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This brochure serves as an information source for the public in Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) throughout the state of Texas. The brochure is designed to provide basic information in the area of food safety .

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### Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

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# TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

*Improving Lives. Improving Texas.*

## What are GAPs?/ What does GAPs Approved mean?



# Does your produce come from a GAPs Approved Farm?

The acronym GAPs stands for Good Agricultural Practices. GAPs include a number of practices producers follow in order to reduce the risk of contamination of fresh fruits, vegetables, nuts, etc. by microbial pathogens.

Some of the key practices used to minimize microbial contamination are monitoring and testing irrigation and wash water, training workers in good hygiene and proper hand washing techniques. These practices are documented in a farm food safety plan.



**Testing irrigation water.**

Currently GAPs are voluntary and producers follow these practices with no other incentive than to produce a safe, quality product for consumers.

## **GAPs Certification**

Many producers who choose to use GAPs also decide to get audited by a third party. This means that someone from an outside company comes to their operation and reviews their procedures to verify that they are indeed following GAPs. They can either be audited by the USDA or by a private company. Either way, if they are practicing enough of the criteria they receive a certificate good for one year stating that they are GAPs approved by the auditing company. Meaning that they do everything in their capability to produce a safe, quality product.

## **What can you do?**

As consumers we need to accept some responsibility for food safety, especially with fresh commodities. Even as producers do everything they can to provide you with safe, quality produce, it's not a guarantee. Here are some things you can do to help ensure your produce is clean:

- Don't buy bruised or damaged produce.
- Promptly refrigerate any produce that needs it. Fresh produce should be refrigerated within two hours of cutting, otherwise discard.
- Wash your hands often, with warm water and antibacterial soap.
- Wash all fresh produce individually with cool tap water before eating.
- Wash surfaces often. Cutting boards, utensils and countertops should be washed with soapy, warm water and then sanitized. Sanitize with a solution of 1tsp. chlorine bleach in 1qrt. water. ([www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov))
- Don't cross contaminate. If possible use one cutting board for produce and one for raw meat.



**Washing produce at home before eating.**