



# INFORMATION

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## NEWS RELEASE/PSA

### Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) for the Production and Handling of Fresh Produce

A one-day program for commercial fruit & vegetable producers to learn about techniques and practices that can help minimize produce contamination. This program is suggested for growers who sell wholesale to grocery stores, organizations, food processors and selling directly to the public.

#### Background

Over the past few years we have heard through media announcements about major outbreaks of illnesses that have been attributed to contaminated fresh produce. Whether domestically produced or imported, four key events have brought focus and concern for the microbial food safety of fresh fruits, vegetables, nuts and other edible horticultural foods:

1. Recent reoccurring outbreaks linked to consumption of domestic and imported products.
2. Positive detection of human pathogens from random survey sampling of both imported and domestically produced produce.
3. Recent reports from several researchers documenting the difficulty of cleaning and disinfecting produce surfaces.

4. Recent reports from several researchers documenting the potential for internalization of pathogens during postharvest handling

#### About the Program

The goal of every produce farmer is to grow and sell wholesome products. And because of occasional disease outbreaks, agricultural producers of all sizes may soon be increasingly challenged with establishing and documenting methods of microbial risk reduction and prevention. Buyers for retail chains increasingly are requiring producers to establish and document a GAP program and may require third party auditing to verify compliance.

This overview program will provide a brief outline of the fundamental components of microbial food safety that should be part of any comprehensive management plan for growers, specialty crop producers, harvest operators, distribution and wholesale handlers, direct marketers, and fresh cut processors. Topics will include the discussion of key points and the guiding principles of food safety for fresh produce and auditable methods of documenting compliance with a food safety program.

Growers will also learn how to develop a food safety plan and conduct a self-audit. These are precursors that should be in place before requesting a third-party audit for GAPs certification.

#### Program Specifics

**Date:** March 16, 2009

**Location:** Howard County Fairground

**Who should attend:** Commercial fruit and produce growers who sell through wholesale and direct marketing outlets

**Cost:** \$20.00 per person with advanced registration. \$30 at the door. The cost includes program materials, refreshments and lunch.

#### Program Schedule and Topics:

8:30 Registration

GAP and Food Safety current research update. (tomato and leafy greens)

GAP case study

Implementing GAPs – Real experiences

Adjourn by 2:30 pm

**Registration:** Register by March 10th by sending a Check made out to "BCEAC" (for \$20/ person registering) to University of MD Extension; 1840 York Rd. Timonium, MD 21093. For question you can contact David Martin at 410-666-1022.

If you need special assistance to participate in this program, please contact David Martin at 410-666-1022 by March 6, 2009.

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