



Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) certification in the New Zealand horticulture industry (July 2024)



Overview

Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) schemes provide assurance for the safe and sustainable production, packing and distribution of fruits and vegetables in New Zealand. Horticulture businesses who achieve compliance with GAP assurance standards demonstrate that management systems, procedures and practices are in place to meet relevant regulatory and market requirements – so customers can buy with confidence. The two schemes operational in New Zealand are New Zealand GAP (NZGAP, owned by Horticulture New Zealand) and GLOBALG.A.P. (based in Cologne, Germany).

Why GAP?

GLOBALG.A.P. was established in 2007 (originally EUREGAP, founded in 1997) as British retailers working together with supermarkets in continental Europe become aware of consumers' growing concerns regarding product safety, environmental impact and the health, safety and welfare of workers and animals. Many retailers worldwide followed by developing their own sets of standards to help allay consumer concerns, which meant increasing compliance costs, duplication and complexity for growers. As a result, NZGAP was established in 1999 to enable growers to meet the requirements of multiple markets in New Zealand and overseas with one integrated food safety system which is more relevant and accessible for NZ growers.

Audited Self-Management Assurance Model

All GAP certified operators are independently audited by certification bodies (e.g. AsureQuality, SGS) who are accredited (e.g. by JAS-ANZ) against ISO standards to undertake assessment and certification activities. Growers must continuously meet requirements of GAP standards to maintain certification. GAP standards are benchmarked to relevant Regulatory and Market requirements so that GAP certification can be accepted as a pathway for growers to demonstrate compliance with those requirements (e.g. Food Safety, Environment, Social Practice).

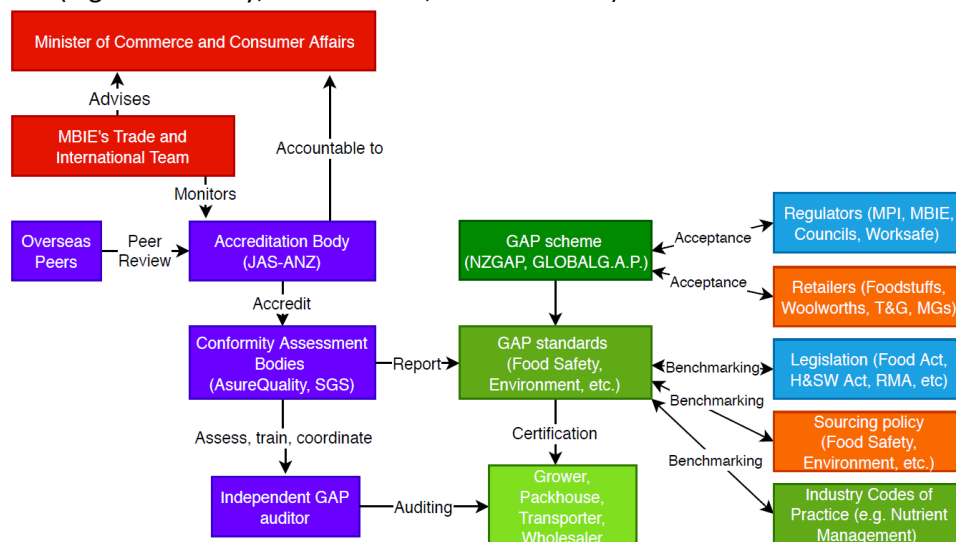


Fig 1: New Zealand Conformance Infrastructure for GAP certification

GAP numbers

There are approximately 3,500 growers certified to NZGAP or GLOBALG.A.P. in New Zealand. All exported fresh produce must be GAP certified to meet market requirements. All Kiwifruit, plus most of the Avocado, Onion and Apple industries are certified to the GLOBALG.A.P or NZGAP GLOBALG.A.P. Equivalent standards due to the market requirements especially in Europe, North America and

Australia. The remaining 1,500 growers, plus >130 packers, transporters and wholesalers are certified to the NZGAP standard. Domestic markets require over 90% of fresh fruit and vegetables consumed in NZ to be GAP certified.

Scope of GAP standards

GAP certification is primarily focused on Food Safety, but the core standard also covers elements of Environment, Social Practice and Health & Safety. NZGAP has developed an Environmental Management System (EMS) add-on provide a pathway for growers to comply with audited Freshwater Farm Plan requirements. NZGAP has also developed a Social Practice add-on and Contractor Standard which will be benchmarked to regulatory and market requirements. GLOBALG.A.P. also has a social practice add-on (GRASP) which is required for market access to many international supermarkets.

Regulatory acceptance

NZGAP and GLOBALG.A.P. have both been approved by MPI as Section 40 Template Food Control Plans for National Programme 1 under the Food Act 2014. The horticulture industry has been involved with the Food Act 2014 for over 10 years from policy development through to the current implementation phase. If growers have registered for Food Act via their GAP provider, their next GAP audit will double as a Food Act verification (audit) thus delivering a more effective system with one auditor up the drive. Current recognition of GAP is however suboptimal due to the piecemeal nature of the pathway enabled under the Food Act. The horticulture sector is seeking a pathway for full recognition of Industry Assurance Programmes like GAP for Freshwater Farm Plans and Food Safety to enable growers to meet regulatory and market requirements via one integrated system.

International recognition

NZGAP is accepted in most overseas markets, while it also benchmarked to GLOBALG.A.P. which in turn is accepted by almost all retailers worldwide.. GAP programmes are also required to be Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) recognised for some markets.

Achieving and Retaining Certification

All certified growers are independently audited, and they must continuously meet requirements of GAP standards to maintain certification. Certified growers are required to provide a significant amount of evidence of their practices during the audit process including risk assessments, action plans, records, certificates, documentation, interviews and observations. In general, GAP standards are threshold schemes (i.e. pass/fail) meaning that certain requirements must be met (verified via the GAP audit) before certification can be achieved. If the requirements are not met in full then growers have up to 28 days post audit to make corrective actions. Non-conformance can lead to suspension or cancellation of GAP certification meaning that the grower can no longer trade in markets requiring certification. All certified growers are subject to random audits and targeted audits where triggered.

Audit costs

Food Safety GAP audit costs range from \$1,000 – \$4,500 depending on the scale and complexity of the business, while audit frequencies vary from annual to three yearly depending on the standard/programme and risk profile of the business. Social Practice and Environmental add-on audits cost range from \$500-\$3,000 depending on the programme plus the market and regulatory requirements, with reporting being a significant driver for increased costs.

Resources:

- **NZGAP** www.nzgap.co.nz
- **GLOBALG.A.P.** www.globalgap.org
- **Food Act recognition** <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/food-safety/food-act-2014/requirements/>