



CanadaGAP Auditor Training Course – Unit 6

Auditor's Responsibilities

1.0 Collecting information

The auditor is responsible for assessing the auditee's compliance with the requirements in the CanadaGAP manuals using the CanadaGAP audit checklist criteria. An audit report will be created for each audit and will be based on objective evidence gathered by the auditor through the examination of documented procedures and records, observations of activities and interviews of personnel.

a. Review of documents:

Documents may include the CanadaGAP manual, record keeping forms, written procedures and signage. They may be available in hardcopy or electronically. Sampling of documents is permissible as there is a limited amount of time for the audit; however, at least one example for each required form should be examined.

b. Observation/Verification of activities:

Physical verification by the auditor indicates that the stated practices, procedures and methods are utilized and followed as defined. Due to time constraints it will not be possible to look at every single record or detail. For example, a random selection of all the agricultural chemical applications for the year could be reviewed, not every single record. Or, if the auditee has many suppliers that provide letters of assurance, randomly pick two or three and ask for the letters. If they are missing, look further.

c. Questioning/Interviewing:

Most of the information will be obtained through interviewing of facility personnel. The auditor should determine compliance and its adequacy. Probing or open-ended questions rather than those that require simple yes or no answers should be utilized. Information obtained from interviews should be substantiated by evidence from documents and records and observations by the auditor.

Scores and comments are assumed to have been visually confirmed unless otherwise stated. Verbal confirmations by the auditee should be the exception to the rule and if auditing properly, these should be rarely used. If a verbal confirmation is accepted, then the auditor should write this in the comments on the question.

The auditor is the "eyes and ears" of the certification body, gathering and recording evidence for the certification body to determine whether the auditee meets the standard and will receive certification.

2.0 Audit Protocol

2.1 Before the Audit

The auditor should review the contract to conduct the audit as well as the previous audit report for that operation if available. (Note: No previous audits will be available in the first year.)

The auditor should prepare the audit documents:

- Audit plan
- Checklist – fill in as much of the audit checklist as possible (name, address, contact information, etc. then verify accuracy at the audit)

The auditor should prepare for the audit and ensure they have the most recent versions of the CanadaGAP audit checklist and are aware of the current updates to the manuals that the auditee should have. These will be available through CanadaGAP. Further information on CanadaGAP manual updates can also be found on the CanadaGAP website at www.canadagap.ca.

2.2 Audit Plan

The audit plan should include the following:

- Audit Date (except for unannounced audits, when the date is known only 2-5 business days in advance for non-GFSI options, or **no** advance notice for GFSI options)
- Audit Location
- Type of Audit/Audit Scope (including other addenda [e.g., Costco addendum, CanadaGAP Pollinator Health addendum, etc.])
- Auditor Name

The Auditor will confirm the plan and communicate any changes with the auditee. The auditee should be formally notified about the audit anywhere from 3 weeks to 3 months prior to the audit, unless it's an unannounced audit.

The audit plan should be forwarded to the auditee in advance of the audit. In preparation for the audit, the audit plan could refer the auditee to the CanadaGAP web site (www.canadagap.ca) for a copy of the latest CanadaGAP Audit Checklist. The auditee's representatives who will be attending the opening meeting should also be discussed ahead of the audit. The person responsible for the food safety program (the person overseeing the program and ensuring it is being managed) should be the one answering the auditor's questions. A consultant could sit in during an audit and provide support when needed, but if they do not oversee the daily food safety procedures, they should not be answering questions.

When scheduling or confirming the audit, the following should be discussed with the auditee:

- The automatic fail items and where they can be found on the checklist
- Who you will need to meet with
- Gather any missing information about the operation: whether they are involved in production, packing, storage, what commodities will be audited, etc. This will help with scheduling
- Any biosecurity requirements, where to park etc.
- Anticipated length of time for the audit and time commitment required from the auditee

2.3 *Audit Sequence*

The typical sequence for the audit is:

- Arrival and Introduction
- Opening Meeting
- Data collection, Observations, Interviews
- Exit Meeting/ Presentation of draft report

2.3.1 Opening Meeting

During the opening meeting, the following topics should be covered.

- Introduction of the audit team
- Audit overview – purpose, scope, objectives and audit methods and procedures
- Automatic failure items and procedures if an autofail item is found
- Anticipated duration of the audit and projected time for closing meeting
- Visitor policies (footwear, hair, jewellery and safety procedures that the auditor must follow)
- Any changes to the checklist
- Requested attendance for closing meeting
- Invitation to the auditee to discuss any questions regarding the audit
- Explain that decisions on certification are made by the certification body, not the auditor
- The appeals process

2.3.2 Exit Meeting/ Post Audit Meeting

- Occurs at the end of the audit activities, prior to preparing the audit report.
- Is with management to present an overview of the audit observations.
- Is an opportunity to present preliminary audit results in a draft form to management and explain that the audit evidence collected was based on a sample of the information available.
- System issues are highlighted, rather than individual issues.
- Remind the auditee of the appeals process and complaint procedure.
- Fill out the executive summary page and review with the auditee.
- Any diverging opinions regarding the audit findings or conclusions between the auditor and the auditee should be discussed and, if possible, resolved. If not resolved, this should be recorded.
- Review the corrective actions process if applicable.
- Explain that audit findings are subject to review by the certification body and that the final report will come from the certification body.
- Leave a mutually signed copy of the executive summary page with the auditee.
- Remind auditee that should they become certified, they must report food safety recalls to their CB (the onus is on the operation as agreed upon in their contract).

2.4 *Automatic Failures*

If any of the automatic fail items is observed:

- Score the audit as an automatic failure and describe the reason for the failure in the Executive Summary
- Continue the audit if the auditee wishes you to do so
- Otherwise, end the audit if the auditee prefers not to continue
- If the auditee wants you to abort the audit they will still be charged as agreed in the contract

- Note: the auditee cannot get certified if the audit is not completed in its entirety. An audit report should not be generated.

Note: See “Auditor Checklist - Points to Cover During Opening and Closing Meeting” found at the end of this document for a summary checklist of 2.3.1, 2.3.2 and 2.4 above.

2.5 *Audit Report*

This should include:

- Name of the organization that was audited
- Date(s) of the audit
- Time that the audit started and ended
- Audit Type/ Scope
- Summary of findings and final score
- Description of any corrective action requests issued (e.g., in the Executive Summary, in Auditor Observations)
- Individual requirement findings and scores
- Auditor’s comments in sufficient detail to substantiate scores and enable the certification body to assess the auditee’s compliance with the requirements

The audit report is finalized by the auditor and sent to the certification body within 10 business days of the date of the audit.

2.6 *Follow up*

After the audit, the auditor completes the audit report including the scoring section and sends the completed report to the certification body for review. The auditor does not make determinations on certification. The certification body will make decisions and determinations on certification after reviewing each audit report. It is important that the auditor collect and document enough evidence for the certification body to make a determination. The certification body may make adjustments after reviewing the audit report. For this reason, the auditor can review the auditee’s preliminary score but cannot confirm the final result or certification at the time of the audit.

In some cases, there may be an opportunity for the auditee to address immediately during the audit an issue where points would normally be deducted. This will generally be a situation where there is a low food safety risk. If this is the case, allow the auditee to correct the problem during the audit and give them credit on their audit. If the auditee is missing some paperwork / records that can be retrieved within a short time delay, allow the auditee to obtain the missing documentation and provide to you by fax or email before signing off on the completed audit report. Otherwise, if documentation has not been kept as required or is not retrievable by the auditee, identify the non-conformance on the Executive Summary or within the checklist (i.e., deduct marks for the item and include comments).

If the issue during the audit involves any of the automatic failure items, then the auditee is NOT allowed to address the situation immediately. These situations usually have a high food safety risk and need to be treated accordingly to mitigate the risk. The auditee would autofail and you would score it accordingly, complete the Autofails page of the audit report and indicate the autofail in the Executive Summary.

If the auditee has passed the audit, no further follow-up is required. The auditor notes findings or recommended improvements. These are reviewed during future audits to determine the auditee’s commitment to continuous improvement. It should also be noted that the auditee always has the option to implement corrective actions if he wants to increase his audit score. Some customers

may require this; the auditee is responsible to know and meet his particular customer requirements. The corrective actions process would be initiated by the auditee.

If the auditee has failed the audit (i.e., a score below passing or has an autofail item) the auditor will note autofails and other findings in the executive summary. The auditee will have an opportunity to implement corrective actions/plans to achieve a passing score after the audit report is issued by the certification body. The follow-up on corrective actions/plans must be initiated by the auditee [possibly in consultation with customer(s) if required to prioritize; otherwise, auditee refers to executive summary items for “Autofails or Other Findings”]. Autofail items must be addressed first. The auditee implements corrective actions/plans then contacts the auditor, who reviews the evidence provided. The auditee describes corrective actions/plans on the *Corrective Actions Report* by completing columns 2, 3 and 4, provides supporting evidence and indicates date of implementation. The auditor reviews the corrective actions/plans and supporting evidence, completes the information in the remaining columns and the *adjustment to score* section on the *Corrective Actions Report* (recommendations relative to adjusting the score and closing the corrective actions requests), and sends the report to the certification body for review. Determinations on acceptable corrective actions/plans and certification will be made by the certification body. Refer to the instructions on the *Corrective Actions Report* for more information.

3.0 Biosecurity Policy

CanadaGAP Auditors are responsible for finding out and following any biosecurity policies and protocols in place at each auditee’s operation. Ask the auditee for any protective equipment or supplies that must be worn during the audit (e.g., booties, gloves, smocks, etc.).

Biosecurity involves the protection of the biological health of the species of concern from potential harm caused by biological, chemical, physical hazards. This includes the health of both plants and animals and is designed to reduce the spread of plant and animal diseases that could be devastating to the agricultural community. These hazards can be crop pests, such as insects and diseases (e.g., plum pox in tree fruit) or animal diseases on mixed operations that have livestock (e.g., avian influenza in poultry). Described below are practices to prevent the transfer of biological hazards on, to, within and between agricultural operations in Canada.

The following procedures should be followed when visiting mixed farm operations (farms that have both horticultural crops and livestock):

When arriving on-site:

1. Park vehicle in appropriate areas, away from sources of contamination. Generally, an appropriate parking spot is:
 - Not adjacent to livestock housing facilities and animal traffic areas
 - Is not underneath ventilation exhaust and inlets
 - Has no visible contamination (such as manure on the ground)
 - Does not interfere with the conduct of business (ask the owner or manager)
2. Ask the owner/operator if there are any local biosecurity protocols that need to be followed. If the owner/operator is not present, confirm and respect any signs, posted protocols, and/or barriers at the facility.
3. Wear footwear that is clean of any visible contamination. If there is evidence of manure being recently applied to crop fields or if there is a likelihood of having to enter animal areas of the premises directly from the field, then boots should be washed between crop fields, within farms or when moving between farms.

The following procedures apply to all farm operations:

1. Wash hands or use a waterless hand sanitizer upon arrival.
2. If possible, try to avoid walking in fields or handling plants when they are wet.
3. Clothing, hair and equipment should be visually inspected when leaving the site to ensure that no insects or plant material have adhered to them.
4. When entering a greenhouse facility wear clean clothes and clean shoes.
5. When a known contagious disease or regulated crop pest is present:
 - a. If you have more than one visit and are aware of one or more sites having a known or suspected contagious disease or regulated pest, visit the site(s) with known or suspected contagious and regulated plant pest last.
 - b. If the contagious disease or regulated pest is soil-borne, boots must be cleaned with a disinfecting agent prior to leaving the site. Excessive organic matter should be removed from boots prior to disinfecting.

Auditor Checklist - Points to Cover During Opening and Closing Meeting

Opening Meeting

During the opening meeting, the following topics should be covered:

- Introduction of the audit team.
- Audit overview – purpose, scope (including any addenda), objectives and audit methods and procedures.
- Automatic failure items and procedures if an auto-fail item is found.
- Anticipated duration of the audit and projected time for closing meeting.
- Visitor policies (footwear, hair, jewellery and safety procedures that the auditor must follow).
- Any changes to the checklist.
- Requested attendance for closing meeting.
- Invitation to the auditee to discuss any questions regarding the audit.
- Explain that decisions on certification are made by the certification body, not the auditor.
- The appeals process.

Exit Meeting/Post Audit Meeting

Occurs at the end of the audit activities, prior to preparing the audit report, with management to present an overview of the audit observations. Diverging opinions regarding audit findings/conclusions should be discussed. If not resolved, these should be recorded.

The following should be covered:

- Explain that audit evidence collected was based on a sample of the information available.
- Review the executive summary page. Highlight system issues rather than individual issues.
- Explain the corrective actions process.
- Inform the auditee of the appeals process and complaints procedure.
- Leave a mutually signed copy of the executive summary page with the auditee.
- Explain that audit findings are subject to review by the certification body.
- Advise the auditee that the certification body will send them the final audit report directly within three weeks to one month and what to do if it takes longer than one month.
- Advise the auditee that audit certificates will be issued by the certification body and who to call with questions.
- Remind auditee that should they become certified, they must report food safety recalls to their CB (the onus is on the operation as agreed upon in their contract).

Automatic Failures

If any of the automatic fail items is observed:

- Score the audit as an automatic failure and describe the reason for the failure in the Executive Summary
- Continue the audit if the auditee wishes you to do so
- Otherwise, end the audit if the auditee prefers not to continue
- If the auditee wants you to abort the audit they will still be charged as agreed in the contract.
- Note: the auditee cannot get certified if the audit is not completed in its entirety. An audit report should not be generated.