FACTSHEET: RECORD-KEEPING AND TRACEABILITY

Q: Why do I have to do so much paperwork?

A: There are two types of documentation involved in the CanadaGAP® manuals: written practices and ongoing forms. Each has a different purpose:

1. Written practices and procedures describe how you do things in your operation and are contained in the body of the CanadaGAP manuals. Written procedures not only tell others (e.g., an auditor) what you do in your operation, but they are also useful for your employees to ensure everyone knows what to do and how to do it.

2. Ongoing monitoring can be done by using checklists and other templates, found in the forms section of the CanadaGAP manuals. By using the forms, you can demonstrate that you are following food safety practices on an ongoing basis. This is the only way the auditor can assess what happens in the operation when he or she is not there, and whether you are taking the program seriously. Remember—if you didn't write it down, there is no proof you have done it.

Q: How can I find the time to do all this paperwork?

A: One of the biggest challenges for many fresh produce suppliers is finding time to complete the extra paperwork required for good record-keeping. Here are a few tips to help ease the burden:

- Customize the forms to suit your operation and your personal style. You may be able to combine forms, which can save time.
- Consider which records you are already keeping. Many people keep track of packing and shipping information electronically. If you are already recording this information, you do not need to fill out additional forms. You may have to tweak your system to catch any pieces of information that you are missing.
- Post checklists where they are most likely to be used. For example, the washroom cleaning checklist should be in the washroom, and the visitor log should be kept in a central location such as an office (if you require all visitors to check in first).
- Fill out as much information as possible during the off-season (annual forms, Sections 1-24 of your CanadaGAP manual) and, if possible, implement the ongoing forms a little bit at a time.
- Ensure that employees are properly trained if you delegate the record-keeping to them. Employees are more likely to fill out forms properly if they understand the importance of record-keeping.

Q: Are there electronic versions of the forms that I can customize for my operation?

A: Yes, the forms provided are templates only, and it is a good idea to customize them to your operation if possible. Microsoft Excel forms are available for download on the CanadaGAP website, and several companies offer paid electronic solutions for record-keeping. There may be some forms, or certain columns on a form, that don't apply to your business. Keep in mind that you still need to document the required information if it applies to your operation. Visit the CanadaGAP website to access electronic solutions.

Q: Can I use my own forms?

A: Yes, you can use your own forms as long as they contain all the necessary information, in accordance with the CanadaGAP manuals. You may need to add an extra column or two to your own forms.

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