

**Title** An International comparison of food safety programs in the fresh produce industry  
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### **Abstract**

**Introduction:** the globalization of the Canadian supply chain for fresh produce has focused attention on the food safety practices of Canadian and foreign suppliers at all levels of the chain. HACCP-based programs have been developed by the Canadian Horticultural Council (CHC) for primary producers and packers and by the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA) for repackers and wholesalers. These national programs will be recognized by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). The study compared the CHC and CPMA programs with programs in countries which export to Canada to establish a basis for buyer specifications for both domestic and imported fresh produce for importer, national grocery chains and independent retailers. **Materials and methods:** The multi-stakeholder steering committee selected 16 foreign programs for comparison. During 2007/2008, the CHC programs for potatoes and greenhouses were compared with ten foreign programs (five from the US) and the CPMA program with six (four from the US). Each program's technical content was reviewed in detail against the Canadian base program. A "comparison scale" was established and the final tabulations for industry's use presented the relative "equivalence" of all programs. **Results and discussion:** Foreign programs that have been developed using the HACCP-based approach adopted by CHC and CPMA produce comparable food safety practices. Those that do not use this approach, such as California Leafy Greens program, demonstrate significant gaps. Furthermore, the GlobalGAP and GFSI benchmarking schemes generate results similar to the CFIA recognition program. A significant number of exporting countries in the Americas, Africa and Asia are now developing HACCP-based food safety programs for fresh produce. This is the first major international comparison of food safety programs in fresh produce sector. It demonstrates the positive value of adopting the HACCP-based approach. It could serve as a stimulus for the mutual recognition by industry and governments of fresh produce food safety programs or for a new international standard in the fresh produce sector.