



Program Overview

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Disclaimer

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CanadaGAP® is a program developed in Canada to promote Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) for fruit and vegetable suppliers.



Presentation Outline

- What is CanadaGAP?
- Government Recognition
- GFSI Benchmarking
- Scope & Requirements
- Certification
- Certification Options
- Costs & Benefits



What is CanadaGAP®?

- A **food safety standard** for fresh fruit and vegetable suppliers.
- A **certification program** for companies to demonstrate to their customers that they meet food safety requirements.
- HACCP-based.
- Government-recognized.
- GFSI-recognized.



Program Scope

- The program consists of commodity-specific food safety requirements based on published, peer-reviewed science.
- Requirements address the hazards associated with fresh fruits and vegetables grown commercially in Canada.
- Covers:
 - **Production, Packing, Storage**
– of harvested product.
 - **Repacking, Wholesaling and Brokerage**
– of market product.



Crops Covered

- Production, Packing and Storage:

- Combined Vegetables
- Tree and Vine Fruit
- Small Fruit
- Potato
- Greenhouse Product
- Leafy Vegetable and Cruciferae



- Repacking, Wholesale and Brokerage:

- **All fresh fruits and vegetables** except for sprouts, product in hermetically sealed containers, minimally processed fruits and vegetables



Third Party Certification

- CanadaGAP does not perform the audits itself
- Audits are performed by third party certification bodies
- Certification bodies must:
 - operate according to certification rules set out in international standards (ISO/IEC 17065)
 - be accredited and monitored by a national Accreditation Body that belongs to the International Accreditation Forum (e.g., Standards Council of Canada, ANSI National Accreditation Board (ANAB))
 - be licensed by and accountable to CanadaGAP for the delivery of audits



Who is Certified?

- The program launched in 2008 and there are approximately 3,000 companies* that are currently active.
- Less than 10% of participating producers have enrolled through a group.
- CanadaGAP manuals and training tools have been distributed to thousands of producers across Canada.
- The decision to enrol in CanadaGAP is voluntary and **market-driven**.
- The program enjoys strong support from retailers, food service customers and processors (among others: Loblaws, Walmart, Metro, Sobeys, Sysco, GFS, McCain Foods, Simplot, Lamb-Weston, Cavendish).

** Statistics are current as of August 31, 2023**



Government Recognition

- In 2017, CanadaGAP received full Government Recognition.
- The recognition indicates that CanadaGAP meets all government requirements for a technically sound, effectively delivered food safety program.
- Full Government Recognition positions the program to be a “model system” for program participants needing to meet federal regulatory requirements.



Technical Review

- The standard has been rigorously reviewed for technical soundness by Canadian federal and provincial governments through the Government Food Safety Recognition Program, led by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.
- Over a seven-year period, the program underwent seven distinct Technical Review processes, one for each of six crop groupings and one for repacking and wholesaling.
- The process involved in-depth review and close examination by government officials of technical materials:
 - Generic HACCP models (hazard analyses)
 - CanadaGAP manuals and checklist
 - Program management system
- All modules were deemed technically sound.



CanadaGAP and GFSI

- CanadaGAP is officially recognized by the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) for certification options B, C, and D.
- GFSI is an international benchmarking scheme that evaluates food safety programs against a set of requirements agreed on by retailers, manufacturers and other stakeholders. See: www.mygfsi.com
- GFSI examines both the *technical requirements* and the scheme *management system*.
- GFSI recognition of CanadaGAP was first granted in 2010. Re-benchmarking to GFSI requirements occurs as necessary and was most recently completed against Version 2020.



A Brief History

- CanadaGAP originated from the On-Farm Food Safety Program for Horticulture, an initiative coordinated by the Canadian Horticultural Council (now the Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada) starting in the late 1990s.
- Program development was made possible with funding from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.
- CanadaGAP® was launched in 2008 as a full certification program.
- In 2012 program ownership and operations transferred to a newly established not-for-profit corporation, CanAgPlus.



Program Governance

- A Board of Directors oversees program management.
- Election of the Board of Directors occurs during the Annual General Meeting of CanAgPlus.
- Voting members are the companies enrolled for CanadaGAP certification with accounts in good standing.
- The elected Board consists of eight directors.



Program Development and Maintenance

- Program development involved extensive outreach to industry members and organizations over a ten-year period.
- Eight commodity-specific Working Groups contributed to development.
- Representatives included:
 - Individual growers and packers
 - Association staff members
 - Food safety experts
 - Government officials
 - Buyers and end users



** Developed by and for Canada's fruit and vegetable industry **



Ongoing Role for Industry

- Technical materials are maintained and updated by CanadaGAP with input from the Technical Advisory Committee.
- The Committee is made up of food safety experts and industry representatives and serves an advisory role to the CanAgPlus Board of Directors.
- Meets regularly to review:
 - proposed revisions to CanadaGAP manuals and HACCP models.
 - updates to the audit checklist, self-assessment checklist, training materials or other technical documents.
- Brings forward technical issues on behalf of other stakeholders; makes recommendations to the Board.





Program Requirements

Program Requirements

- Requirements of the standard are set out in:
 - CanadaGAP Food Safety Manual for Fruits and Vegetables
 - CanadaGAP Food Safety Manual for Greenhouse Production
 - CanadaGAP Audit Checklist
- These documents provide specific information about what operators must do to comply with the standard
- The manuals offer a user-friendly toolkit to help participants understand food safety risks and document their program
 - Users check off or write down applicable procedures
 - Guidance is given for analysis of site-specific risks



CanadaGAP Manuals

- Contain:
 - General **requirements** – WHAT users must do
 - Specific **procedures** – HOW to meet the requirements
 - Templates for the **records** that must be kept
- Prescriptive approach:
 - what needs to be done to prevent contamination
 - possible/acceptable methods
 - how often (SSOPs)
- All **applicable** checkboxes are MUST DO's
- Manual is completed and reviewed at least once a year
- Forms are completed on an ongoing basis



Benefits of the Manuals

- Goals:
 - ☐ Provide ready-made package to users
 - ☐ Document the steps being taken to minimize the risk of contamination to fresh produce
 - ☐ Show due diligence
 - ☐ Minimize need for expensive consultants
 - ☐ Easy to use and implement “off-the-shelf”
- Checklists minimize writing out lengthy procedures
- An effective educational tool
- Free download at www.canadagap.ca



Key Elements for Food Safety

- Program Review
- Commodity Starter Products
- Premises
- Equipment
- Agronomic Inputs
- Agricultural Water
- Cleaning and Maintenance Materials
- Waste Management
- Personal Hygiene Facilities
- Employee Training & Illness
- Visitor Policy
- Water (for Fluming and Cleaning)
- Ice
- Pest Control Program
- Packaging Materials
- Growing and Harvesting
- Sorting, Grading, Packing, Repacking and Brokerage
- Storage of Product
- Transportation
- Identification and Traceability
- Deviations and Crisis Management



Basic Principles

- The purpose of a food safety program is to:
- Figure out where contamination could be introduced, and mitigate the potential risk of contamination occurring
- If contamination is introduced, other steps in the production process *may* reduce contamination but will not eliminate it (e.g., washing)
 - Risk reduction is a cumulative process – every small measure taken to prevent contamination increases the chance that product will not get contaminated
- This is characterized as the “hurdle effect”

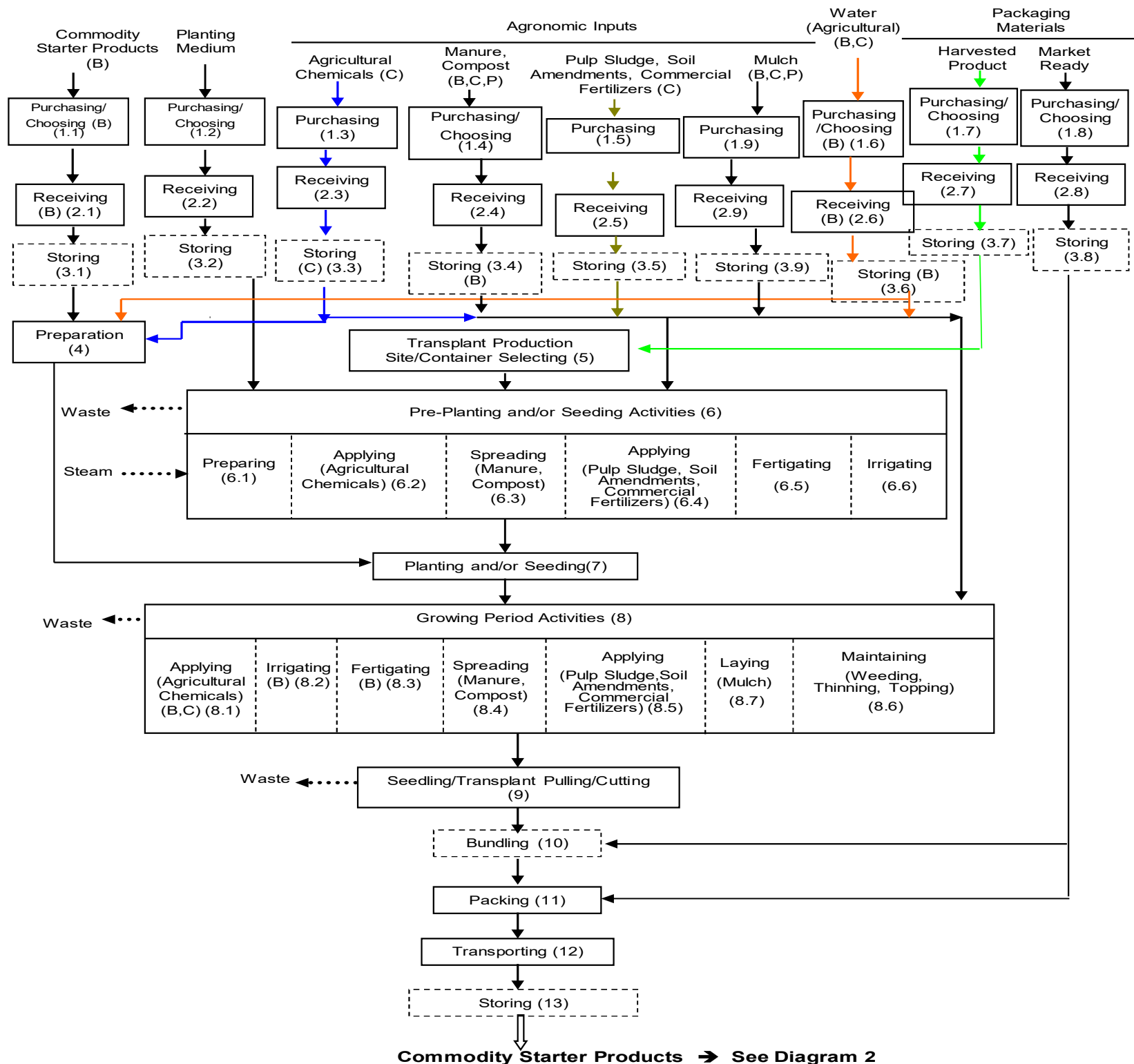


HACCP-Based

BENEFITS FOR CANADAGAP PROGRAM USERS

- Users can implement the manuals knowing a complete hazard analysis has been done
- The practices in the CanadaGAP Manuals are derived from generic HACCP models developed by CanadaGAP and approved by federal and provincial governments
- Individual operations *do not need* to develop their own site-specific HACCP plan unless they are repacking and wholesaling – a generic model is available from CanadaGAP
- The manuals translate the technical language (hazards and control measures) into concrete procedures to follow





Commodity Starter Products → See Diagram 2

More Resources Available

Appendices to the manuals include:

- ☐ Recall Program template
- ☐ Examples on key topics, such as:
 - Water testing & treatment
 - Composting procedures
 - Checklist to assist with assessment of water sources
- ☐ Reference lists, sources, links and other resource materials
- ☐ Training materials & signs
- Printable training resources can be downloaded from www.canadagap.ca



Certification



Audits and Certification

- Six certification bodies are currently licensed by CanadaGAP to offer audits and certification against the standard:

- **Bureau de normalisation du Québec (BNQ)**



Bureau de normalisation
du Québec

- **Control Union**



- **dicentra**



- **MSVS** (Management Systems Verification Services Canada Inc.)



- **NSF Canada Ag** (NSF Canada Agricultural Certification Company)



- **TSLC** (TSL Certification Services International Canada Ltd.)



- Audit services are available in Canada, the U.S., and Latin America
- Over 65 qualified auditors active
- The certification bodies and CanadaGAP publish the names of certified companies

Becoming Certified

- Companies must enroll for certification in the program through CanadaGAP
- First, visit www.canadagap.ca to:
 - Obtain a CanadaGAP Manual
 - Access other resources you may need
- Implement your program
 - Companies can best prepare by using the CanadaGAP manuals and record-keeping templates (or customizing them to your operation)



Enrolling in CanadaGAP

- From the CanadaGAP website www.canadagap.ca
 - ☐ Download the program enrolment form
 - ☐ Link to information about CanadaGAP-licensed Certification Bodies
- Get quotes from the Certification Bodies, and choose your audit service provider
- Understand your customer requirements and choose the appropriate certification option (A1, A2, B, C, D, E or F)
- Send the completed enrolment form and payment of annual program fee to CanadaGAP



Certification Options

- There are seven different options available for CanadaGAP certification, to respond to differences in:
 - ☐ Cost considerations: audit frequency, industry size/structure
 - ☐ Market requirements (some customers require certification to a GFSI-recognized scheme, others don't)

Not GFSI recognized	GFSI-recognized
Option A1	Option B (Group Certification)
Option A2	Option C
Option E	Option D
Option F	



GFSI-Recognized Options

- **Option B: Group Certification**

- Group Management System effectively functions as a surrogate certification body for the Group's members
- Group internally audits all of its members annually
- Certification body audits Group Management System annually
- Certification body audits a sampling of group members
- Cost savings are achievable usually for larger groups, based on economies of scale and making use of existing staff, resources and management systems already in place



GFSI-Recognized Options (cont.)

- **Option C: Annual Audit**

- Annual, on-site audit
- Production, Packing, Storage Operations
- Individual certification

- **Option D: Annual Audit**

- Annual, on-site audit
- Repacking and wholesaling operations only
- Individual certification
- Must maintain a site-specific HACCP model



Certification Options

NOT BENCHMARKED TO GFSI

- **Option A1:** Four year audit cycle
 - Fixed, scheduled audit every four years
 - Mandatory surveillance (random audits and self-assessments) in the intervening years
 - Self-assessments are reviewed by the certification body
 - Meets Canadian Government Recognition requirements
- **Option A2:** Variable four year audit cycle
 - Same as A1, except – if selected for a random audit under the surveillance program, the next scheduled audit would be four years after the random audit



Certification Options

NOT BENCHMARKED TO GFSI

- **Option E:** Annual on-site audit
 - On-site audit by Certification Body
 - Meet the same food safety requirements as Option C (GFSI-recognized), based on CanadaGAP Food Safety Manuals
 - Meets Canadian Government Recognition requirements
- **Option F:** Annual on-site audit
 - Meet the same food safety requirements as Option D (GFSI-recognized), based on CanadaGAP Food Safety Manuals



Becoming Certified: Next Steps

- Submit your enrolment form as early as possible. A minimum of 3 weeks is required, but more lead time to carry out pre-audit activities is preferable
 - E.g., during busy periods (harvest and packing season, etc.) auditors may not be available
- Don't wait until the last minute to schedule an audit
- The certification body or auditor will contact you to confirm the scope of your audit and set the date
- At least 3 months of records are required before the audit date



(continued)



Next Steps (cont.)

- Audits must be timed to coincide with the activities and crops encompassed by the certification
- Minimum audit duration is ½ day (1 full day for repacking and wholesaling)
- The certification body will make every effort to assign the closest available auditor within your requested timeframe
- Download the audit checklist to help you prepare: www.canadagap.ca/audit-checklist/



The Audit Process

- Auditors will:
 - use the CanadaGAP Audit Checklist to assess compliance against the standard
 - look for evidence that a “food safety system” is in place
 - observe the operation’s surroundings, practices and employees
 - interview management and other key personnel responsible for the food safety program
 - talk to employees handling product
 - review written procedures (manual), ongoing records and other supporting documents



Audit Checklist

- A single Audit Checklist includes the requirements for all scopes covered by CanadaGAP
 - Except separate checklists for: Group Management System Audit; Management System Audit for Multi-site Operations
- All operations enrolled in the program are evaluated using the same audit checklist
 - Each question is scored
 - Most important elements have a higher **maximum** score and sections are also weighted according to their overall importance
 - One audit can cover multiple crop groupings; however, audits must occur during harvest, packing, repacking, storage or shipping of products relevant to the certification



To pass your audit

- **FOR Options B, C, and D**

- You must comply 100% with the CanadaGAP audit checklist
- Items that receive less than full points during the audit must be addressed through corrective actions approved by the certification body (CB)
- If corrective actions are not possible during the current year, you must submit a corrective actions plan for approval by the CB
- The corrective actions plan will be verified at the next audit and you can be certified in the meantime

- **FOR Options A1, A2**

- You must obtain a score of 85% with no autofailure items
- Autofailure items must be corrected before being certified
- Those scoring below 85% must implement corrective actions to obtain a passing score of 85%



To pass your audit

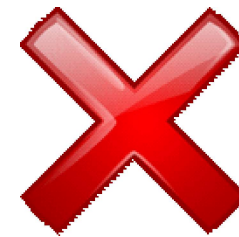
- **FOR Options E and F**

- A score of 95% with no autofails is required to pass the audit. You must always correct all autofail items first
- Those scoring below 95% must implement corrective actions to obtain a passing score of 95%
- If corrective actions are not possible during the current year, you must submit a corrective actions plan for approval by the CB



Automatic Failure Items

- ☐ An immediate food safety risk is present
- ☐ Evidence of feces or evidence of rodents on food contact surfaces in use, or product post-harvest
- ☐ No record of any one agricultural chemical application
- ☐ Untreated sewage (sludge/water) for fluming, cleaning, irrigation
- ☐ Manure is applied <120 days before harvest or no records of manure application date or PHI



(continued)



Automatic Failure Items (cont.)

- ☐ Toilet waste goes directly into production site
- ☐ No washrooms
- ☐ Hand washing facilities absent or not complete/properly stocked
- ☐ No tests or failed tests on water used for cleaning or fluming product
- ☐ Employees observed using the toilet and handling product without proper hand washing
- ☐ **For cucumbers and peppers sent for pickling and repacking, wholesaling and brokerage of fiddleheads ONLY:** Operations are NOT sourcing product from suppliers who have a credible food safety program



After the Audit

- At the end of the audit, the auditor leaves the Executive Summary, but not the final audit report
- The auditor submits the report to the certification body for review by a qualified reviewer
- The final report is issued within 30 business days of the audit. If certified, the company usually receives the certificate at the same time
- The certification body makes all certification decisions. An appeals process and complaint handling system are in place
- If you fail your audit at the end of the production season, it may be too late to take corrective action until next year



Costs and Benefits



Certification Costs

- There are two cost components:
 1. **Annual Program Fee.** Payable to the CanadaGAP Program each year on the anniversary of enrolment
 2. **Audit Fees.** Billed by the Certification Body after the audit
- Over a four-year timeframe, the **average annual cost** ranges from \$1,000 to \$2,500
- Costs vary, depending on:
 - Certification option
 - Duration of audit (scope of activities, auditee preparedness, etc.)
 - Certification body selected
 - Audit location
 - Number and nature of CARs to close out



What is CanadaGAP's role in the certification system?

- A comprehensive management system sets out scheme rules and policies, and identifies CanadaGAP functions related to:
 - Keeping the standard updated and technically sound; revising manuals; communicating updates; maintaining recognition
 - Supervising certification body performance in accordance with licensing agreements, ensuring service standards are met
 - Training and approving auditor trainers
 - Providing up-to-date course materials to train auditors
 - Reviewing and approving auditor credentials
 - Assisting certification bodies with technical interpretation issues, appeals/complaints



Program Benefits

- ✓ HACCP-based program, comprehensive hazard analysis
- ✓ Program has received full Government Recognition
- ✓ Technically sound standard approved by government and reviewed regularly by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency
- ✓ User tools are practical & straightforward to implement
- ✓ GFSI-recognized program (options B, C and D are formally benchmarked)
- ✓ Choice of certification options depending on customer requirements

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Program Benefits (cont.)

- ✓ Objective, third party audits
- ✓ Auditors are trained specifically on CanadaGAP requirements and performance is closely monitored
- ✓ Strict requirements for certification bodies and auditors to ensure competency
- ✓ Ongoing oversight of certification bodies by the Accreditation Body and CanadaGAP
- ✓ Safeguards to prevent conflict of interest and threats to impartiality
- ✓ Mechanisms to manage complaints and appeals



Questions?



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Canada 



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