

Group Food Safety Certification pilot project:

The following is an outline of the steps in the implementation of a group food safety / GAP pilot program. This is a generic list of steps and identification of participants. This template may require customization to adapt it to the needs of a particular group of stakeholders.

Preliminary Project development: The goal of the pilot is to maximize quality of food safety compliance while minimizing cost to each producer as well as overall among producers in a group of producers who are committed to marketing collectively. The process will be documented in such a way that it provides data points to guide future implementation of GAP and related on farm regulations for small holders or others operating in groups. It is an important goal to develop GAP implementation and assurance methods that are effective and affordable in order to assure market access for qualifying producers of all scales and production types.

Value chain members separately and together discuss and agree on the value of a group approach to Food Safety (GAP) certification. Buyer _____ agrees to engage this process as a pilot project. Farmers _____ agree that if a group approach can be developed it will support their efforts to market collectively. A qualified GAP standard owner _____ agrees to engage in this process. A qualified technical service provider / trainer on behalf of the GAP standard owner also agrees to participate.

Identifying Financial Support: Farmers gain access to grant funds to provide initial support for first year development and implementation activities. Funds can come from grants or from other partner organizations. Funds will need to be focused on training, development of quality management plan (QMS), training of internal auditor/inspector, and implementation of on farm improvements as needed.

Identifying Technical Support: Partner organizations including the GAP standard owner and the trainers it works with and _____ all agree to invest “in kind” support to develop the process specifications. This project offers an opportunity for the Technical Support entities to develop and test various aspects of the process, and to gain critical feedback and critique including cost and other data points to drive future improvements.

Agreement to go forward: At the conclusion of initial discussions, farmers and buyers agree to

proceed. GAP standard owner and Technical service providers agree to work with the farmers and buyer to create a pilot project.

Milestone #1:

Farmers individually and Group collectively, and service providers agree to pursue a pilot project in group GAP certification with the support and participation of GAP standard owner and related technical service providers..

Defining Training Materials: Training will be required in all modules needed for Food Safety (GAP). All modules needed to support full GAP certification will be included...

Identifying Training Participants: Key personnel from all farms who wish to be assessed and certified as group members need to be trained along with any other personnel to whom owner/managers may wish to delegate on-farm oversight or training duties. Also personnel with interest or capacity to conduct internal assessment and audits will be trained.

Identifying Trainers or Training Partners: A service provider that is acceptable to the buyer and to the farmer group will be identified to train farmers and internal audit/inspection staff.

Milestone #2:

Training Service provider will supply relevant templates to support training in GAP modules

Service provider trains the farmers in customizing and applying these templates

Upon completion of training, farmers will possess a site/operation specific, complete on farm GAP manual / Food Safety program

Farmers then will implement these programs.

Selecting Competent Technical Staff: The group will identify a Quality Management System responsible person (QMR) and internal auditor/inspector. Often these functions are handled by two people, but a single person can fulfill the entire range of duties if properly qualified and trained

Internal Inspector and Auditor Training: Internal inspector, auditor, and QMR will be trained as necessary in HACCP, Food Hygiene, PPP/IPM/Fertilizer handling, to be provided through on line training modules. Basics of auditing and inspection to be carried out by person, including witnessed/shadow inspection. This training will be conducted by the training service provider

Milestone #3:

Training and technical service provider will develop on line training component for internal inspector/auditors in collaboration with GAP standard owner

Training and technical service provider will train internal inspector/auditors

Upon completion of training internal inspector will inspect all member farms and submit results to GAP standard owner and the reports will be posted using the appropriate IT system in order to assure access by buyer to the reports.

Upon review of reports, buyer will identify any critical compliance issues (if any) and corrective actions will be recommended

Upon fulfillment corrective requirements of buyer (if any), the grower group will be given provisional vendor approval and buyer will begin buying produce

Documentation at Group Level: QMR will begin compiling QMS document according to an outline provided by GlobalGAP and overseen by technical service provider (see below). The document will include statement of policies, procedures, work instructions, and management plans practices produce the framework for the individual farm GAP /Food Safety plans.

Centralization of Operations: The Farmer group, working with its QMR will consider what other aspects of operations (if any) can be centralized with benefit to the group. Consideration can reach beyond the limits of food safety. These functions can be included in the quality management system, if deemed of collective value. In this way the QMS provides a framework for addressing other collective market requirements and needs.

Participatory Development of QMS: The QMR along with whatever outside support may be needed will develop a QMS that reflects the policies and practices of the group. This process will not rely excessively on external consultants, nor will it be written entirely by the QMR, but will be a product of interactive process between farmers and QMR along with review as needed by outside technical service providers

QMS Compliance details: During the QMS development process attention will be given to the actual, on the ground realities of the group and the risks associated with the products that it produces. Risk management strategies will be customized to that reality. The QMS document will be a customized document, that is scale and risk appropriate.

Monitoring Progress: A QMS manual checklist will be used, supplied by the GAP Standard owner or developed in collaboration with the GAP standard owner, to monitor progress in the implementation of the QMS and to assure that the overall goal of successful GAP implementation is achieved. Monitoring will be carried out by the technical service provider and GAP standard owner in collaboration with the group's internal QMR. Results will be updated regularly to the buyer in order to maintain buyer confidence in the integrity of the program.

Milestone #4:

The QMS document is complete and ready for auditing AS A SYSTEM DOCUMENT. It will be submitted to Technical service provider, GAP standard owner, and buyer as needed for review.

Collaboration as needed will ensue to bring the QMS to a level where it reflects the needs of the buyer and the producer and can successfully be audited by the GAP standard owner or its agents, to verify the attainment of GAP standards by member farms.

Choosing a Certification Body: In collaboration among the Group QMR, the Technical Service provider, the buyer, and the GAP standard owner, a 3rd party audit timetable and plan will be developed

Milestone #5:

After appropriate review and modification, and allowance of sufficient time for the QMR to fully implement the QMS, the group will be audited, corrective actions plans delineated as needed, and GAP approved status awarded to the group when its achievement warrants that status.