

# 2023

# CANADAGAP<sup>®</sup>

# Annual Report



## CanadaGAP Program

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## Annual Report 2023

### Program Overview

CanadaGAP<sup>®</sup> is a food safety program for companies that produce, pack, repack, store, wholesale and broker fruits and vegetables. The program has completed fifteen full years of operation as a certification program, and has close to 3,000 participating companies from across the Canadian and U.S. fresh produce industry.

CanadaGAP is designed to help implement effective food safety procedures within fresh produce operations. Audit and certification services for the program are delivered by third party, accredited Certification Bodies. Since 2010, the program has been benchmarked and officially recognized by the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) for certification options B, C and D. It is also fully recognized by the Canadian Government and has been benchmarked to the *Safe Food for Canadians Regulations* to ensure 100% alignment with Canadian regulatory requirements for food safety.

Two manuals, one specific to greenhouses, the second for other fruit and vegetable operations, have been developed by the horticultural industry and reviewed for technical soundness by Canadian government officials. The manuals are designed for companies implementing Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) and maintaining an effective food safety program. The manuals are based on a rigorous hazard analysis applying the seven principles of the internationally-recognized HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point) approach. Program materials are available for free on the CanadaGAP website at: [www.canadagap.ca](http://www.canadagap.ca)

Almost three thousand produce suppliers are currently CanadaGAP-certified. The program enjoys strong support from Canada's retail, processing and food service sectors, as well as international recognition across the range of export markets in the U.S., Latin America, Europe and Asia. Working together, a dedicated team of staff members, Board of Directors, stakeholders and program participants contribute to strengthening food safety implementation across the horticultural sector.



## Highlights from 2023

2023 has been another busy year at CanadaGAP. Several previously initiated projects came to fruition, even as new opportunities and challenges arose. Some of the highlights from the last year include:

- **Expanded scope for the CanadaGAP Greenhouse Program:** CanadaGAP released the updated Greenhouse Food Safety Manual (Version 10.0), which covers a significantly expanded scope of crops, including many small fruits, tree and vine fruits, root crops and other vegetables that increasingly are being grown indoors. CanadaGAP cooperated with the Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada to obtain federal funding to complete the required research and hazard analysis for the expanded scope.
- **New Certification Bodies:** Three new Certification Bodies, *TSLC*, *dicentra*, and *MSVS*, were approved and licensed to begin offering CanadaGAP audits and certification in 2023. Control Union, another recently announced certification body in 2022, also began actively offering CanadaGAP audits and certification in 2023. **This expansion to the choice of certification bodies for program participants represents the most significant enhancement to the CanadaGAP service offering in many years.** Program participants are encouraged to explore the range of options available to them and choose the certification body most suited to their needs. More information about services offered by these CBs is available on the 'Certification Bodies' page of the CanadaGAP website ([www.canadagap.ca](http://www.canadagap.ca)).
- **Additional tools** were made available on the CanadaGAP website. Many new FAQs were published at [www.canadagap.ca](http://www.canadagap.ca). Updated and new brochures and PowerPoint presentations were developed; topics include unannounced audits, new certification options, and main changes to the CanadaGAP manuals. Additionally, there was greater promotion of *Understanding the CanadaGAP Program* introductory course.
- **Electronic version of the CanadaGAP Manuals:** An affiliate of the program, Provision Analytics, a third-party software provider, invested in fully digitizing the CanadaGAP Food Safety Manuals. CanadaGAP worked closely with software developers to ensure the integrity of the content. Provision launched the fully digitized Fruit and Vegetable Manual in 2023. More information is available on "Food Safety Links" page of the CanadaGAP website.
- **Program Recognition:** The program continued to pursue various benchmarking-related activities. CanadaGAP underwent benchmarking to the SAI Platform Farm Sustainability Assessment (FSA) in cooperation with McCain Foods. CanadaGAP participated in a produce working group to review upcoming changes to GFSI benchmarking requirements (GFSI is working on its 2024 updates). The process for maintenance of Canadian Government Recognition for the five-year review was completed in the last quarter of 2023.

- **CanadaGAP Auditor Recognition Award:** A new annual award was announced by CanadaGAP in 2022 to recognize a CanadaGAP auditor who has shown extraordinary heart, dedication and commitment to their role. The Sheri Nielson Auditor Recognition Award was established in honour of a longtime CanadaGAP auditor and much-loved member of the agricultural community, Sheri Nielson, who passed away unexpectedly last year. The first awards were presented in December 2022 to Isabel Varey and Natalia St-Amand. This year’s awards were presented in November 2023 to Isabelle Martineau and Jovana Mitich.
- **Database Upgrades:** Internally, two new databases are under development: the CanadaGAP Operations database and Auditor management database to be deployed in 2024.



### GFSI Benchmarking

CanadaGAP maintained international recognition during the course of intense monitoring activities by the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) over the course of 2023. Re-benchmarking to new GFSI requirements will be coming in another year or so (2025). There continue to be challenges with unannounced audits on-farm -- one of the least popular changes introduced to the program following the announcement of a new GFSI definition for ‘unannounced’ in October 2021. In summer 2023, CanadaGAP conducted surveys of program participants, auditors and CBs to collect additional data regarding unannounced audits. This data has been collated for presentation to GFSI as part of the GFSI stakeholder consultation on 2024 benchmarking requirements.

### Program Participant Achievements

Despite increasingly stringent food safety requirements and many other challenges facing the industry in recent years, the average audit score for CanadaGAP program participants continues to improve. For the one-year period ending August 31, 2023 **the average audit score for CanadaGAP program participants was 96.38%** – an outstanding achievement by certified companies. Based on preliminary audit results (before corrective actions were implemented), the overall average of 96.38% was measured across participants of all CanadaGAP certification options. Even higher audit scores were seen among Option C and E program participants, with those scores averaging above 97% – another very significant accomplishment.

Average audit scores in the past year were higher across all commodity groups covered by the CanadaGAP program, including Tree and Vine Fruit, Potatoes, Greenhouse, Field Vegetables, and Small Fruit. Repacking and Wholesaling (Option D) audit scores were slightly below 2022 levels, averaging just over 94% on the CanadaGAP audit checklist before corrective action implementation. Those results demonstrate a highly commendable effort on the part of fresh produce suppliers and a clear commitment to achieving and maintaining a robust food safety program within their businesses.



## Report from the Board

### Annual General Meeting

CanAgPlus, the not-for-profit corporation that owns and operates the CanadaGAP program, holds its Annual General Meeting (AGM) for members each year in late November or early December. The 2022 AGM was held virtually on December 1, 2022 and the 2023 AGM was also held online on November 29, 2023. Further details are posted on the CanadaGAP website at [www.canadagap.ca/events/annual-general-meeting/](http://www.canadagap.ca/events/annual-general-meeting/).

### Board of Directors

The Board of Directors meets face-to-face at least once a year and holds regular virtual meetings. The Board met at the CanadaGAP office in September in conjunction with a five-year strategic planning session.

The Board is comprised of eight volunteer directors who serve two-year rotating terms, with four directors elected annually. The Board welcomed three returning and one new director at the 2023 AGM.

<b><u>Elected during 2023 AGM</u></b>	<b><u>Elected during 2022 AGM</u></b>
Denis Desjardins, Desjardins Seed Farm Ltd.	Alvin Keenan, Rollo Bay Holdings
Ian McDonell, Snow Road Solutions	Jody Mott, Holland Marsh Growers' Association
Beth Pattillo, Noggins Corner Farm II Ltd.	Susan Ranck, Ranck & Associates, LLC
Julian Sarraino, Fresh Taste Produce	Scott Wright, University of Saskatchewan

The full list of directors and their biographies are posted at:

<http://www.canadagap.ca/history/governance/>.

The 2023 AGM was the final meeting for retiring chair, Stephanie Lariviere, who has served on the CanAgPlus Board of Directors since 2013 and as Chair of the Board since 2018. Stephanie's retirement is in accordance with the CanAgPlus by-laws, which set a maximum of ten consecutive years of service as a director. Many thanks to Stephanie for her unwavering dedication and service, and a warm welcome and congratulations to Scott Wright, the newly elected Board Chair for 2024. Scott is with the University of Saskatchewan and has served as Vice-chair of the Board for the last two years. The new Vice-chair for 2024 is Beth Pattillo, a tree fruit producer, packer and repacker at Noggins Corner Farm II Ltd. in Nova Scotia.

### Management Review

The annual management review of the program was held with senior management and representatives on September 6, 2023. During the management review, directors and staff consider the following elements of program performance and opportunities for improvement:

- requests for modifications to the program
- performance of CanadaGAP Certification Bodies
- complaints and their handling

- internal audit results
- auditor training undertaken and its outcomes
- resource needs
- policies related to conflict of interest and confidentiality, among others.

Recommendations arising from the management review are presented to the full Board of Directors for further discussion and action.



### **CanadaGAP Technical Advisory Committee**

CanadaGAP receives many requests each year from program users to revise the CanadaGAP Food Safety Manuals, generic HACCP models, and audit checklist. The CanadaGAP Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) comprises a group of qualified experts who are instrumental to providing recommendations on proposed changes to the technical standard. Requests are first considered and researched by staff, and information is presented to the committee for discussion and expert input.

Nominations to the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) are accepted annually, and appointments are made by the Board for one- or two-year terms. While the Board makes efforts to appoint members who are representative of the various crop groupings within CanadaGAP's scope, given the committee's role the primary criteria for members is food safety knowledge, education and technical expertise. Consideration is also given to representatives with expertise in various types of production, storage, packing, repacking and wholesaling, as well as other relevant expertise (e.g., industry experience). The size of the committee is set at a maximum of nine members, along with a chair drawn from the Board of Directors, to maximize the efficiency and productivity of meetings. Board member Beth Pattillo served her third term as chair in 2023, and was reappointed to the role for 2024. All members generously volunteer their time to the work of the committee.

The Technical Advisory Committee meets every summer to consider the requests for program modifications. The 2023 meeting was held remotely in July, with a pre-meeting call taking place in June to review all agenda items and ask any questions in advance of the full day meeting.

Candidates interested in serving on the TAC are encouraged to apply through the public nominations process each fall. The list of current TAC members is published on the CanadaGAP website.

CanadaGAP wishes to remind all stakeholders that the program has an open-door policy to receive feedback, suggestions for improvement, and requests for modifications to program requirements from all parties, at any time. Contact information for the CanadaGAP office is available at [www.canadagap.ca](http://www.canadagap.ca)



## Marketing, Education and Outreach

CanadaGAP is involved in a significant number of education and outreach activities. 2023 was a very busy year with engagement by CanadaGAP representatives both in-person and remotely in a number of important ongoing initiatives. The table on the following pages provides a summary of these activities.

Month	Event / Topic	Location
January	CFIA meetings to review Maintenance of Recognition under the Canadian Government Food Safety Recognition Program	Ottawa/online
January	Standards Council of Canada (SCC) Mirror Committee webinar	Online
January to September	CanadaGAP Witness Audits	Across Canada
January to December	Monthly calls of GFSI-recognized Certification Programme Owners	Microsoft Teams
January, March, June, Sept, November	Canadian Supply Chain Food Safety Coalition Board meetings	Zoom calls
February	BC Ministry of Agriculture consultation regarding delivery of CanadaGAP to BC producers	Online
February	CFIA webinar on Establishment Risk Assessment (ERA) Model	Online
February	CanadaGAP Webinar for Certification Bodies on 2023 updates	Microsoft Teams
March	Understanding the CanadaGAP Program course (Food Safety Solutions)	Online
March, November	Meetings with Costco	CanadaGAP office
March	Meeting with Walmart	Online
March	ANAB Meeting for ISO/IEC 17065 Scheme Owners	Webinar
March to May	Certification Body Auditor Calibration sessions	Webinars/calls
April	CPMA Annual General Meeting	Online
April	Understanding the CanadaGAP Program course (Gestion Qualiterra inc.)	Virtual/Live Online
April	International Federation for Produce Standards (IFPS) Food Safety Committee call	Online
April	CFIA call on standardized inspection process	Online

<b>Month</b>	<b>Event / Topic</b>	<b>Location</b>
April	GFSI Conference	Atlanta, Georgia
April	GFSI Steering Committee meeting with Certification Programme Owners	Atlanta, Georgia
April	GFSI US-Canada Local Group meeting	Atlanta, Georgia
April	Government of Canada Critical Infrastructure webinar	Online
April	CPMA Food Safety Committee meeting	Conference call
April	ANAB webinar on ESGs (Environmental, Social, Governance issues)	Online
May	International Accreditation Forum (IAF) Food Group meeting	Zoom
May	SCC Mirror Committee call on ISO 22000	Online
May	Understanding the CanadaGAP Program course (Essential Food Safety)	Online
May	CanadaGAP Webinar for Accreditation Bodies on 2023 updates	Webinar
May	Canadian Supply Chain Food Safety Coalition AGM	Zoom
May	CPMA Webinar Grocery Code of Conduct	Online
May	Call with CFIA regarding Maintenance of Recognition	Call
May	Government of Canada Cyber Security Webinar	Online
June	CanadaGAP Technical Advisory Committee pre-meeting call	Zoom
June	CanadaGAP-hosted Coalition meeting with CFIA	Ottawa
June	CanadaGAP Presentation to CFIA in conjunction with Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada	Online
June and July	GFSI Certification Programme Owner calls to review Benchmarking Requirements for Primary Production	Online
June and July	Annual Performance Review Meetings with Certification Bodies	Microsoft Teams
July	CanadaGAP Technical Advisory Committee meeting	Zoom
July	Coalition members-only meeting re Canadian Government Food Safety Recognition Program	Online

<b>Month</b>	<b>Event / Topic</b>	<b>Location</b>
July	GFSI session for US-Canada Local Group	Online
August	GFSI Annual office visit	CanadaGAP Office
August	Annual meeting with ANAB-ANSI	Zoom
September	CanadaGAP Management Review	CanadaGAP Office
September	CanAgPlus Board meeting and 5-year strategic planning session	CanadaGAP Office
September	FSMA Best Practices webinar	Online
September, October	CONTACT's Produce Safety Webinar Series (attended)	Online
October	Food Industry Intelligence Network call – Coalition & CFIA	Microsoft Teams
October	International Fresh Produce Association webinar	Online
October	Annual meeting with Standards Council of Canada	Online
October to December	CFIA Maintenance of Recognition calls	Online
November	CPMA Food Safety, Regulatory and Quality Assurance Workshop	Online
November	Sheri Nielson Auditor Recognition Award Ceremony	Online
November	CanAgPlus Annual General Meeting and Board meeting	Zoom
December	Call regarding GFSI Capability Building Framework	Zoom
December	Call & Workshop regarding GFSI Certificate Platform	Zoom





## Program Participant Survey Results

CanadaGAP is committed to surveying program participants every three years to obtain their views and feedback on various topics related to program delivery. CanadaGAP wishes to thank all respondents to our surveys and welcomes stakeholder feedback on the program at any time.

The most recent CanadaGAP program participant survey was distributed November 1, 2022, via email (and by hardcopy to the small number of participants who request communication in that manner). The email was sent to 3,188 recipients, and 51% of recipients (1,580) opened the email, while the survey links had 173 clicks.

The survey received a response rate of approximately 3%, which is too low to draw statistically significant conclusions. All who completed the survey elected to do so anonymously.

The focus of the survey was on awareness of CanadaGAP certification options. While nearly all (98%) respondents were aware that more than one certification option is available from CanadaGAP, fewer program participants were aware of the differences (75%) or that some options are GFSI-recognized while others are not (76%). Fifty-six per cent of program participants were aware of the new options (E and F) that CanadaGAP introduced in 2022. Only 24% of respondents (although 50% of French respondents) checked with their buyers about the new options when they were launched; 54% of those respondents reported that their buyers were aware of the new certification options.

CanadaGAP was pleased to see that 86% of English respondents, and 100% of French respondents use the CanadaGAP website as a resource when they require information. To find more information about certification options, the resources that were reported to be used most frequently were the certification options page (30), the FAQs (23), the certification option comparison chart (21), the communique announcing the change (17), the town hall summary (2), and the town hall presentation and recording (1 each). One respondent additionally reported relying mainly on their grower association.

Respondents indicated that they would use a new brochure (26), more FAQs (17), a webinar (16) and a new PowerPoint (7) to assist them to communicate to their customers. In response to these comments, CanadaGAP has made available both PowerPoint presentation and brochure on Options E and F, in addition to the extensive FAQs.

The chart below provides an overview comparison of GFSI-recognized certification options C and D, with the two new certification options (E and F) introduced by CanadaGAP last year:

Options C and D (GFSI-recognized)	Options E and F (Not GFSI-recognized)
<u>SAME:</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food Safety standard</li> <li>• Audit criteria</li> <li>• Audit rigour</li> <li>• Audit frequency (annual)</li> <li>• Autofail items</li> </ul>
<b>Unannounced Audits:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No advance notice from the auditor</li> </ul>	<b>Unannounced Audits:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 to 5 business days' notice from the auditor</li> </ul>
<b>Passing score: 100%</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All non-conformities corrected prior to certification</li> </ul>	<b>Passing score: 95%</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some wiggle room for minor non-conformities or items requiring a significant capital investment</li> </ul>

### CanadaGAP Website

The CanadaGAP website [www.canadagap.ca](http://www.canadagap.ca) contains guidance to improve understanding of food safety requirements and comprehensive information about how the program works. It is updated on an ongoing basis. Those interested in receiving the latest news from CanadaGAP can subscribe directly through the website by entering their information in the 'Sign up' section at the bottom of every page.

The website also makes freely available a range of handouts, posters, training tools, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), and other communication materials to support operator and employee training. The most frequently accessed sections of the website include:

- Manuals downloads page
- List of CanadaGAP certified companies
- Presentations
- Hand washing signs

### Other Stakeholder Communications

CanadaGAP communicates regularly with program participants and other stakeholders through regular communiques. CanadaGAP publishes between 30 and 35 communiques each year. They can be accessed on the CanadaGAP website at: [www.canadagap.ca/publications/communiques/](http://www.canadagap.ca/publications/communiques/).

Auditor training notes are also distributed to affected stakeholders, including auditors, Certification Body representatives and program participants. These materials are equally available on the CanadaGAP website by visiting the 'Auditors' page.

For a listing of media coverage of CanadaGAP, consult the website at: <http://www.canadagap.ca/media/articles/>

## Understanding the CanadaGAP Program course

In 2014, CanadaGAP developed a two-day orientation course entitled ‘Understanding the CanadaGAP Program’. The two-day course is designed to educate attendees on the main elements of the CanadaGAP program and provide some fresh produce food safety background to assist with their understanding of program requirements. The course materials are available from CanadaGAP upon request, in both English and French.

While CanadaGAP does not provide training directly, the ‘Understanding the CanadaGAP Program’ course is offered by various approved training providers. Training providers are permitted to deliver the course provided that they use a facilitator approved by CanadaGAP to offer the training. The facilitator must be familiar with the CanadaGAP Program and manual requirements (e.g., must have successfully passed the CanadaGAP Auditor Training Course).

A number of courses are offered by training partners each year in English and French. Five public courses were offered virtually in 2023. Courses are publicly advertised through the CanadaGAP website ‘Calendar of Events’ or by signing up to receive CanadaGAP communications directly at: [www.canadagap.ca/publications/communiques/](http://www.canadagap.ca/publications/communiques/).

Further information is available at: <https://www.canadagap.ca/program/training-resources/> or by contacting the CanadaGAP office.



## Program Participation

Nearly 3,000 producers are currently participating in CanadaGAP. Although program participation has still not fully recovered from the impact of the pandemic, the level of new enrolments has been maintained over the last year. However, there has been an overall decline in participation since last year, due to a growing number of retirements from farming, increased consolidation within the industry, and movement to food safety audits and certification under non-GFSI recognized programs. As a result, CanadaGAP ended the year with a 4% net decline in participation levels.

The table below shows year-over-year changes in the number of producers participating in the program. The numbers below reflect net growth or decline, which factors in normal attrition resulting from changes in farming operations, retirements from the industry, voluntary terminations of certification, etc.

## Year-over-Year Changes in CanadaGAP Participation

Year (Sept – Aug)	Number of producers	Increase (Decrease)	Annual Rate of Growth (Decline)
2008-2009	537	537	100%
2009-2010	781	244	45%
2010-2011	1879	1098	141%
2011-2012	2204	325	17%
2012-2013	2440	236	11%
2013-2014	2526	86	4%
2014-2015	2927	401	16%
2015-2016	3042	115	4%
2016-2017	3127	85	3%
2017-2018	3156	29	1%
2018-2019	3185	29	1%
2019-2020	3233	48	2%
2020-2021	2930	(303)	-9%
2021-2022	3097	167	6%
2022-2023	2978	(119)	-4%

### Participation Trends

The following participation trends are noteworthy for 2023:

#### *Regional Trends*

- Participation levels in 2023 declined most steeply in British Columbia and Ontario, with a small decrease also seen in Nova Scotia.
- 2023 growth in the program was most marked in the United States and New Brunswick, with small gains also seen in Manitoba, Quebec and Saskatchewan. Alberta and Prince Edward Island participation numbers remained the same as in 2022.

- British Columbia continues to maintain the highest enrolment levels overall, at 35% of all CanadaGAP-certified companies (down from 38% in 2022), followed by Ontario (22% of program participants) and Quebec (17% of program participants). The ratios of Ontario and Quebec participants are both unchanged from 2022.

### *Certification Options*

- **Declining participation in Group Certification:** The proportion of producers participating in the program through Group Certification (Option B) dropped again in 2023, after a slight recovery in 2022. Just over 7% of producers participating in CanadaGAP are part of a group certification, which is comparable to 2021 numbers. From 2008 to 2020, the proportion of participants from CanadaGAP-certified groups ranged between 20% to 30% of all enrolments. While some producers who were formerly members of a group are now individually certified to a different CanadaGAP certification option, the program has not seen an offset to the loss of farms previously certified through Option B. Many of the growers who were part of previously CanadaGAP-certified groups have left the program to seek group certification under other programs that are not GFSI-recognized.
- **Growing participation levels in Options A1 and A2:** A significant number of CanadaGAP-certified producers moving from group certification to individual certification are choosing certification options that are not GFSI-recognized. Consistent with increases seen over the last two years, 2023 saw another bump in the number of companies enrolled in the four-year audit cycle (Option A1 or A2). The proportion of Option A1 and A2 growers is now 28% of all program participants, up 1 percentage point since last year, and up 6% from 2020.
- **Uptake of New Certification Options:** Uptake of Options E and F is also up slightly (to 3%) in 2023, compared to 2% last year. It will take time for the industry to gain understanding and acceptance of these relatively new options for certification. More information is available on the CanadaGAP website at: [www.canadagap.ca/certification/certification-options/](http://www.canadagap.ca/certification/certification-options/)
- **Consistent Option C participation levels:** The proportion of program participants enrolled in Option C remains consistent with 2022 levels, at 57% of participating companies. Option D has decreased to 4%, as brokerage operations were moved to the new Option F last year. Overall participation in CanadaGAP from the repacking and wholesaling sector remains stable.



## Commodity and Sector Trends

- Declines were seen in participation by fruit producers (both in the Tree and Vine Fruit and Small Fruit crop groupings) in 2023, with corresponding proportional increases in participation by the field and greenhouse vegetable sectors, including a slight rise among potato producers.
- For the purposes of analyzing participation trends, enrolment figures are broken down by five crop groupings:
  - Tree and Vine Fruit
  - Field Vegetables
  - Potatoes
  - Small Fruit
  - Greenhouse

Total participation in CanadaGAP is 100%. The proportion of that total occupied by each crop grouping is presented below and within the attached program statistics, where further details as well as a provincial breakdown are included. Data is current as of August 31, 2023.

### Proportion of CanadaGAP Participants represented by crop grouping:

Based on # of producers	Tree and Vine Fruit	Field Vegetables	Potatoes	Small Fruit	Greenhouse	Repacking, wholesale & brokerage	Total CanadaGAP Participation
<b>Percentage of CanadaGAP participants in 2023</b>	21%	29%	19%	17%	7%	7%	100%
<b>For comparison:</b>							
<b>2022</b>	24%	27%	18%	19%	6%	6%	100%
<b>2021</b>	21%	29%	19%	19%	6%	5%	100%
<b>2020</b>	24%	30%	17%	18%	6%	5%	100%
<b>2019</b>	24%	29%	18%	19%	7%	3%	100%
<b>2018</b>	24%	27%	18%	20%	8%	3%	100%
<b>2017</b>	24%	25%	19%	21%	8%	3%	100%
<b>2016</b>	30%	24%	18%	20%	8%	Not reported	100%
<b>2015</b>	33%	23%	18%	18%	8%	Not reported	100%

## Audit Trends

- *Number of CanadaGAP Audits (for Options A1, A2, C, D, E and F, and Group Management System audits)*

	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
<b>No. of audits reported</b>	1885	1921	2019	1748	1650	1589	1538

Reporting period from September 1 to August 31 based on certificates issued.

In addition, approximately 100 farms that belong to groups are audited each year.

- *Average Audit Score by Crop Grouping (from September 1 to August 31 based on certificates issued)*

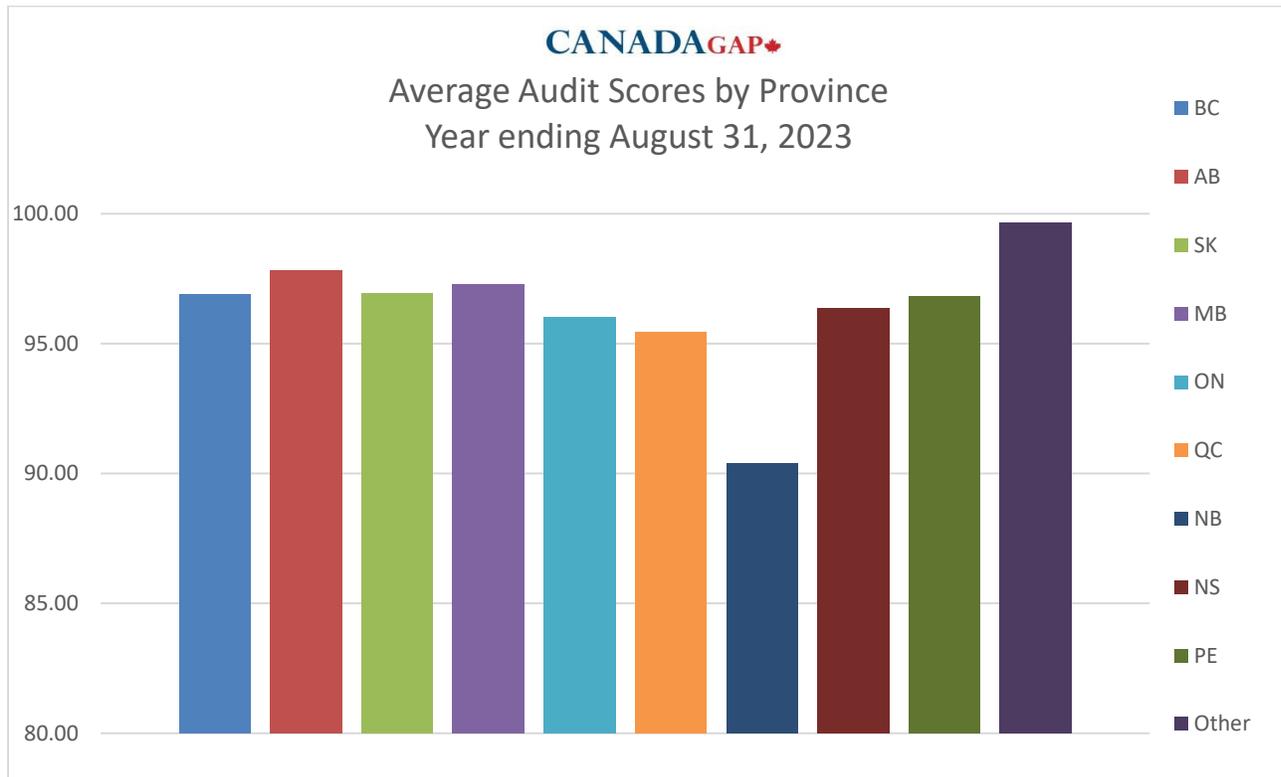
<i>Crop Grouping</i>	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
<b>Potato</b>	95.91	95.81	94.55	94.59	94.46	94.98
<b>Greenhouse</b>	97.43	97.24	96.91	95.66	96.63	96.36
<b>Tree &amp; Vine Fruit</b>	95.97	94.61	93.54	93.76	92.84	93.75
<b>Leafy Vegetable &amp; Cruciferae</b>	96.51	95.57	93.95	93.78	93.82	94.61
<b>Small Fruit</b>	96.89	95.77	94.45	94.25	92.92	93.29
<b>Combined Vegetable</b>	97.14	96.18	94.87	94.38	94.50	94.61
<b>Overall Average</b>	<b>96.38</b>	95.70	94.61	94.28	93.98	94.34

As producers commit to continuous improvement in their food safety program, the result is **the highest ever average audit score for CanadaGAP program participants in 2023.**

Based on preliminary audit results (before corrective actions were implemented), the overall average of **96.38%** was measured across participants of all CanadaGAP certification options. Average audit scores in the past year are slightly higher across all commodity groups covered by the CanadaGAP program, including Tree and Vine Fruit, Potatoes, Greenhouse, Field Vegetables, and Small Fruit.

Big congratulations are extended to CanadaGAP-certified companies, for continuing to maintain and achieve high levels of food safety within their operations!

The graph below illustrates average audit scores by province:



## Random Audit Programme

CanadaGAP offers certification on a four-year cycle to companies participating in Option A1 and A2. These certification options are not GFSI-recognized as they do not fully meet GFSI benchmarking requirements.

To become certified, companies undergo a scheduled audit in the first year of the four-year cycle. To be recertified in the subsequent three years, they may be randomly chosen for an audit in any or all of the three years. If they are not randomly selected, they must complete a self-declaration and self-assessment and submit it to the Certification Body to demonstrate their ongoing adherence to program requirements.

The table below compares certification audit scores to random audit scores since 2012. The interesting trends seen over the last six years continues, with operations randomly selected for an audit achieving on average *higher scores* than Option A1/A2 operations undergoing their regularly scheduled audit. Data pertaining to 2023 random audits will be available in 2024.

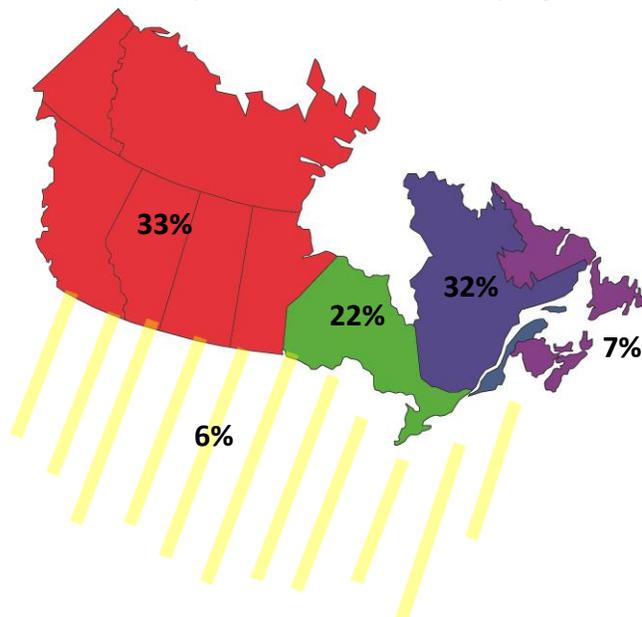


## CanadaGAP Random Audit Results for Option A1 and A2

Year	Average Audit Score during Regular 4-year Audit	Average Audit Score for Random Audits
2012	87.56	90.65
2013	91.85	91.55
2014	90.14	91.92
2015	91.03	93.50
2016	91.16	88.05
2017	91.06	93.64
2018	91.82	92.92
2019	90.35	92.69
2020	90.82	94.40
2021	91.82	93.26
2022	92.30	94.52

## CanadaGAP Auditors

- The auditor pool consists of 69 active and qualified CanadaGAP auditors currently working for a Certification Body (CB). This represents 13% of those who have taken the CanadaGAP auditor training course and 22% of those who have passed the course.
- The map below shows auditors by region:



	# of auditors	Percentage
West	23	33%
Ontario	15	22%
Quebec	22	32%
Atlantic	5	7%
U.S./LatAm	4	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100%</b>

Data current as of October 31, 2023

With respect to the CanadaGAP auditor pool, 2023 represented a significant year of growth in recruiting new auditors. Some of the main trends included:

- 1) **A significant increase in the number of auditors in Quebec:** The number of auditors in Quebec continued to grow. Despite several retirements, the overall auditor pool in Quebec increased by 5 new auditors in 2023.
- 2) **Instability in Certification Body and Auditor Pool:** Fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic continues to be seen in the CanadaGAP auditor pool. Since 2020, auditor retirements have been occurring at an unprecedented rate. CanadaGAP and certification bodies have experienced double the usual number of auditor retirements and new recruits during this period. This has required extra time to vet and qualify potential candidates.

Some factors affecting the decision of auditors to depart the program have included:

- Increased difficulty of travel
- Safety concerns especially for older auditors
- Remote auditing has been a frustrating experience for auditors and auditees
- Auditors who were on the cusp of burnout or who were considering retirement were pushed into leaving the profession during the pandemic
- New requirements around unannounced audits that make auditing scheduling and logistics on-farm even more challenging.

One third of the CanadaGAP auditor pool has turned over since 2021. The spate of recent departures has exacerbated an already existing auditor shortage. As a result, retention and recruitments efforts by CanadaGAP and the certification bodies have greatly intensified.



### **Training of New CanadaGAP Auditors**

In the last two years, double the number of auditor training courses have been offered to make training available to new recruits for the CanadaGAP auditor pool.

Since 2020, CanadaGAP auditor training courses have been offered remotely due to the pandemic. Virtual courses have reached not only more potential auditor candidates, but also consultants, food safety managers and other stakeholders who attend the courses for education purposes.

Although the course is primarily designed to train potential auditors, the practical knowledge provided in the auditor training course is as beneficial to a food safety manager who is implementing the program at their operation as it is for an auditor who is being trained to verify compliance.

### Summary of CanadaGAP Auditor Training sessions:

	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	Total since 2008
Number of people who have taken auditor training course	47	50	59	37	25	19	48	538
Number of people who passed the course to date*	18	28	31	13	17	11	32	315
Percentage of people who passed the course to date*	60%	68%	70%	52%	77%	65%	70%	67%
Number of auditor training sessions	7	8	5	5	6	3	7	80

*\*Results are cumulative as of December 21, 2023. All seven courses from 2023 have exam rewrites still ongoing (participants have one year from the date they took the training to complete all exams attempts). Data is not yet complete. These numbers are therefore not considered final or representative. Those who attended the course for educational purposes only were not included when calculating the number or the percentage of people who passed the course.*

### CanadaGAP Repacking and Wholesaling Auditor Training

The scope of the CanadaGAP program has included certification for repacking and wholesaling operations since 2014. Currently, 36 CanadaGAP auditors (53% of active auditors) are qualified to perform repacking and wholesaling audits.

Training of new and current auditors for the additional scope is ongoing. The Repacking and Wholesaling training unit is now embedded within the regular CanadaGAP Auditor Training course for new auditor candidates. At their discretion, Certification Bodies may also opt to offer training in the additional scope to their existing pool of auditors who may not yet hold this qualification.

### CanadaGAP Auditor Refresher Training and Testing

First introduced in 2014, auditor refresher training and assessment have been administered by CanadaGAP every two years to ensure ongoing auditor comprehension of program requirements, including new requirements that have been recently introduced. It is mandatory for currently qualified auditors to complete refresher assessments, and for all internal auditors who work for Groups (under certification Option B).

The most recent refresher assessment was completed in 2020. Generally speaking, auditor refresher assessment is completed every two to three years. Due to resource pressures in 2023, CanadaGAP

management made the decision to delay refresher testing until fall/winter of 2024-2025. Instead, to ensure auditors continue to maintain their knowledge of current requirements, four mandatory auditor refresher ‘Question and Answer’ webinar sessions (two English and two French sessions) were held in December 2023 for active CanadaGAP auditors.

### ***Train-the-Auditor Trainer – New Auditor Trainers and Refresher Testing***

Trainers delivering the CanadaGAP Auditor Training Course must first be qualified and approved by CanadaGAP. Trainers must have passed their original CanadaGAP Auditor Training course with at least 90%, then must complete an additional Train-the-Auditor-Trainer course.

In March 2023, a one-on-one course was offered virtually by CanadaGAP to one candidate, who subsequently qualified as an approved trainer. A private course was offered by Food Safety Solutions in August 2023 for two candidates who are now also approved CanadaGAP auditor trainers.

Auditor trainers must also undergo periodic refresher testing by CanadaGAP. Starting in 2022, trainers’ credentials are now valid for a five-year period, after which approved trainers must maintain their competency by successfully completing refresher testing. In 2022, eight qualified trainers who were up for renewal successfully completed their refresher exams. They will be retested again in 2027 alongside the three newly qualified trainers.

### **Certification Bodies**

The following six Certification Bodies were licensed to offer CanadaGAP audits and certification in 2023:

- Bureau de normalisation du Québec (BNQ)
- Control Union
- dicentra
- MSVS (Management Systems Verification Services Canada Inc.)
- NSF Canada Ag
- TSLC (TSL Certification Services International Canada Ltd.)



2023 was an exceptionally busy year for CanadaGAP signing on new service providers for delivery of audit and certification services.

- In February 2023, CanadaGAP welcomed **TSLC** as a newly licensed Certification Body. TSLC is located in Canada, and affiliated with the global organization TSL Certification Services International Ltd. (TSL CSI), an ANAB accredited Certification Body. In July, subcontractor Gestion Qualiterra inc. partnered with TSLC to continue to offer audit services in Quebec, allowing TSLC to offer audits throughout Canada.
- In April 2023, **dicentra** was announced as a new Certification Body for CanadaGAP, with audit and certification services operational by the summer. dicentra is an ANSI National Standards Board (ANAB) accredited certification body that is headquartered in Toronto, and that offers audits to several other food safety programs.
- In December 2023, CanadaGAP welcomed **MSVS** as a Certification Body partner. MSVS is a new Canadian owned and operated certification body with headquarters in Abbotsford, British Columbia. Cofounders Isabel Varey and Jovana Mitich have expertise in agriculture, food safety and the certification process; they are also the first two recipients (serving English Canada) of the Sheri Nielson Auditor Recognition Award.

Among the other changes to the certification body roster this year, Perry Johnson Registrars Food Safety, Inc., a certification body that joined the program as a service provider in 2020, opted to cease offering CanadaGAP audits and certification in March 2023.

CanadaGAP auditors are employed or contracted directly by the Certification Body, and some auditors work for more than one CB. Information about each Certification Body is available on the CanadaGAP website at: <https://www.canadagap.ca/certification/certification-bodies/>

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## Integrity Programme to Oversee Certification Body and Auditor Performance

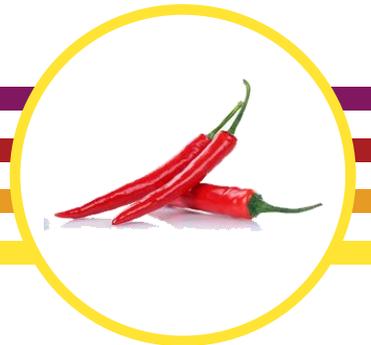
CanadaGAP's integrity surveillance programme for Certification Bodies consists of:

- Mandatory annual performance review meeting with each CB
- Service standards set out in licensing agreements, monitored and reported on annually
- Certification Body office audits encompassing all service providers over a 5-year cycle (NSF: 2019; Gestion Qualiterra: 2021; PJRFSI: 2022; NSF: 2023; BNQ and TSLC: planned for 2024)
- Audit report spot checks (at least one per auditor each year)
- CanadaGAP participation on CB calls where auditors receive updates and are calibrated to program requirements and scoring. CanadaGAP staff have an opportunity in this way to monitor auditor performance, gaps in auditor knowledge, etc.

- Witness audits – our goal is to see every auditor at least once over the 5-year audit cycle
- Auditor Refresher Testing is repeated on a regular basis to ensure ongoing auditor comprehension of CanadaGAP program requirements
- Complaints monitoring and ongoing follow-up.

## What’s Ahead for 2024?

- Correction Notice will be issued for CanadaGAP Food Safety Manuals (Version 10.0) in 2024, but no new version will be released
- Updated Audit Checklist will be published in March for 2024 audits (effective date: April 1)
- CanadaGAP will be re-benchmarking the program to the next version of the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements in 2024-2025
- CanadaGAP Auditor Refresher Testing was deferred from 2023 and is planned for Q4 of 2024
- Active engagement in GFSI activities will continue, including participation in the US-Canada Local Group, various GFSI “Race to the Top” initiatives, and regular meetings with the GFSI Steering Committee and management
- Board Strategic Planning activities will continue into 2024



## Thank you to CanadaGAP Staff and Valued Partners

CanadaGAP extends sincere thanks and appreciation to our partners at the Certification Bodies – BNQ, Control Union, dicentra, MSVS, NSF Canada Ag and TSLC – and to each hard-working CanadaGAP auditor.

Management and directors wish to express heartfelt thanks to the small, dedicated team of highly competent staff members who are instrumental to the smooth and efficient functioning of the CanadaGAP program.

CanadaGAP thanks the hard-working volunteers from industry who make up our talented Board of Directors and Technical Advisory Committee.

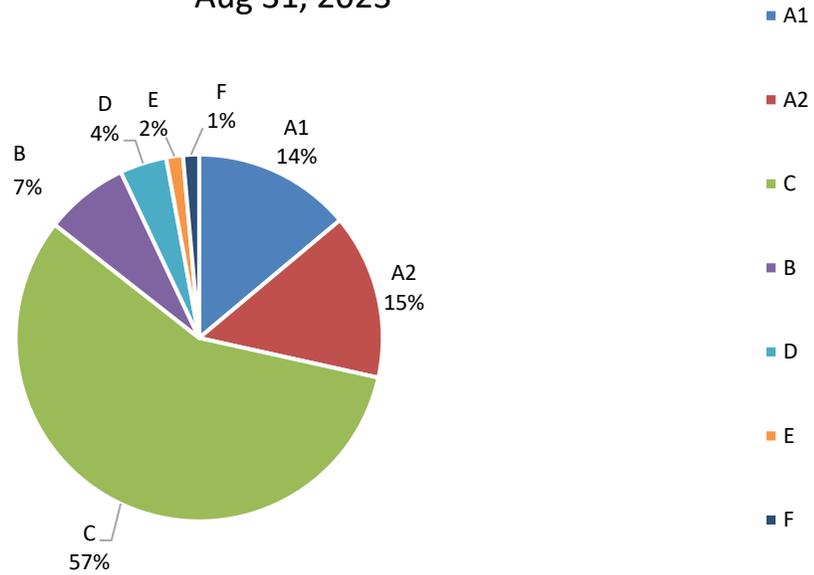
CanadaGAP Program staff and Directors recognize and appreciate the efforts of every CanadaGAP-certified operation in their commitment to producing food safely for the benefit of all.

# **CanadaGAP**

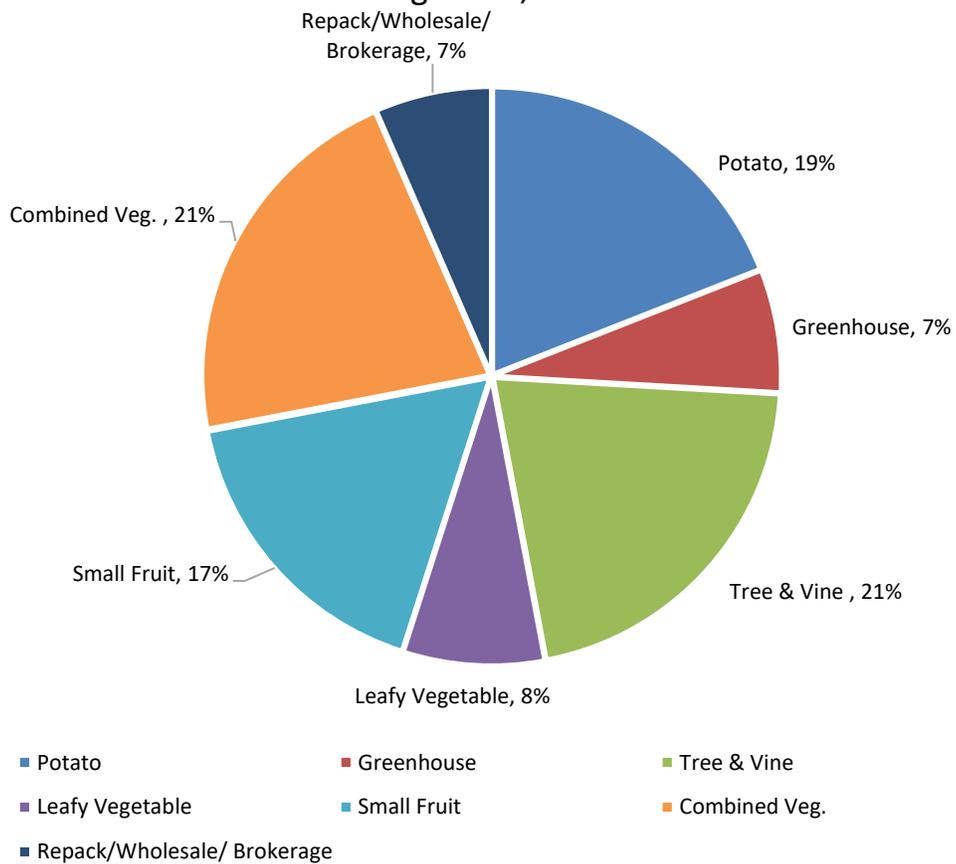
## **Program Uptake**

### **Statistics**

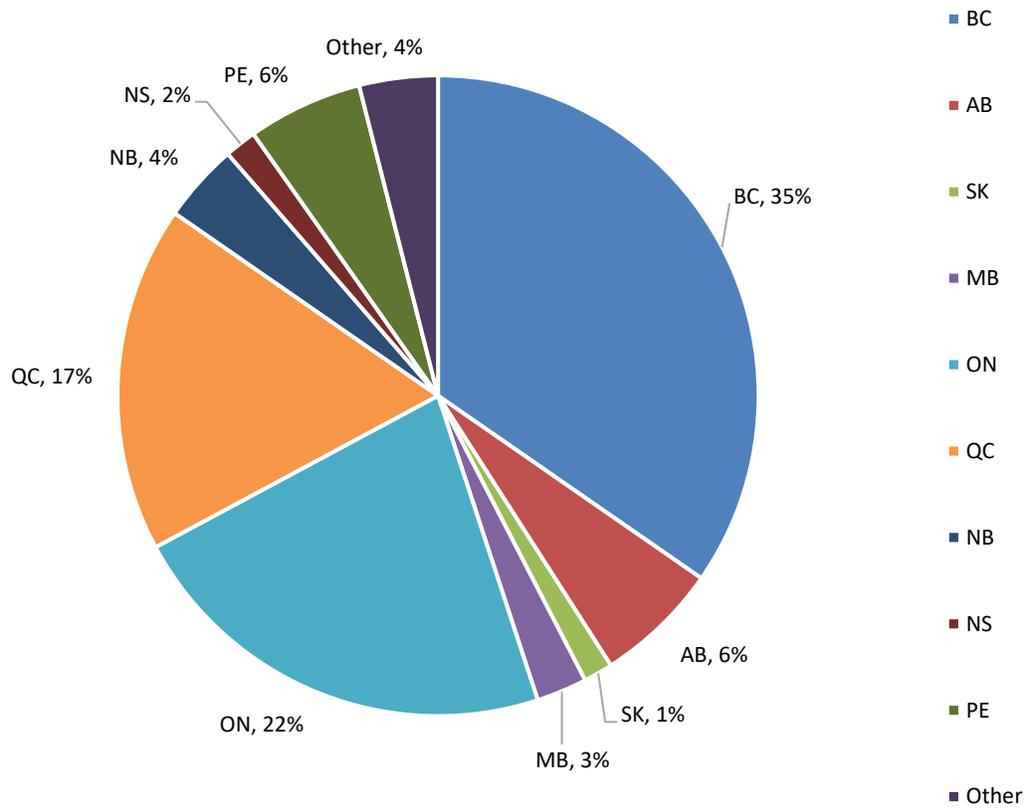
### Participation by option Aug 31, 2023



### Program uptake by commodity August 31, 2023



Operations enrolled by province Aug 31, 2023



Commodity by Province - August 31, 2023

