

# IMPACT

University of Idaho  
Extension

Twin Falls County, 246 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave E, Twin Falls, ID 83301; 208-734-9590; Fax: 208-733 9645

## Extension Develops GAP Audit Planning Materials for Idaho Potato Producers

### *The Situation*

As produce consumption has increased, scientists at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, Georgia, noticed another important trend. From 1973 through 1998, there was a significant increase in the number of food borne disease outbreaks associated with fresh produce. Produce-associated outbreaks can be caused by bacteria, viruses, or parasites. Bacteria like *Salmonella*, *E. coli* O157:H7, *Shigella*, and *Bacillus cereus* are of significant concern. Parasites like *Cryptosporidium* and *Cyclospora*, and viruses such as hepatitis A and Norwalk, also have been the causative agents in several produce-associated outbreaks. There are only a few documented cases of Food borne illnesses traced back to poor agricultural practices, but one particular food borne outbreak worth noting was related to *E. coli* O157:H7 contamination of lettuce mix. This outbreak was traced back to poor agricultural practices and improper handling of the lettuce after harvest. It could have been prevented with the use of good agricultural and management practices.

Any fruit or vegetable that may end up in the Federal food programs (school lunches, military, etc) must pass the GAP Audit at the farm level. Because of this, some processed potato facilities in Idaho are requiring farmers who sell potatoes to them to pass the Audit. Although not difficult procedures for farmers who are doing a good job anyway, it is a fair amount of work to know what kind of records to compile and what documentation is needed for various sections of the audit matrix.

### *Our Response*

Working in conjunction with University of Idaho potato specialists, Extension Educators from Twin Falls and Minidoka Counties compiled a list of materials for producers to use. Beginning with the Audit Matrix, each section is referenced with the required documentation sheet, and if needed, additional required documentation is noted. This information has been developed into a notebook that will allow producers to have all the information in one place, easily accessible and understandable.

### *Program Outcomes*

Extension educators have talked about the GAP Audit at speaking opportunities throughout the summer. More thorough presentations will take place during the Extension Winter Schools, primarily the potato school, and Idaho Irrigation Equipment Conference. Also, the notebook has been submitted to the Idaho Potato Council for recommendation, approval, and possible funding for distribution.

### *The Future*

The USDA-GAP program is here to stay. It is not too far of a stretch to imagine it will eventually be applied to all fresh fruits and vegetables grown in Idaho. All it is going to take is for a major retailer to require fresh products to be GAP certified. Fresh pack growers, sweet corn growers and U-pick truck farmers need to be aware of what will be required should the program expand. As it does expand, Extension already has a framework with which to develop programs for other commodities.

## ***For More Information***

Steven L. Hines, Extension Educator  
University of Idaho Extension—Twin Falls County  
246 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave E  
Twin Falls, ID 83301  
208-734-9590x19  
Fax: 208-733-9645  
Email: [shines@uidaho.edu](mailto:shines@uidaho.edu)

Dale Baker, Extension Educator  
University of Idaho Extension—Minidoka County  
85 E. Baseline  
Rupert, ID 83350  
208-436-7184  
Fax: 208-436 6889  
Email: [daleb@uidaho.edu](mailto:daleb@uidaho.edu)

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