

CANADAGAP ANNUAL REPORT

Highlights from 2020



Photo by Glenn Lowson

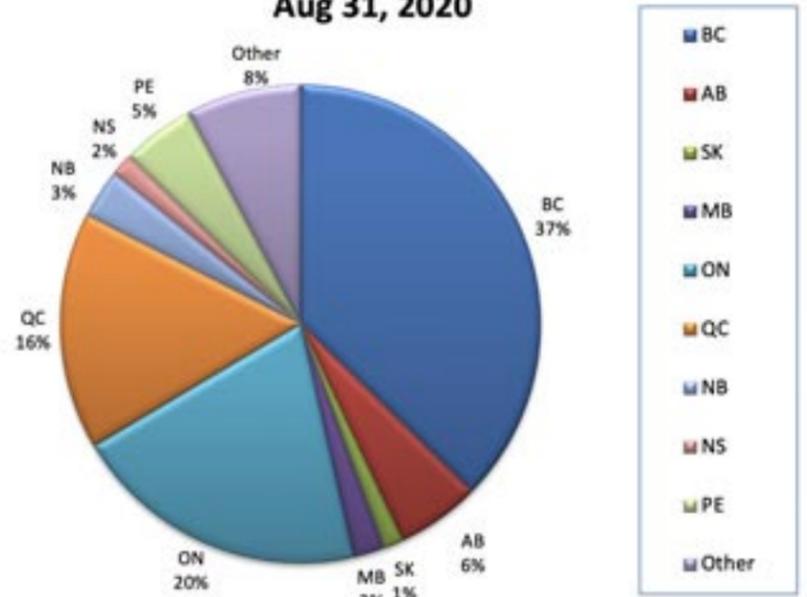
HEATHER GALE

With the arrival of the global coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic early in the year, 2020 brought unprecedented challenges to the food industry globally and within Canada. As in all sectors, the regular course of business for fresh produce operations and food safety programs was profoundly

disrupted. The industry has risen to the challenge and shown great resilience and flexibility in these uncertain and difficult times. CanadaGAP and its partner Certification Bodies have also worked hard to be responsive and creative in adapting to the shifting landscape. Some of the program adjustments that have been required over the course of 2020 include:

- Postponement of audits and extensions of CanadaGAP certificates for up to six months, when audits could not proceed as planned.
- Development and implementation of new procedures to allow for CanadaGAP audits to be performed using partially remote auditing methods, to reduce the auditor's time on-site.

Operations Enrolled by Province
Aug 31, 2020



- Extensive communications with all stakeholders, including program participants, producer organization representatives, auditors and certification bodies, buyers and customers in the retail, processing and food service sectors, and all levels of government.

requirements, and receive approval from CFIA for any proposed changes to the program. In August 2020, CanadaGAP submitted materials as required for CFIA to complete their annual review of changes prior to publication of the next version of the CanadaGAP Program.

- Rescheduling of meetings and events to an online format.

CanadaGAP anticipates publishing updates to the CanadaGAP Food Safety Manuals (Version 9.0) in December 2020, with an implementation date for CanadaGAP audits effective April 1, 2021. The advance publication of new Lot Code requirements will assist operations in complying with CFIA's planned enforcement of corresponding Lot Code requirements in the Safe Food for Canadians Regulations beginning on January 15, 2021.

- Ongoing updates to a dedicated COVID-19 webpage on the CanadaGAP website, focused on helping CanadaGAP program participants access timely and helpful resources to navigate the dynamic demands of adjusting to COVID-19 within their operations.

Alongside the challenges of enabling and maintaining a focus on the safe production and handling of fresh fruits and vegetables during the pandemic, CanadaGAP was successful in undertaking the following activities over the course of the past year:

- **Updates to the CanadaGAP Food Safety Manuals:** Version 8.0 of the CanadaGAP Food Safety Manuals was released in January 2020, and took effect on April 1, 2020. As in previous years, a number of changes to the manuals were driven by new GFSI Benchmarking Requirements.

- **Re-benchmarking to GFSI – in progress:** CanadaGAP has been benchmarked and officially recognized by the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) since 2010. To maintain recognition, CanadaGAP undertook re-benchmarking to GFSI Version 2020 during the summer months. While re-benchmarking activities are not yet complete, GFSI recognition remains a priority for the program, as it is crucial to securing support for CanadaGAP certification from retailers, processors and food service customers.

- **Changes to CanadaGAP program scope:** Driven by changing risk profiles and emerging research, several technical decisions were implemented in 2020 with respect to crops and activities that are eligible for CanadaGAP certification. In 2020, aquaponics and microgreens were removed from the scope of the CanadaGAP program for production, packing and storage activities. Meanwhile, the program scope was expanded to include all commodities grown in non-controlled environments (e.g., high and low tunnels).

- **Maintaining government recognition:** CanadaGAP first received full Government Recognition in 2017 under the Canadian Government Food Safety Recognition Program. To maintain government recognition, CanadaGAP must continue to demonstrate sound management of the certification system, align with all applicable regulatory

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• **New certification body:** Perry Johnson Registrars Food Safety, Inc. (PJRFSI) was licensed by CanAgPlus in July 2020 as the newest certification body offering CanadaGAP audits in Canada (excluding Quebec) and the United States. Perry Johnson Registrars Food Safety, Inc. has a demonstrated history of providing value-added food safety certifications to clients, with a track record of rigour and consistency throughout the certification audit process. PJRFSI joined NSF Canada Ag and Bureau de normalisation du Québec (BNQ) in the list of available certification bodies for CanadaGAP.

• **Responsive/electronic documentation solutions:** The CanadaGAP Program has made efforts in recent years to respond to program participants requesting solutions to challenges related to documentation and record-keeping. We have increased our partnerships with interested affiliate organizations who have developed proprietary software for record-keeping, a fillable Word version of the manuals, and translation of the CanadaGAP template forms in various languages. For several years now we have made the full manuals available in Spanish as a resource.

In 2020 CanadaGAP also made the food safety manuals and the self-assessment checklist available in a fillable PDF format. CanadaGAP is in the process of surveying program participants to determine if the resources provided directly by CanadaGAP have been useful to users.

Participation trends

The following participation trends are noteworthy for 2020:

- Participation in 2020 rose most markedly among producers in Ontario and the United States.
- Among commodity groupings, a small increase in participation was seen in the Field Vegetable industry, with a slight proportional drop in participation from the Greenhouse, Potato and Small Fruit sectors.
- BC continues to maintain the highest enrolment levels overall, at 36% of all CanadaGAP-certified companies.
- Growth in Option D enrolments for repacking, wholesaling, and brokerage operations continues to increase, now representing 5% of all CanadaGAP-certified companies. Close to 120 program participants are enrolled in Option D.
- Group certifications comprise nearly 20% of all enrolments,

while 23% of certified companies are enrolled in the four-year audit cycle. The number of program participants moving to an annual audit under Option C continues to increase. Option C now includes 58% of all participants, up 5% from 2019.

• For the purposes of analyzing participation trends, enrolment figures are broken down by five crop groupings:

- o Tree and Vine Fruit
- o Field Vegetables
- o Potatoes
- o Small Fruit
- o 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, 2020.

Random Audit Programme

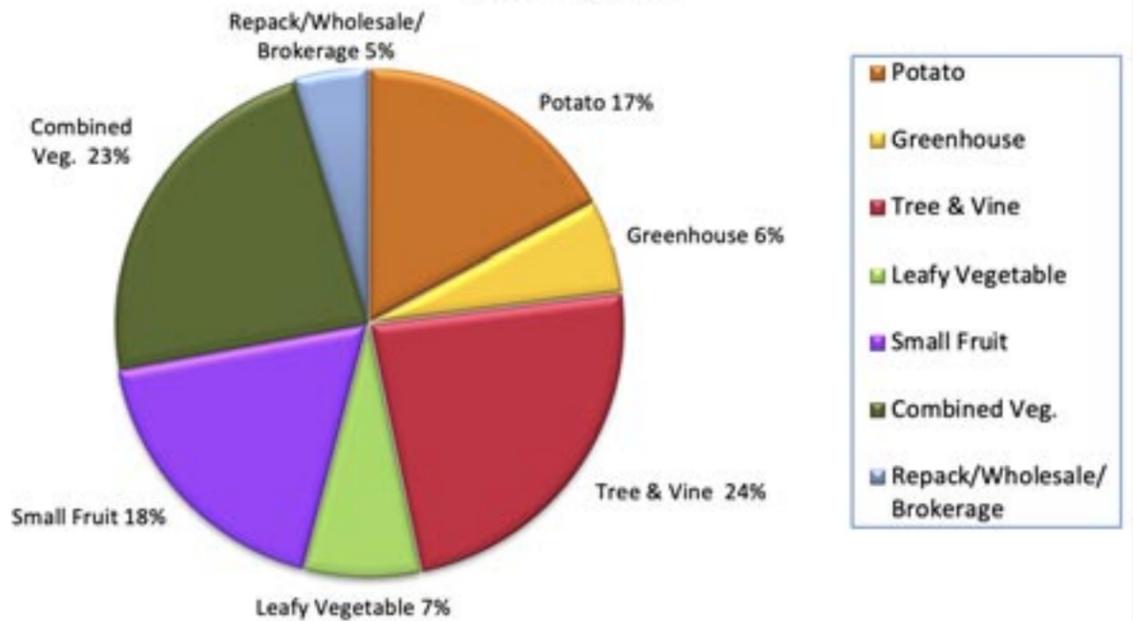
CanadaGAP offers certification on a four-year cycle to companies participating in Option A1 and A2. These certification options are not GFSI-recognized as they do not entail an annual on-site audit. To become certified, companies undergo a scheduled audit in the first year of the four-year cycle. To 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. Interestingly, for the last three years, operations randomly selected for an audit have, on average, achieved slightly higher scores than Option A1/A2 operations undergoing their regularly scheduled audit. Data pertaining to 2020 random audits will be available in 2021.

What's ahead for 2021?

- Updated CanadaGAP Food Safety Manuals (Version 9.0) will be published in December 2020, with implementation of new requirements effective April 1, 2021
- Relaxation of certain GFSI technical requirements for operations enrolled in CanadaGAP certification options A1 and A2 will be announced in December 2020, in conjunction with the release of the next version of the CanadaGAP Food Safety Manuals – stay tuned!

Proportion of CanadaGAP participants represented by crop grouping August 31, 2020



- Conclude GFSI re-benchmarking to Version 2020
- Engagement in GFSI technical working groups for Leafy Greens and various "Race to the Top" initiatives will be maintained. CanadaGAP is a member of several task groups, including one that is developing Auditor Training benchmarking requirements and expectations for

continuous professional development, and another that is addressing Key Performance Indicators for monitoring of Certification Bodies and Certification Programme Owners.

- Complete refresher testing for CanadaGAP auditors
- CanadaGAP will continue its active participation in the development of the new

ISO/IEC 22003-2 standard, which could have a significant impact in future on CanadaGAP and its Certification Bodies

Heather Gale is the executive director of CanAgPlus, the group that administrates the CanadaGAP program.



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