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REVISED GUIDELINES ON THE CERTIFICATION OF GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES (GAP) FOR FRUITS AND VEGETABLE (FV) FARMING

DA ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 30, December 07, 2012

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Pursuant to the Philippine commitment to the Strategic Plan of Action on ASEAN Cooperation in Good Agricultural Practices (SPA ASEAN GAP) 2009- 2012 which compels the ASEAN Member States (AMSs) to align their national GAP program (standard, certification procedures, training of inspectors, etc) with the adopted regional standard on GAP, this Administrative Order replaces A.O. 25 s. 2005 and A.O. 30 s. 2008 in order to be harmonized with the ASEAN common vision.

These guidelines provides for the basis of farm inspection for the purpose of certification. The farms producing horticultural products intended for domestic and export markets will be assessed using the same checklist which spells out the minimum requirements for certification. However for farms engaged in export, additional requirements imposed by the importing country will apply.

SECTION 1. Objectives of the Certification – The certification of farms is aimed at the attainment of the following:

- Facilitate farmers adoption of sustainable farming practices which is aimed at ensuring food safety and assuring produce quality while having regards for environmental protection and that of workers health, safety and welfare;
- Access of Philippine agricultural commodities to neighboring ASEAN markets and other foreign markets;
- Empower farmers to respond to the demands of consumer; and
- Enable consumers exercise the option of buying safe and quality fruits and vegetables from traceable and certified sources.

SECTION 2. Scope of the Guidelines - This establishes the rules applied by the Department of Agriculture (DA) for granting, maintaining and withdrawing Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Certificate to individual growers or farms, cooperative-owned and/or operated farms, corporate farms or to Produce Marketing Organizations (PMOs) or consolidators that market and/or trade the produce. Demonstration farms of government, academic and research institutions are also eligible to apply for GAP certification.

SECTION 3. GAP Certification Committee –

A. Composition – The Good Agricultural Practices Certication Committee (GAPCC) shall be composed of the Directors of attached agencies of the Department of Agriculture (DA), representatives from the private sector, non-government organization and academe.

Chairperson

Director

Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Product Standards (BAFPS)

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Vice-Chairperson

Director

Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI)

Members

Director/Authorized Representative

Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority (FPA)

Director/Authorized Representative

Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI)

Director/Authorized Representative

Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM)

National Program Coordinator/ Authorized Representative High Value Crops Development Program (HVCDP)

Sectoral Representative National Agricultural and Fisheries Council (NAFC)
Sub Committee on Crops

Director/ Authorized Representative National Consumer Affairs Council (NCAC)

Representative Non-government organization (NGO)/ Peoples' organization (PO)

Representative Academe

Secretariat

Technical Staff

Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Product Standards (BAFPS)

B. Tasks

In general, the Committee is tasked to:

- Set directions for the Philippine GAP Program, including policy formation, strategies on capacity building, strengthening market linkage and information dissemination;
- Undertake annual review of the program, set priorities and endorse the proposed plan to the Secretary for approval;
- Undertake annual review of the Guidelines, its inspection procedures and training programs and propose changes, as necessary;
- Recommend to the Secretary the list of qualified National, Regional and Local Inspectors, as applicable and as identified and endorsed by the Directors of the various agencies and Regional Field Offices;
- Recommend to the Secretary the list of qualified technical personnel of the Department and Local Government Units (LGUs) that will be subsequently trained to extend assistance to farmers prior to their application for certification; and
- Participate in international discussions to better align PhilGAP with existing international GAP programs.

Meanwhile, the representatives from the various Department agencies (i.e. BPI, BAI, BSWM, FPA and HVCDP)

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shall have the following tasks related to certification:

-Undertake review and make appropriate decisions regarding GAP applications;
- Endorse to the DA Secretary the list of applicants that has been found to be compliant with the appropriate provisions of the Revised Philippine National Standard (PNS) for Good Agricultural Practices for Fruits and Vegetable Farming (PNS/BAFPS 49:2011);
- Hear appeal(s) and endorse to the Secretary appropriate action(s) in response to the petitions;
- Annually review investigations of complaints about abuses in the production and sale of products that do not adhere to GAP standard, including the use of mark;

C. Secretariat

The Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Product Standards (BAFPS) shall act as Secretariat of the GAPCC. The GAPCC Chairperson may authorize the Secretariat to issue official communication regarding an application, except those that pertains to a decision. This may include, call for a meeting, request for submission of documents from an applicant, etc. The Secretariat will also accompany the inspectors during the conduct of inspection(s) to provide assistance during the farm operation evaluation of the applicant. In case of unavailability of inspectors to conduct follow-up inspections to verify compliance of the applicant to the list of non-compliant item(s), the GAP secretariat may be authorized to conduct the visit using the list as a guide. A report of such visit(s) will be submitted to the GSP inspectors for their evaluation.

D. Inspectors

The National and Regional Inspectors from the line agencies of the Department shall be composed of identified technical personnel duly designated by the Directors of BPI, BAI, BSWM and FPA.

The local DA designated inspectors, meanwhile, will be those that have been duly designated by the Regional Executive Directors (REDs) of the Regional Field Offices (RFOs) of the Department.

The national, regional and local inspectors will be trained on the provisions of the Revised Philippine National Standard (PNS) for Good Agricultural Practices for Fruits and Vegetable Farming (PNS/BAFPS 49:2011) and re-tooled on the aspects of inspection.

SECTION 4. Application

A. Application

The DA GAP Certification Scheme acknowledges the following type of organizations requesting for certification.

- individual grower;
- Small-holder group (e.g. cooperative, outgrowership scheme);
- Demonstration farms of government, academic and research institutions;
- Corporate farms; and
- Produce Marketing Organization (PMOs) or consolidators.

Initial application:

The applicant shall submit the completed application form to the GAPCC through its Secretariat. The duly accomplished form shall be accompanied by the following supporting documents:

- farm or organizational profile;
- farm map;
- list of fertilizers and pesticides used; and

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- certificate of training on GAP principles

In addition to the afore-mentioned requirements, corporate farms, cooperatives, and consolidators, are to submit these papers (as applicable):

- Company/corporation/cooperative- Certificate of Registration;
- Field operation procedures;
- Procedure for accreditation of farmers/growers;
- Manual of procedure for outgrowership scheme which will show that the company/PMOs/cooperative have 100% control of all registered or accredited growers (e.g. internal policies on accreditation of farmer/grower, sanctions, etc.)

Upon the receipt of application, the GAPCC will inform the concerned DA RFUs on the received application. The GAPCC, in its formal communication, may request the DA RFO to extend assistance to the applicant in conducting the initial assessment of the farm and in facilitating farmer's adoption of GAP practices.

Renewal

For entities applying for renewal of certificate, the following documents shall accompany the accomplished application form:

- Updated farm map (showing new areas/expansion of areas), if applicable;
- Updated list of fertilizers and pesticides used;
- Revised (if any) manual of operation; and
- Copy of results of post-certification monitoring inspection (inspection report and certificate of analyses).

B. Fees

The Cost of certification pertaining to the administrative expenses to be incurred by the Committee and the GAP inspectors during the evaluation, inspection and audit shall be free of charge and will be shouldered by the BAFPS.

For applicants requesting for its first (1st) certification, the cost of analyses for the first sampling shall be free and will be borne by BAFPS. However, in cases when the results of analyses shows non-compliance to standards set, the inspectors shall conduct another sampling after the corrective actions has been complied with. The cost of analyses for the subsequent sampling(s) shall be borne by the applicant.

Meanwhile, for applicants filing for renewal of certificate, the cost of analyses for the first (1st) sampling shall be free of charge and shall be borne by BAFPS. The cost of analyses for subsequent samplings shall be borne by the applicant, in cases where the chemical and microbial results of the analyses of the first (1st) sampling show non-compliance with the standards.

During the conduct of regular monitoring inspection of GAP certified farms, the costs of analyses shall be free of charge.

SECTION 5. Certification -

A. Audit/Inspection –

Assessment of the farms will be against the minimum requirements set in the four (4) modules of the standard: food safety, produce quality; workers, health, safety and welfare; and environmental management.

After the GAPCC has evaluated the application, the Committee will notify the applicant on the farm audit date within thirty (30) days upon receipt of the application.

The national inspectors as endorsed by the Agency Directors shall conduct the inspection. However, the identified regional and/or local inspectors may also be tapped to ensure cost effectiveness and sustainability in the conduct of follow-up inspection and/or monitoring inspection, as needed.

The team of inspectors shall conduct the inspection as per procedure and shall be guided by the inspection checklist(s). The same set of protocols will be used for inspection of the farm either for initial certification or renewal purposes. Inspectors shall conduct an entrance meeting and an exit interview with the applicant or authorized representative upon completion of the inspection process. The inspector(s) shall cover all potential problem areas noted on the inspection form. Both the team of inspectors and the applicant or his duly authorized representative will sign the inspection form to signify that the inspection was conducted in accordance with the inspection guidelines and that the applicant concurs with the findings of the inspectors.

Samples (water, soil, plant tissue, etc.) will be taken for analyses based on appropriate sampling techniques. The producer will not charge the GAP program for the sample(s) taken. The payment of costs of analyses is guided by Section 4.B (Fees) of this Guidelines.

The team of inspectors will prepare an inspection report addressed to the GAPCC and will include the list of non-compliant items and other recommendations. The applicant will receive an official communication regarding the results of inspection, together with a copy of analyses.

Once a farm has been granted a GAP certificate, it shall be subject to monitoring inspection. Samples will be taken for microbial and pesticide analyses, as appropriate.

B. Issuance of GAP Certificate

The awarding of GAP-FV certificate is based on the applicant’s compliance on the minimum requirements set in the Code of GAP.

The compliance criteria also include the following:

- Documentation of farm management to help trace the history of the farm produce. The farm records must be kept for two (2) years. New farm applying for certification must have at least three (3) months of farm records.

Upon the review of the inspection report, the GAPCC shall approve, deny or place an application in pending with the view of making a decision later on after all the non-compliant items have been complied with. If placed in pending or denied, the Chairperson will have fifteen (15) days to notify the applicant.

Upon approval of the application, the endorsement of the GAPCC together with the recommendation from the team of inspectors who conducted the inspection shall be forwarded to the Office of the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture for approval.

After the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture has conceded, the GAPCC shall assign an unequivocal permanent registration number and issues a GAP certificate to the applicant. The GAP certificate will information such as: name of the farm, farm identification number, address of the farm certified, scope of certification (name of produce) and validity of the certificate.

The GAP certification award entitles the applicant to use an official mark ‘GAP Certified’ in accordance with the provision set out herein.

SECTION 6. Renewal of GAP Certificate

GAP certified farms shall renew GAP certificate by submitting a new application one (1) year after it has been issued or after each growing cycle, in the case of perennial crops.

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Application for renewal shall be done one (1) month prior to the anniversary date of the certificate.

Re-certification requires the re-audit of farm(s) based on the GAP-FV guidelines and will be conducted one (1) month prior to the expiry of the existing certification.

Audit for the purpose of re-certification shall be conducted preferably during the harvesting season so as to cover as many points in the checklist as possible. In situations where there is no crop or produce present at the time when the inspection is due, and providing that the farmer has already signified his intention for re-certification at the end of the period of validity of the previous certificate, the Department may opt to extend the validity of the previous certificate by up to 3 months. This is to give ample time when the farm may be inspected with presence of crop/produce. An extension can only be granted if the farmer applicant re-registered before the expiry date.

SECTION 7. Advertisement – The 'GAP Certified' mark is an official mark to be put on fruits and vegetables produced by certified farms. It is an offense for any farm or company to use the mark to advertise the farm's fruits and vegetables not produced by the farm or when the farm is not certified.

Certified farms are allowed to use the mark as part of their advertisement. This privilege will be withdrawn in the event of non-compliance with the regulations and guidelines.

The 'GAP Certified' mark may be used on letterheads of the company and in advertisement materials such as brochures and packaging bags for promotion of the farm and must adhere to the given specifications.

All materials containing the 'GAP Certified' mark shall be submitted to the GAPCC for approval in their use and release to the public,

SECTION 8. Revocation of GAP Certificate – Certified farms must observe and comply with the GAPCC Guidelines. Farms must comply with all major criteria as specified in PNS/BAFPS 49:2011. Non-compliance with the Code shall result in the loss of approval or failure to comply with any part of the guidelines as shown by the monitoring inspection, may result to withdrawal of the certificate.

SECTION 9. Confidentiality – All employees, contractors, and Committee members must adhere to the principles of confidentiality. Information submitted by applicants for approval will not be released to the public, including production practices, ingredients, customer list, complaint log, etc. without written permission to the applicant. However, the following information may be released.

- Name, address and telephone number of the applicant;
- To confirm whether or not the applicants operation was approved on a specific date;
- Any information to comply with a court order; and
- Any information to comply with a request from the GAPCC investigating an alleged complaint.

SECTION 10. Conflict of Interest – Conflict of interest is defined as having an economic interest with a producer or packer under review for approval one year prior to, during or one year after work or employment was concluded. Staff, contractors and Committee members with a conflict of interest must make the conflict known and not participate in discussion or decisions regarding the producer or packer under review.

SECTION 11. Additional Regulations - Other regulations may be introduced and notified when they become necessary to ensure production of safe and quality fruits and vegetables in certified farms.

SECTION 12. Effectivity - This Order shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its filing with the UP Law Center.

So Ordered.

(SGD.) PROCESO J. ALCALA

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Secretary

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