



Food Safety for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

The Basics of CanadaGAP Audits

The companies that provide CanadaGAP audits are called Certification Bodies. Certification bodies operate independently of CanadaGAP. They offer CanadaGAP audits under license, and are overseen by CanadaGAP management to ensure they deliver the service according to program rules. They are also overseen by their Accreditation Body to ensure they operate according to international standards for certification bodies. These include standards governing complaints, impartiality, appeals, and other matters related to certification.

The certification body's role is to:

- Perform audits, using staff or contract auditors
- Recruit, train and supervise auditors
- Schedule audits and assign auditors
- Review audit reports before issuing reports to the client
- Review self-assessments and corrective actions
- Issue reports and certificates
- Make all certification decisions including extensions, suspensions, withdrawals
- Handle billing for audits
- Maintain and publish registries of certified companies
- Respond to appeals and complaints regarding the audit

Enrolling for CanadaGAP certification includes choosing which certification body that you want to perform your audit. CanadaGAP currently has three certification bodies to choose from:

BNQ



NSF Canada Ag



SGS Canada



Which Certification Body should I choose?

While all certification bodies must meet the same basic requirements to offer CanadaGAP audits and certification, these companies are private and compete with each other on price and services. It is worth contacting the various certification bodies to find out how well they can meet your needs for an audit, including:

- How many auditors do they have?
- Which regions or provinces do they operate in?
- Do they have auditors in your area?
 - If the auditor will have to travel, where is the auditor coming from? How much does the certification body charge for the auditor's travel time and expenses?
 - Will an audit be scheduled to occur in conjunction with others nearby, so that auditor travel costs can be shared?
- How much does the certification body charge for the audit? Is it an hourly rate, a half or full day rate?
- Do they charge an administrative fee to issue the certificate?
- What other fees do they charge – for example, if the audit takes longer than planned, or if corrective action requests are issued and have to be verified?
- How will communication occur? Will the audit plan arrive by email? Will the audit report and certificate be mailed or emailed? Make clear your preferences.
- Are there features of the certification body's service that distinguish it from their competitors? Do they offer discounts? Do they offer additional services?

What are the next steps?

- Your selected certification body will contact you once they have received a copy of your enrolment form from CanadaGAP.
- Your certification body will want to collect additional information about your operation to help them scope your audit properly. They may ask for information about:
 - the number of acres
 - the location of your production
 - the number of employees you have
 - other crops/livestock on your operation
 - the specific products and activities that the audit will cover
 - whether you agree to them sharing your audit results with your buyers
- You will receive a contract or service proposal from the certification body. Read it carefully to ensure you understand all terms and conditions, services, and fees before you sign it. You must send a signed copy to your certification body before a certificate can be issued, assuming you subsequently pass the audit.
- The certification body, or the auditor assigned to do your audit, will send an audit plan. Make sure to review and verify the plan before you accept it. The plan will indicate the auditor, timing, and scope of your audit and certificate.
- After the audit, your certification body will issue your audit report within 30 business days. If you passed the audit, you will usually receive your certificate at the same time. If you failed the audit, you have 60 days to correct the problem(s) and obtain certification.

If you have any problems with your audit, your auditor or your certification body, you have the right to file an appeal or complaint with the certification body, or directly with CanadaGAP.

- The instructions for appealing your audit findings or filing a complaint are provided by your certification body. Consult your contract or contact their office for information.
- Complaints can be filed with CanadaGAP in writing at info@canadagap.ca or by regular mail at the address below.

What is the benefit of an audit?

The audit:

- Is an opportunity to identify potential problems
- Offers a continuous process for improvement
- Helps you meet your customer requirements and comply with contract obligations
- Helps you comply with legal and regulatory requirements related to food safety
- Provides an effective method for involving and motivating staff at all levels.

Read the CanadaGAP brochure “What to Expect From Your Audit” for more information about preparing for your audit.

Contact Us

CanadaGAP Program • 245 Menten Place, Suite 312 • Ottawa, ON K2H 9E8 • Tel: 613-829-4711 •
Fax: 613-829-9379 • info@canadagap.ca • www.canadagap.ca

© CanAgPlus 2018

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