist for the General Questions, Farm Review, Field Harvest and Field Packing, and Storage and Transportation scopes. The manual has since been revised to integrate new questions and requirements of the updated USDA GAP/GHP Audit.

Whether or not you have previously participated in a GAP Audit, you still should be aware of changes to the audit requirements since last year. This article will outline some of those necessary changes. If you were previously using a UI Potato GAP Organizational Manual, then you will need to replace the older version of the manual with the latest one. If you have never participated in a GAP Audit and will be required to pass the Audit either this year or next, the USDA GAP Audit and UI manual will be a good place to begin the process.

On November 9, 2009 the USDA replaced the May 11, 2007 version of their Good Agricultural Practices and Good

Handling Practices Audit Verification Checklist with an updated version. The new version has three major changes:

- 1) new identification of records, policy or documentation requirements
- 2) new numbering, wording or point values for previous questions
- 3) the addition of new questions to each section with several questions related to traceability having been added

New Documentation Identification. Some questions on the Audit checklist require the auditor to review documentation in addition to their observations. The 2009 Audit identifies the type of documentation necessary (R, P, or D) to receive a "Yes" answer on that question. The letter "R" indicates some type of record (log, schedule, service record, weight ticket, etc.) is needed to verify that an action has been taken for a specific situation. A "P" indicates that the company/operation has a policy or written procedure (SOP) stating what will be done for a specific situation. The letter "D" indicates the requirement for both a policy stating an action will be taken and a record demonstrating the action has been taken.

New Numbering, Wording or Point Values. Some questions in the November 2009 Audit have been assigned different numbers, reworded to clarify intent, changed the type of documentation required or changed point values previously given in the 2007 Audit. Therefore, it is important to review paperwork assembled for the 2007 Audit to ensure all the new required documentation is included for the 2009 Audit. Also, the addition and/or change in point values have changed the total possible points for each scope. This could affect the number of questions the farm/company can decide to answer "No" and still pass the Audit. Remember that only 80 percent

of the applicable questions in a scope must be answered "Yes" to pass.

Addition of New Questions. Traceability questions have been added to all scopes of the November 2009 Audit. The General Question scope requires documentation that a traceability program has been established and a mock recall conducted within six months of the Audit. Documentation of specifics within this traceability program is required in each scope. In addition to traceability questions, a documented pre-harvest assessment of possible contamination sources of potato production areas is now required in the Field Harvest Audit. An example has been included in the UI Organizational manual. In the Storage and Transportation scope, there were also two major additions: 1) a new policy describing the handling of finished product that comes in contact with the floor, and 2) policies related to worker health and hygiene.

University of Idaho has updated their GAP Organization Manual to correspond with the changes in the November 2009 USDA Audit. It also includes new tips for growers and information about how the Idaho OnePlan can help with recordkeeping. The manual is available for download at the UI Kimberly R & E Potato Storage website: <http://www.kimberly.uidaho.edu/potatoes/gap.htm>.

The UI GAP website provides information describing what is GAP, the GAP manual layout, how to use the manual, a step-by-step procedure on how to compile the manual and photos showing what the manual should look like when completed. It is provided on the UI website in both pdf and Microsoft Word format. The pdf version is available to use as an example. It is not intended to be used in its present form and is primarily an example of what could be necessary in a manual. The UI Potato

GAP Organizational Manual **needs to be tailored to each specific farming operation** since some SOP wording and documentation may not be applicable to all operations. The Microsoft Word version can be saved to a computer and edited to make it specific for each operation. Once the necessary changes have been made and saved on a computer, it is ready to be printed and assembled in a three-ring binder as explained in the procedures on how to compile the manual.

The manual also includes sections to insert maps, the current USDA Audit Checklist and other miscellaneous information so the edited manual includes all information the GAP Auditor may ask for at the time of the audit. This manual should include all necessary information and documentation needed to present at the time

of the audit. It is important to follow the most current version of the USDA GAP Audit Verification Checklist. This can be found at U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA): Fresh Product Grading and Quality Certification: www.ams.usda.gov/gapghp. The UI manual and website will continue to be updated as the Audit Checklist version changes. Specific details or tips regarding the GAP Audit are discussed in greater detail in the 2008 and 2009 UI Potato Conference Proceedings at www.cals.uidaho.edu/potato/ResearchExtensionProceedings.asp and the May 2008 Spudvine article at <http://www.extension.uidaho.edu/bingham/spudvine.htm>.

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Did You Know?

A ten-wheeler truckload of potatoes carrying 300 cwt. would contain approximately 60,000 tubers if the average tuber weight were 8 ounces.

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