USDA GROUPGAP
AUDIT PROGRAM
LOCAL FOOD. NATIONAL EXPERTISE. GLOBALLY RECOGNIZED FOOD SAFETY STANDARDS.
Local produce isn’t just for the farmers’ market anymore. Only 1% of total food sales happen at farmers’ markets, but in 2019, overall sales of locally grown food are expected to reach $20B dollars. That means demand is growing in grocery stores too. Customers want their grocery store to carry products from local farmers they know and trust. Are you prepared to meet the growing demand for local?

If you carry ORGANIC, you should carry LOCAL.

Walmart plans to DOUBLE LOCAL FOOD SALES by 2025.

Nearly 60% of grocery shoppers report eating locally grown foods twice a week or more - compared to 47% of grocery shoppers eating organic foods twice a week or more.

National Grocers Association

MORE LOCALLY GROWN FOOD = MORE PROFIT.

78% of customers are willing to pay more for local food in grocery stores.

AT Kearney

From single urban households to low-income households, shoppers across all demographics are willing to pay more for local food.

AT Kearney

Nearly 9 out of 10 shoppers say locally grown food is “very/somewhat” important to their choice of a primary supermarket.

National Grocers Association
Market demand for locally grown food is stronger than ever. In response to this demand, small and mid-sized farmers are scaling up their businesses and entering wholesale markets. While these farms are committed to safe production practices, it can be cumbersome and costly for them to comply with food safety requirements designed with large-scale agriculture in mind.

**GROUPGAP** was developed in 2016 by the USDA and the Wallace Center to help farmers of all sizes meet federal regulations and wholesale food safety requirements.

The USDA **GROUPGAP** Audit Program is a model that allows individual farmers to certify their practices together as part of a centrally-managed group, meeting the latest FSMA requirements and certifying to GAP/GHP, Harmonized GAP, or Harmonized Plus+ (GFSI Equivalent).

**GROUPGAP** provides an umbrella of support, with the local group and participating producers addressing food safety compliance cooperatively. This reduces the administrative and financial burden placed on farmers, while ensuring that all certified farms consistently implement food safety best practices that you and your customers can trust. The system improves product traceability, facilitates faster corrective action, and creates transparency at every stage from the farm to your store.

**GROUPGAP MAKES FOOD SAFETY EASIER TO MANAGE FOR FARMERS AND BUYERS ALIKE.**

- **BROADER SUPPLY BASE:** ACCESS NEW POOLS OF LOCAL GROWERS WHO DEMONSTRATE THROUGH GROUPGAP CERTIFICATION THAT THEY MEET YOUR FOOD SAFETY REQUIREMENTS.

- **STABLE SUPPLY CHAIN:** SOURCE FROM A LARGER NUMBER OF GROWERS SO YOU CAN BE MORE RESILIENT IN THE FACE OF SUPPLY CHANGES OR DISRUPTIONS.

- **DIVERSITY OF PRODUCTS:** OFFER A WIDER VARIETY OF PRODUCTS FROM A BROADER ARRAY OF LOCAL PRODUCERS.

- **COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REGULATIONS:** ENSURE THAT YOUR PRODUCTS MEET FSMA REQUIREMENTS.

- **PEACE OF MIND FOR YOU AND YOUR CUSTOMER.**
In **GROUPGAP**, a food hub, support organization, or central business entity coordinates a group of producers and establishes best practices for complying with a food safety standard.

The USDA audits a local Quality Management System (QMS), an ISO-9001 system designed by the USDA and the local group to ensure that farmers meet or exceed the food safety standard. Using this QMS, both the local group and USDA audit farms in the group every year, multiple times per year.

**GROUPGAP** provides a source of local food that is reliable, traceable, and meets all your food safety requirements.

**GROUPGAP** is compliant with the latest FSMA requirements and can certify to an array of standards, including USDA GAP/GHP, Harmonized GAP, and Harmonized Plus+ (GFSI equivalent).

**GROUPGAP** = **HOW THE GROUP MODEL WORKS**

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**ONCE THE QMS IS ESTABLISHED, THE LOCAL GROUP:**

- Coordinates on-farm implementation of food safety procedures
- Monitors farmers’ practices over time
- Manages record keeping and reporting

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The local group QMS audits every farm, multiple times, every year.

Farmers write and implement a food safety plan for their operation.

USDA reviews every audit by the local group.

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AUDITORS WITH THE LOCAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (QMS)

Local auditors are trained and tested by the USDA to the same standards as all USDA auditors:

- Trained in Good Agricultural Practices
- Trained to interpret specific audit schemes, including USDA GAP/GHP, Harmonized GAP, and Harmonized Plus+ (GFSI Equivalent)
- Trained in farm auditing best practices
- Receive annual continuing education and professional development

The USDA makes additional random audits and reviews every local audit, comparing results to ensure consistency and integrity of the system.

Multiple, unannounced audits by the USDA and USDA-trained-and-audited local groups gives you the confidence, reliability, and reassurance you need to provide safe, high-quality products to your customers.
Farmers are business people too, and they want to minimize food safety risks as much as you do. With that in mind, GROUPGAP goes beyond audit checklists and teaches farmers proactive skills. Through peer learning and technical assistance, participating farmers address food safety as part of their own risk management strategy.

Good Agricultural Practices are about just that: building on-farm skills and knowledge so that farmers understand, consistently implement, and take pride in the practices they use every single day on the farm. The audits are just to verify: the daily practices are what matters.

Rather than seeing food safety as another box to be checked, farmers build real knowledge and skills in hazard analysis, self-assessment, and whole-farm risk management. The result is a sustainable culture of food safety and quality, and a local supply chain you can rely on to meet your customers’ demand for local produce.

A FOOD SAFETY MODEL THAT MEETS EACH FARMER WHERE THEY ARE:

- Ongoing training
- Multiple unannounced audits
- Mutual accountability for maintaining the highest standards
- Local educational resources
- Confidence and pride in best practice
- Faster and better corrective action

We have been GAP-certified through both independent and GROUPGAP models. What I have appreciated about the Group model is that there is an accessible resource network I can tap into with any questions or clarifications. Having an open dialogue has helped me better understand and appreciate the thought process behind the food safety standards, which makes it that much easier to adopt better practices.

– Collins Thompson, The North Farm, Chatham, Michigan