

## USDA Announces \$3.7 Million in Financial Assistance to Fruit and Vegetable Growers in 16 States

Beginning Jan. 2, 2019, USDA's Risk Management Agency will provide Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) funds to cover up to 100% of the cost of the Harmonized GAP audit and the Harmonized GAP Plus+ audit for farmers in the following 16 states which are authorized by Congress to receive financial assistance for conservation and financial risk mitigation: **Connecticut**, Delaware, Hawaii, **Maine**, Maryland, **Massachusetts**, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, **New York**, Pennsylvania, **Rhode Island**, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia and Wyoming.

"These audits help producers meet Produce Safety Rule standards and will also improve their ability to sell into markets that expect growers to demonstrate that they have incorporated a culture of food safety into their operations," said Marketing and Regulatory Program Undersecretary Greg Ibach. "We are excited to be able to support producers pursuing these audits in the 2019 season."

Harmonized GAP and Harmonized GAP Plus+ audits are comprehensive and give farmers the best market options for their products, reducing the cost of separate audits for different buyer requirements. Both audits are aligned with the technical provisions in the FDA's Food Safety Modernization Act Produce Safety Rule, meet the requirements for the Produce GAP Harmonization Initiative and demonstrate adherence to industry and FDA best practices. The USDA Harmonized GAP Plus+ audit additionally meets buyer requirements for Global Food Safety Initiative audits.

"Success in the [specialty crops](#) industry means more than growing good produce. It means growing markets. More than ever, market access hinges on showing that you are using good agricultural practices (GAP) to minimize food safety risks associated with your product. USDA's GAP Audit Services provide third-party assurance that your fruits and vegetables are produced, packed, handled, and stored as safely as possible to minimize risks of microbial food safety hazards in accordance with Food and Drug Administration (FDA) guidance and industry-recognized food safety practices." (Ken Petersen, Head, Audit Program Section, Specialty Crops Inspection Division)

More information is available in [Questions and Answers about the GAP Assistance Program](#) on AMS' [Harmonized GAP](#) webpage and by contacting AMS' Specialty Crops Inspection Division, Audit Services Branch at (202) 720-5021 or [scaudits@ams.usda.gov](mailto:scaudits@ams.usda.gov).