

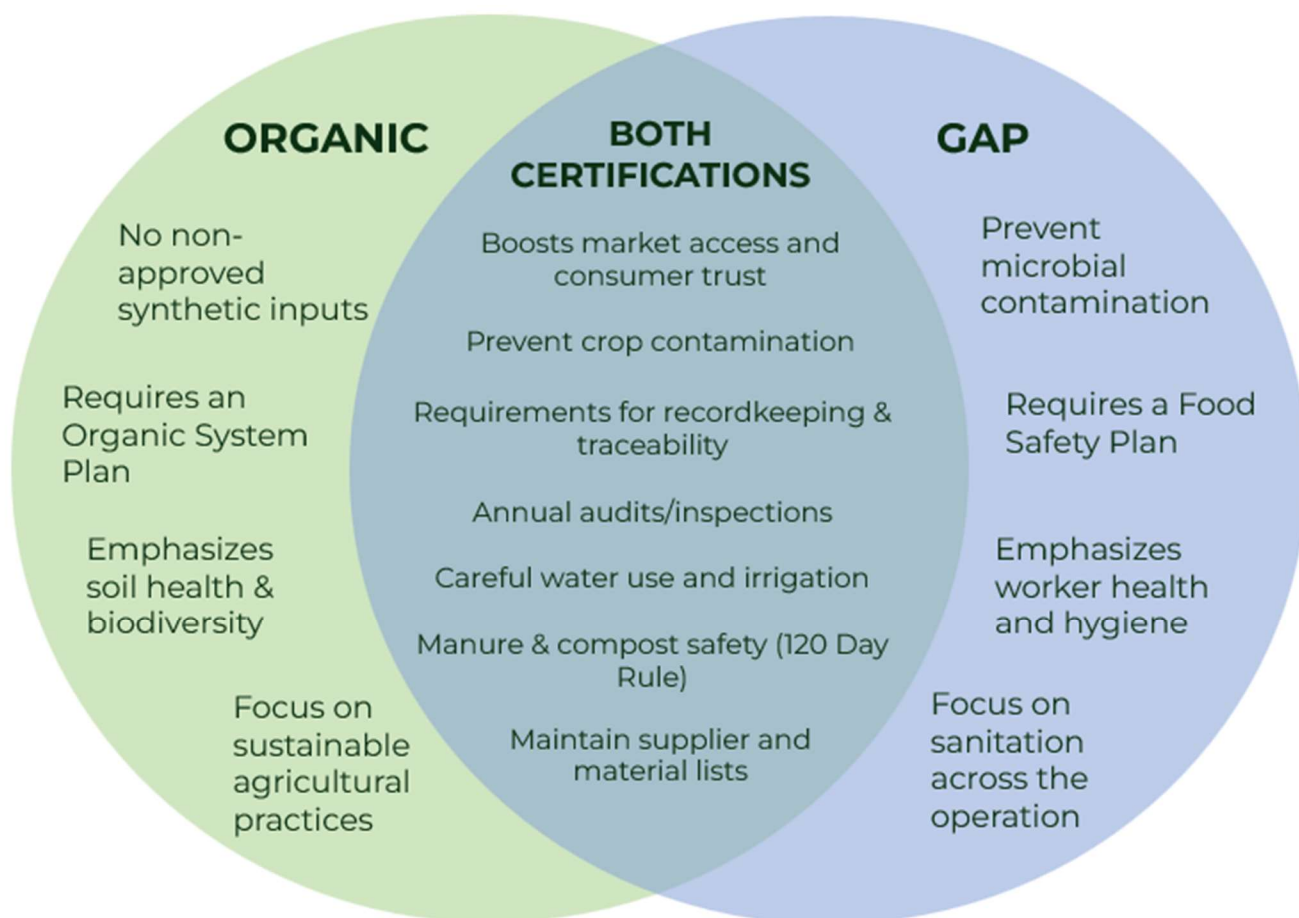
GAP vs Organic

What's the Difference?

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INTRODUCTION:

Organic certification and Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification are both voluntary certifications which verify that operations are adhering to certain standards. Organic certification focuses on ensuring an operation produces food **free of non-approved materials or GMOs** and in ways that **maintain soil and water health**. GAP certification focuses primarily on food safety and hygiene in order to **minimize risk of foodborne pathogens**. Both certifications require written plans, diligent recordkeeping, and annual inspections. While GAP Certification is voluntary, the FDA's Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) is US law and required for most farms. New producers should read more on FSMA to understand the requirements. This document explains the major similarities and differences between requirements for Organic vs GAP certification.





TYPES OF GAP CERTIFICATION

There are multiple types of Food Safety certification that are available to producers and handlers. Here's a breakdown of several types of Food Safety certifications available and what kinds of operations they typically apply to:

USDA GAP/GHP	USDA GroupGAP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) applies to pre-harvest and harvest operations. GHP (Good Handling Practices) applies to post-harvest handling Widely accepted domestically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows small and medium-sized operations to certify collectively, reducing certification costs Ideal for grower groups supplying larger buyers
Harmonized GAP	Global GAP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simplified and aligned with the FSMA (Food Safety Modernization Act) Widely accepted domestically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GFSI (Global Food Safety Initiative) For large producers exporting internationally Many international retailers require this certification

ORGANIC & GAP SIMILARITIES:

- **Market Access:** Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification and Organic Certification both allow access to premium markets by proving commitment to certain standards.
- **Consumer Confidence:** Both certifications require annual audits of the operation and its products. This allows consumers to trust the operations' claims.
- **Traceability & Recordkeeping:** Thorough recordkeeping is required for both certifications in order to provide traceability for products.

DIFFERENCES:	Organic	GAP
Primary Focus	Eco-friendly, sustainable agriculture (protecting water and soil)	Food safety and hygiene to prevent illnesses
Conventional Pesticides & Herbicides	Prohibited	Allowed
GMOs	Prohibited	Allowed
Ecosystem Health	Soil fertility, water quality, and ecosystem biodiversity must be maintained	No requirements for maintenance of soil or ecosystem health
Animal Welfare	Requires organic feed, natural living conditions, and access to outdoors	Requires basic welfare standards, mostly relating to food safety



Organic System Plan & Food Safety Plan Crossover

Both Organic and GAP certification require written plans which detail operation procedures. Organic requires an Organic System Plan, while GAP requires a Food Safety Plan. There is notable crossover in the information and recordkeeping required for these two plans:

- Operation contact information and description
- Operation map and acreage
- List of commodities being certified
- Traceability of products from beginning to end, including inputs, planting, livestock feed, harvests, processing, transport, storage, and sale
- Chain of custody protocols
- Description of irrigation system(s)
- Separation of edible crops and livestock; contamination prevention plan to prevent contact between crops and manure
- Description of compost and/or manure use
- Description of equipment cleaning practices to prevent contamination
- Description of contamination risk from transport and mitigation plans
- List of cleaning agents used on the operation
- Rodent and pest control plan
- Recordkeeping

Organic Only

- Land management history (of applied substances)
- Description of buffer zones
- Soil health maintenance and/or improvement plan
- Description of crop rotation practices
- Descriptions of recordkeeping system functionality
- List of all input substances
- Description of operation's natural resources and biodiversity, and plan(s) to maintain and/or improve them
- Types of seeds, seedlings, and planting stock used for crops
- Weed management plan
- Disease management plan
- Product labeling information
- Contamination prevention plan (from prohibited substances)

GAP Only

- Self-audit reports
- Operation health and hygiene policies & training
- Visitor health and hygiene policy
- Disciplinary policy for food safety violations
- Chemical application safety
- Water risk assessment & mitigation
- Detailed description of washing, packing, and storing stations, including maintenance and contamination prevention plans
- Map of water distribution system for wash/pack line
- Water quality and temperature assessments

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

USDA Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)

[USDA: An Overview of Good Agricultural Practices \(GAPs\)](#)

[USDA: Good Agricultural Practices \(GAP\) Resources](#)

[NASDA GAP Overview](#)

USDA Organic

[USDA Certified Organic: Understanding the Basics](#)

[USDA The Organic System Plan](#)

[Transition to Organic Partnership Program Resource Library](#)

Food Safety Modernization Act

[USDA Food and Nutrition Service – The Food Safety Modernization Act and the Produce Safety Rule](#)

[US Food and Drug Administration FSMA](#)

[Cornell Produce Safety Alliance – Produce Safety Rule](#)