

Food Connection: 2011 Conference

WORKSHOP: Farm Food Safety certifications: Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)

Description: Organically Grown Company (OGC), a produce distributor will address farm food safety issues, relating to growers, distributors, and customers in the supply chain. Specifically, GAP certification benefits and processes will be covered. Learn how to become GAP certified via a third party audit and hear from a farmer who has successfully gone through it! A District Manager from ODA who will also lend his expertise on best practices for passing an audit.

Speakers: David Amorose, Purchasing/Inventory Director, OGC; Michael McMillan, Purchasing & Sourcing, OGC; Karen Anderson, Market Manager, Spring Hill Farm; Gary Neuschwander, District Manager-Salem, Oregon Department of Agriculture.

Moderator: John Caputo, Inspector, Oregon Tilth

Workshop Notes:

David – Organically Grown Co (OGC) intro:

Has been in business over 30 years, distributes in OR & WA, tries to source locally/regionally – about 75-80% in summer, works with ~40 farms (2/3 of which have some sort of food safety certification)

- OGC got involved more heavily in food safety after complaint against them in 2008 for E. coli – circumstantial evidence pointed to spinach from a medium-sized farm in WA
- Everyone along supply chain is liable (farmer, distributor, restaurant)
- One of best indicators of whether food safety is taken seriously is whether there is someone in charge.
- National Food Safety: Food Modernization Act – passed in January, but has yet to be funded; would give mandatory recall authority to FDA (vs. current voluntary)

Why Food Safety?

- Moral
- Legal – strict liability to protect individuals
- Legislative
- Market

Food borne illness in US:

- 76 million cases (80% unknown sources) annually
- 5,000 deaths annually
- Produce (29.4%), Seafood (24.8%), Poultry (15.8%)
- E. coli = 46% cases are in children < 10
- E. coli, listeria, shigella, salmonella

Certification Types

- GAP (good agricultural practices)
- GHP (good handling practices)
- GMP (good manufacturing practices)

Lessons Learned:

- Can't completely eliminate pathogens (all raw foods contain microorganisms and possibly pathogens)
- Incidents can occur on small farms (it's just that distribution and means of spreading is usually less than at a large facility)
- Some produce is more susceptible than others (esp. spinach, leafy greens)
- If it isn't documented, you didn't do it (in the minds of inspectors)

1 main law firm for food safety cases: Marler Clark

OGC/GAP Certification:

- Sponsors GAP training seminars
- Consultations on NW operations
- Outreach
- Applied for grant funding to do more consultations

GAP audit involves consideration of:

- Previous land use
- Worker health & hygiene
- Water use & sources
- Soil amendments
- Environmental influences

Should have:

- Policies (for health and hygiene, employee training, etc.)
- Records (land use, water testing, etc.)
- Documentation (compost handling, sanitization, other SOPs)

USDA GAP program: Coordinated through each state's agriculture dept, accessible introductory program, affordable

Karen Anderson, Spring Hill Farm (35 acres, organic vegetables, certified by Oregon Tilth, sells to OGC and Farmer's Markets). She went through GAP certification process, started with ODA's long list of questions

- All workers must be on board
- Language creates additional outreach challenges, need to invest in good translation

Costs:

- Writing documents
- Box washer
- Translation
- Audit (~\$600)
- Training
- Water tests
- Laminator
- Light covers
- Implementation costs

Gary Neuschwander, ODA

Question of animals on farms: basically monitor and mitigate where appropriate...

GAP= on farm

GHP = fresh products being packed in another location than the field

GMP = processing, milling, etc.

- 1) Find and know requirements
 - Google USDA AMS good agricultural practices to find checklist (<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5050869>)
 - 2) Make a commitment to food safety as a culture and business practice
 - Hardest thing is to change behavior
 - [Gary] will do walk through of farm and answer questions pre-GAP audit
- some cost share \$ available through ODA for small/new farms (up to \$275)
 - organically certified operations are many steps ahead in terms of being ready for GAP audits/certification