



Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services  
Division of Food, Nutrition and Wellness

**Farm to School**  
**Good Agricultural Practices/Good Handling Practices**  
**Certification Program Application**

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**Background:**

Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP) audits are voluntary independent audits of produce suppliers throughout the production and supply chain. GAP/GHP audits focus on best agricultural practices to verify that fruits and vegetables are produced, packed, handled and stored in the safest manner possible to minimize risks of microbial food safety hazards. The audits verify adherence to the recommendations made in the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables) and industry recognized food safety practices. These audits are based only on observations of the practices, and review of records and documentation to include policies and procedures at the time of the audit. Please note the audit does not certify any specific product as safe but that reasonable measures are being performed to mitigate the likelihood of an unsafe product being sold.

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Division of Food, Nutrition and Wellness (FNW) understands that it can be difficult for small farms to work with schools without certain certifications. As a solution, FNW, as a part of the Farm to School Initiative, has developed the Good Agricultural Practices/Good Handling Practices Certification Award Program.

**Purpose:**

Florida's Farm to School initiative enhances the connection that communities have with local growers to increase Florida products served in schools, offer healthier options for Florida's school children and get students involved in nutrition and agriculture education through school garden activities.

**Overview:**

The Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)/Good Handling Practices (GHP) Certification Award Program is a cost-share/reimbursement program designed to assist Florida farmers with the cost of a GAP/GHP food safety audit with the intent to sell produce to Florida schools. FNW has allocated \$25,000 to assist small farms with the cost of these audits.

**Program Details:**

- FNW will pay **up to** \$2000 of the cost of having The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Division of Fruit and Vegetables (DFV) conduct the audit(s) and for United States Department of Agriculture – Agricultural Marketing Services to certify/approve the passing audit. This audit is to verify an establishment's food safety program. Water tests are not performed during an audit; however, auditors will confirm water tests have been performed. Test results can determine audit outcome.
- Funding is limited to \$2000 per establishment for audits and/or water test(s) conducted. Participating growers/packers/handlers will be responsible for paying any balance due above \$2000.
- If your distributor requires an audit which cannot be performed by the DFV, the Department will not be able to reimburse you for this audit.

- Applications for audits must be approved by the FNW prior to audit being performed.
- Upon approval, applicants should begin reviewing the GAP/GHP Checklist to ensure they are prepared for the audit. If an audit is failed due to the applicant being unprepared, the applicant will be responsible for the cost of the audit.
- Applicants will be contacted by the DFV within two weeks of receipt of the GAP/GHP Application Form to schedule audits.
- Funds are available on a **first-come, first-serve basis**.
- Applicants may attend the Produce Safety Alliance course.
- Applicants must also include a letter of support from a school district the applicant intends to sell products to, preferably on school letterhead.