

## Food Safety begins with Good Agricultural Practice for Vegetable Farming

The assurance of food safety is a shared responsibility from farm to fork. In many instances, the origins of food safety hazards can be traced to the farms. Poor farming practices and the misuse of agricultural chemicals such as pesticides can cause contamination. Management practices and production techniques are also critical risk factors. Globally, food safety assurance schemes are being put in place to reduce the risk of contamination at the point of food production.

The **Good Agricultural Practice for Vegetable Farming (GAP-VF) Certification Scheme** introduced by AVA is one such scheme that has been developed to align Singapore with internationally recognised guidelines. It aims to set a national benchmark for the production of safe and quality local vegetables by:

- (a) promoting a safety assurance system at source;
- (b) inculcating a sense of responsibility amongst local vegetable farmers to ensure the production of safe and quality vegetables for consumers in Singapore; and
- (c) providing a form of product differentiation mechanism for Singapore consumers who wish to purchase GAP-VF certified vegetables



## GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICE FOR VEGETABLE FARMING (GAP-VF) CERTIFICATION SCHEME



# ASSURING SAFE AND QUALITY VEGETABLE PRODUCTION USING

## Good Agricultural Practices at source

### About the GAP-VF Certification Scheme

The GAP-VF Certification Scheme is a voluntary scheme for local vegetable farms to obtain certification if the farms comply with the GAP-VF guidelines. The GAP-VF comprises a code of practice for safe and quality vegetable production. These guidelines are based on Hazard Analysis of Critical Control Points (HACCP) and quality management principles, with emphasis on the following six key areas :-

- Farm location
- Farm structure
- Farm environment (soil and water)
- Farm maintenance (hygiene and cleanliness)
- Farm practices, methods, techniques (pesticide and fertilizer applications, pest and disease management, postharvest handling)
- Farm management (farm records, traceability, staff training)

The guidelines enable farmers to adopt a systematic approach to minimize contamination risk and to better assure the production of safe and quality vegetables.

### Benefits of being GAP-VF Certified

To vegetable farmers:-

- ✓ GAP-VF certified farmers will have a higher profile as a member of the nationally recognised list of vegetable farmers who are setting the benchmark for the production of safe and quality vegetables sold in Singapore.
- ✓ They will also gain access to a wider market by displaying the "GAP-VF" certification mark on their farm produce. The mark will help to brand their farm produce and differentiate them from other brands in the market;

To vegetable retailers :-

- ✓ Retailers can show their commitment to ensure food safety and meet increasing consumer demand for safe vegetables by selling premium vegetable produce from GAP-VF certified farms in their retail outlets.

To vegetable consumers :-

- ✓ Consumers can enjoy the option of buying quality vegetables grown from traceable and certified sources;
- ✓ They can also be better assured of the safety and quality of the vegetables they purchase.

### Application for GAP-VF Certification

Vegetable farms must hold a valid farm licence and have a minimum of 1 year of vegetable farming activities to be eligible to apply for the scheme. Applicants will be subjected to evaluation and farm audits conducted by AVA based on the scheme's criteria. Audits will be based on site investigations, examination of farm records, assessment of farming and post-harvesting procedures, interviews with the farmers and analysis of soil, nutrients and farm produce.

Upon meeting the scheme's criteria, a GAP-VF certificate that permits the use of the GAP-VF certification mark, will be awarded to the certified farm. GAP-VF certificates are valid for one year from the date of issue and can be renewed on an annual basis. Farm seeking for renewal of the certificate will be subjected to re-evaluation and farm audits conducted by AVA.

