

Changes to Food Safety Standards and Compliance

Freshcare announces GLOBAL GAP initiative

Australian growers looking to enter key export markets are set to save significant cost and complication once global and domestic food safety certification requirements are combined. The widely adopted, industry led food safety program, Freshcare, announces that the Freshcare Food Safety & Quality Standard (FSQ) will benchmark against the widely accepted GLOBALG.A.P. Standard to provide an export market version for Australian growers.

The initiative being delivered through Horticulture Innovation Australia (HIA) – using vegetable industry levy funds and funds from the Australian Government – in partnership with peak industry body AUSVEG, will have a significant impact for growers in many export sectors ([click here to download the Media Release](#)).

Historically, growers have had to undertake a lengthy, complicated and costly transition to implement an entirely new food safety standard (GLOBALG.A.P. – standalone) for export market access. Successful completion of benchmarking, and recognition of the Freshcare Standard by GLOBALG.A.P., would enable Australian growers to build on their existing food safety and quality certification (Freshcare) as a streamlined compliance process to access export markets. The initial step in the process is to identify and clarify the requirements for Good Agricultural Practice (G.A.P) in the key export markets for Australian fresh produce, including a number of markets in Asia and the Middle East; considering required scope(s) – food safety, quality, environmental, biosecurity, worker welfare, etc.

Industry consultation has already commenced and any businesses interested in making input at this preliminary stage, should [contact the Freshcare Office](#).

Once the scope of the benchmark is confirmed, a gap analysis of the Freshcare Food Safety & Quality Edition 4 Standard (FSQ4) will be conducted against the requirements of GLOBALG.A.P. Certification (v5.0).

A Freshcare ‘bolt-on’ based on outcomes of the exercise outlined above will then be developed to submit as part of the formal benchmark submission to GLOBALG.A.P. in early 2017.

Regular project updates will be provided through both the Freshcare website and industry communications, with the project is due for completion by mid/late 2017.

[For more information contact the Freshcare Office](#).

Freshcare and HARPs

Freshcare is transitioning to become a Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) compliant scheme. This is to ensure that it remains relevant and can meet the requirements for the Harmonised Australian Retailer Produce Scheme (or HARPs – see below).

Freshcare accredited farms

Freshcare has a new Code out Version 4 which can be downloaded from the Freshcare website (<https://www.freshcare.com.au/standards/food-safety-quality>). **To ensure that you are compliant to the new Code, you must complete the FSQ4 form – internal audit report and address the criteria.** Alternatively, Rudge are conducting a short (3 hour) training course in Melbourne to help with the transition at a cost of \$400 per person. Providers in other states probably run similar courses.

The updated Freshcare Rules are required to be held by all participating businesses and can be found on the Freshcare website after logging in. It is also a requirement that Freshcare be notified in the event of a product recall.

Guidelines for Fresh Produce Food Safety

The document “Guidelines for Fresh Produce Food Safety”, is a valuable resource. A copy can be downloaded from the Fresh Produce Safety Centre <https://freshproducesafety-anz.com/guidelines>.

Harmonised Australian Retailer Produce Scheme (HARPS)

The HARPs scheme is comprised of a GFSI accredited base standard (see table below of acceptable schemes) and a “bolt on” which covers all the additional requirements that suppliers have demanded over and above the base scheme (e.g. Coles 10 commandments, WQA etc).

ALDI, Coles, Costco, Metcash (IGA) and Woolworths all accept HARPs. This scheme will be rolled out from 26 October, 2016.

There will be significant cost savings for businesses audited to multiple schemes; through a reduction in time and administration costs.

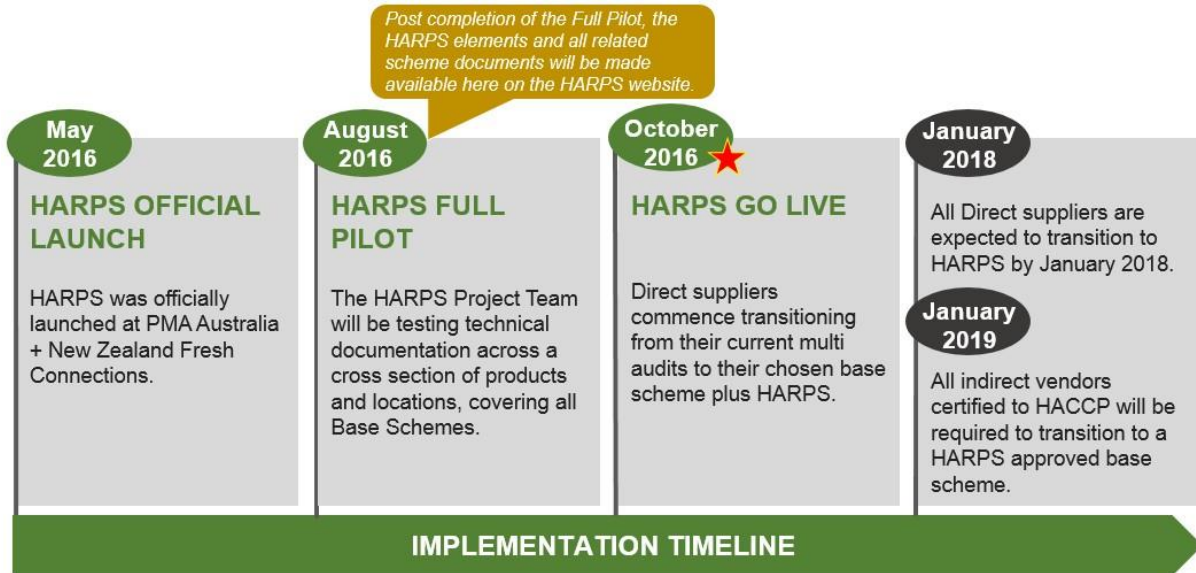
Figure 1: Acceptable base schemes

Standard	Application for	Excludes
BRC Global Standard for Food Safety	Packers	Growers
SQF Code (Food) – Level 3	Growers (Module 2 & 7) Packers (Modules 2 & 10) Distributors (Module 12)	
GLOBAL.G.A.P. Integrated Farm Assurance	Growers and Packers	
Freshcare* Food Safety & Quality	Growers and Packers	



HACCP Accreditation

All growers currently on HACCP and supplying Coles, Woolworths, Metcash, Aldi or Costco will need to transition to one of the base schemes (Freshcare, SQF or Global Gap). Start transitioning at your next audit (if possible). If you do not supply one of the major supermarkets, you can remain on HACCP.



Newsletter

To keep up to date with food safety, The Fresh Produce Safety Centre produces an excellent newsletter. Subscribe at: <https://freshproducesafety-anz.com>

References:

<https://freshproducesafety-anz.com/harps/>

<https://freshproducesafety-anz.com/guidelines/>

<http://harponline.com.au/faq/>

<https://www.freshcare.com.au/freshcare-announces-globalg-a-p-benchmark-initiative/>