Public GAP programmes and commercial GAP standards: Their co-existence & modular approaches to serve different domestic and international market segments

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What is GAP?

GAP = ‘practices that need to be followed to ensure environmental, economic and social sustainability for on-farm production and post-production processes and result in safe and quality food and non-food agricultural products’. A way to manage your system better.

**GAP: Evolution of the Concept**

**...WHAT IS NEW ?**

1. For decades: extension & research guidelines on “good practices”
2. Late 1990s: “GAP” codes & standards
   - farm better (=SUSTAINABLE & SAFE for workers/consumers)
   - demonstrate that you farm better (=records and/or certification)

= GAP is an **opportunity** to integrate technical advice to farmers to include good agronomy + food safety and quality + business skills
= GAP a building block in national food chain approach to food safety
= Different types of GAP standards for different objectives and conditions
Contextualizing National GAP Schemes

• When contextualizing national GAP development, it is important not to limit it to the commercial, micro-economic context of enabling producers to comply with downstream market standards.

• Rather, national GAPs should address both the commercial context and the non-commercial sustainability aspects, including benefits for
  - national food safety strategy;
  - agricultural development and rural livelihoods;
  - export promotion strategy.

• This is the background for using public (and development assistance) resources to support national GAP implementation.
Key Considerations on GAP Schemes

NOT ...

• “all farms should comply with commercial GAP schemes”
  or
• “all countries should define a national GAP”
  or
• “make compliance with national GAP legally mandatory” (should be voluntary)
  or
• all farmers large and small will apply the same GAP now” (= ‘everyone or no one’ strategy)
Clarity on Focus and Strategy of GAP schemes

STRATEGY DEPENDS ON

- Objective: where do we want to go?
- Means: how will we get there?
- Potential: what will we realistically gain by doing it?
- ...AND SHOULD BE:
  - COHERENT
  - COST EFFECTIVE
  - REALISTIC (based on existing capacity)
National GAP Strategy Components

- Stakeholders coordination and mechanisms
- Market Demand & Sector Support
- Infrastructure & capacity building
- Standards & documentation
- Reliable Inspection/ Certif/ Lab
- Concerted strategy and policy

Clarify Market Demand and Sector Support

A. Clarify this first
Clarify Market Demand and Sector Support

- Target your market and other objectives first, then see what you need to comply with.
- Possible options for countries with predominance of smallholders:
  - domestic markets (traditional, or emerging hotels, retail, hospitals)
  - export: not-certified regional or wholesale markets
  - organic and fair trade
  - global supply chains / top retail (with certification)
- Step 1: conduct CRITICAL ANALYSIS of
  - country strengths
  - diagnostic of current practices
  - comparison with legal and commercial requirements of current and target markets
  - importance of sub-sector for development and poverty.
  Preferably done by industry (export farm production managers)
- Government cannot make the industry competitive. The industry can = if strong and interested, can take the lead.
- Market recognition of government-run or supported schemes can be low, however advantages of government-sponsored GAP (see Thailand).
Assure Stakeholder Coordination and Mechanism

B. Essential factor

Stakeholders coordination and mechanisms

- Concerted strategy and policy
- Standards & documentation
- Reliable Inspection/Certif/Lab
- Infrastructure & capacity building
- Market Demand & Sector Support

GAP PROGRAMME
Establish Coordination and Roles of Stakeholders

- Establish a co-owned public/private coordination mechanisms: National steering committee’, ‘Task Force’, etc
  - producer & exporters organizations, public sector, retailers, hospitality industry, consumer groups

= Most successful GAP programmes have this

- Attribute roles and responsibilities realistically

- Foster policy coordination in public services (food safety, crop production/protection, standards, boards, extension, Min of Ag, Health, Tourism + parastatals + local government)

- Farmers & communities create most good practices
Role of Governments

Policy Analysis
- Facilitating conceptual clarity on enhancing developmental contribution
- Addressing smallholder concerns
- Optimizing costs & benefits

Facilitating Investment
- in physical infrastructure
- in SMTQ systems & institutions
- directing donor funding accordingly

Devising flanking/support policies
- on extension services
- on financial support
- addressing problems with registration of CBs

Assuring policy coherence
- among government agencies dealing with various aspects of GAP
- towards donors

Facilitating stakeholder dialogue
- facilitating & engaging in stakeholder dialogue on development & implementation of GAP
GAP Strategy: Consistent and Clear

C. Essential to success, to save time and $

Concerted strategy and policy

- Stakeholders coordination and mechanisms
- Market Demand & Sector Support
- Standards & documentation
- Reliable Inspection/ Certif/ Lab
- Infrastructure & capacity building

GAP PROGRAMME
GAP Strategy: Consistent and Clear

- Consider GAP for domestic market? if NOT, will local consumer benefit? Consider a two-tier GAP (one for domestic market, another for export)
- Consider impact and inclusiveness of smallholders? Policy trade-off
- Possible options for countries with predominance smallholders:
  - domestic markets (traditional, or emerging hotels, retail, hospitals)
  - export: regional, wholesale, non-certified
  - organic and fair trade
  - global supply chains / top retail (with certification)
- Step by step approach to implementation of GAP for different markets

- **Advanced countries/farmers**: focus on individual commercial GAP compliance & group compliance for smallholders if there is no national scheme. National interpretation guidelines OR if national GAP scheme exists, consider whether to benchmark to commercial GAP scheme & promotion of GAP to domestic middle class and introduction of voluntary two-tier GAP (export/domestic)?

- **Less advanced countries/farmers**: individual compliance & national GAP as voluntary tool to upgrade the industry (not benchmarked) + infrastructure development + business skills / linkages (= ‘back to basics’).
GAP Strategy: Consistent and Clear

- Too much consumer focus.
  - Think of farmers: define easily applicable and voluntary GAP... or be prepared to more $$$ (training, investment)... or have a standard which no one enforces.

- No ‘one size fits all’.

- Consistent, transparent, acceptable system takes time to develop.

- Analyze carefully before embarking on benchmarking to commercial GAP.

- Compliance with National GAP should be legally VOLUNTARY (don’t kill your industry or risk falling under WTO discipline).
Modular System of GAP in ASEAN countries

Example: Thailand

Framework for harmonization of national GAPs

Global GAP

Thai GAP

Level 2

Local GAP

Food Safety standard

Minimum Requirement

Accreditation/CBs

Internationally Accredited CB

Locally Accredited CB

Awareness & training
GAP schemes: Conformity Assessment

- Stakeholders coordination and mechanisms
- GAP Standards & documentation
- Concerted strategy and policy
- Market Demand & Sector Support
- Reliable Inspection/Certif/ Lab
- TRAINING farmer, adviser inspector

E. Consider carefully your needs based on objectives
GAP schemes: Conformity Assessment (inspection, labs, certification)

- With or without GAP, governments and other actors should facilitate investment in infra-structure for SMTQ systems (i.e. standards, metrology, testing, and quality assurance), transport, cold chain.
- Analysis: Risk, MRL, soil, irrigation water lab tests, hygiene risk, harvesting risk.
- Establishment and strengthening of local (accredited) laboratory testing, certification and auditing institutions.
- Consider which levels of inspection capacity you need:
  - first party / pre-audit inspection by farmers
  - participatory guarantee systems (groups)
  - second party by extension officers
  - third party inspection by nationally or internationally accredited certification bodies
In a Nutshell: GAP schemes should be about ..... 

- REPERCUSSIONS = Opportunities, but constraints for small farmers. Effects + and –
- INTEGRATION = what coverage of sustainability issues?
- REPARTITION = Who will pay for GAP? Market, governments, farmers?
- COORDINATION = Support win-win situations for consumers, food markets and farmers
- VISION = GAP for domestic or export or modular scheme? Ultimately, a matter of strategic, realistic choice for governments & stakeholders