CANADAGAP®

Program Overview

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Disclaimer

Important:

- *Please note that this presentation was prepared in July 2026 and is current as of that date.*
- If you are using or viewing these slides at a later date, CanadaGAP is not responsible for the currency or accuracy of the information.
- Visit www.canadagap.ca for the latest news, or contact us at info@canadagap.ca or 613-829-4711 to confirm that the information is current.

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

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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.

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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.

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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, repacking of Enoki mushrooms, 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)) or the Global Accreditation Cooperation Incorporated
  - be licensed by and accountable to CanadaGAP for the delivery of audits

Who is Certified?

- The program launched in 2008 and there are approximately 2,800 companies* that are currently active.
- 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 2025****

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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.

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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 v2024 in July 2026.

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 **

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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

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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

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CanadaGAP Manuals

- Contain:
  - General ***requirements*** – <u>WHAT</u> users must do
  - Specific ***procedures*** – <u>HOW</u> 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

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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
- Temperature Conditioning/ Holding/Storage of Product
- Transportation
- Identification and Traceability
- Deviations and Crisis Management

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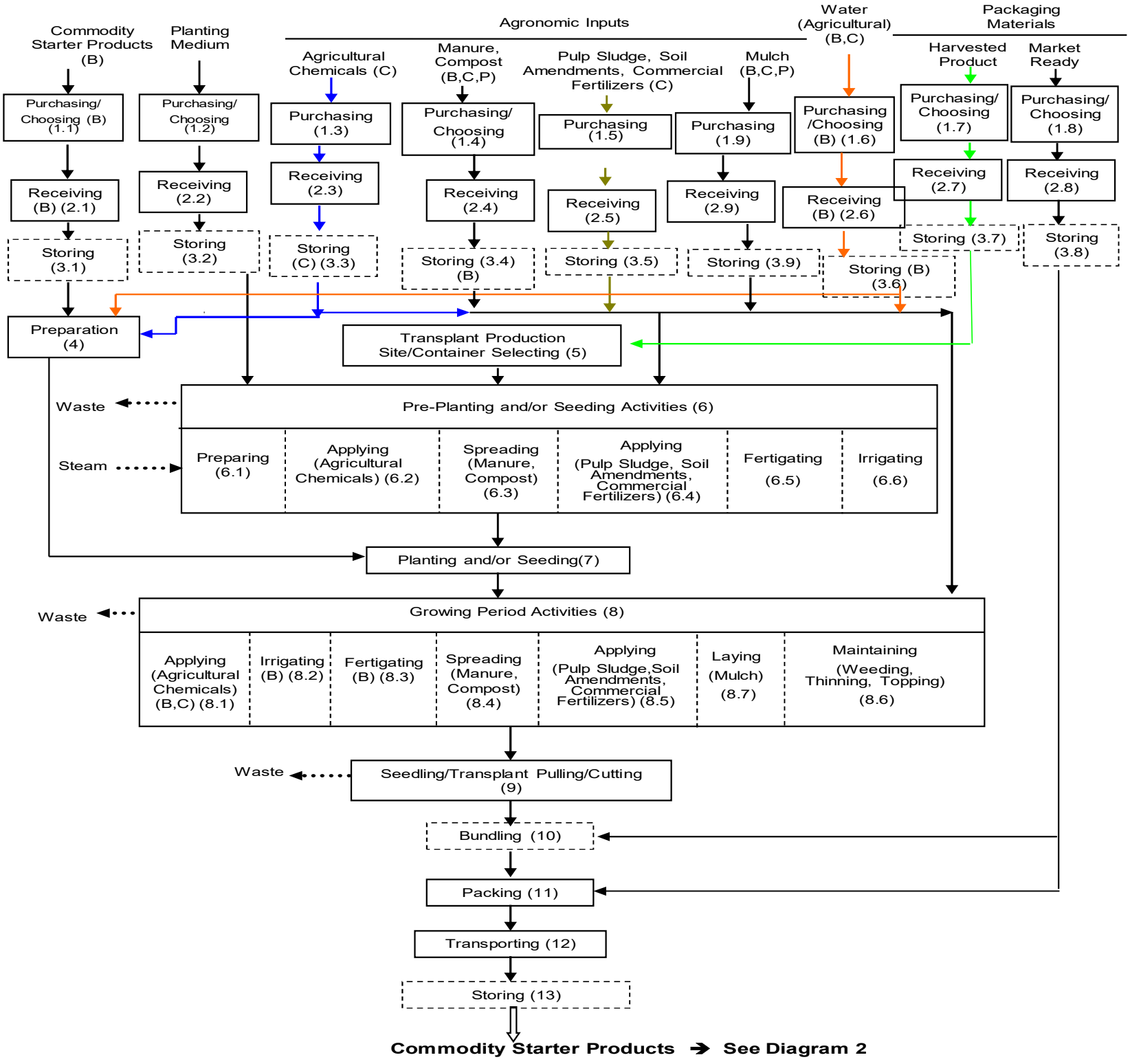
Basic Principles

- 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 (B)
Planting Medium
Agronomic Inputs
Agricultural Chemicals (C)
Manure, Compost (B,C,P)
Pulp Sludge, Soil Amendments, Commercial Fertilizers (C)
Mulch (B,C,P)
Water (Agricultural) (B,C)
Packaging Materials
Harvested Product
Market Ready
Purchasing/ Choosing (B) (1.1)
Purchasing/ Choosing (1.2)
Purchasing (1.3)
Purchasing/ Choosing (1.4)
Purchasing (1.5)
Purchasing (1.9)
Purchasing /Choosing (B) (1.6)
Purchasing/ Choosing (1.7)
Purchasing/ Choosing (1.8)
Receiving (B) (2.1)
Receiving (2.2)
Receiving (2.3)
Receiving (2.4)
Receiving (2.5)
Receiving (2.9)
Receiving (B) (2.6)
Receiving (2.7)
Receiving (2.8)
Storing (3.1)
Storing (3.2)
Storing (C) (3.3)
Storing (3.4) (B)
Storing (3.5)
Storing (3.9)
Storing (B) (3.6)
Storing (3.7)
Storing (3.8)
Preparation (4)
Transplant Production Site/Container Selecting (5)
Waste
Pre-Planting and/or Seeding Activities (6)
Steam
Preparing (6.1)
Applying (Agricultural Chemicals) (6.2)
Spreading (Manure, Compost) (6.3)
Applying (Pulp Sludge, Soil Amendments, Commercial Fertilizers) (6.4)
Fertigating (6.5)
Irrigating (6.6)
Planting and/or Seeding(7)
Waste
Growing Period Activities (8)
Applying (Agricultural Chemicals) (B,C) (8.1)
Irrigating (B) (8.2)
Fertigating (B) (8.3)
Spreading (Manure, Compost) (8.4)
Applying (Pulp Sludge,Soil Amendments, Commercial Fertilizers) (8.5)
Laying (Mulch) (8.7)
Maintaining (Weeding, Thinning, Topping) (8.6)
Waste
Seedling/Transplant Pulling/Cutting (9)
Bundling (10)
Packing (11)
Transporting (12)
Storing (13)
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

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Audits and Certification

- Six certification bodies are currently licensed by CanadaGAP to offer audits and certification against the standard:
  - **BNQ** (Bureau de normalisation du Quebec)
  - **Control Union**
  - **MSVS** (Management Systems Verification Services Canada Inc.)
  - **NSF Canada Ag** (NSF Canada Agricultural Certification Company)
  - **PJRFSI** (Perry Johnson Registrars Food Safety Inc.)
  - **TSLC** (under Kiwa ASI)

- Audit services are available in Canada, the U.S., and Latin America
- Around 62 active qualified auditors
- 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
  - Only option for brokerage operations

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

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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/

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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

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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

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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 $1,200 to $2,800
- 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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