

## Kaolin Mushroom Farms Passes First USDA MGAP

On December 18, 2008, Kaolin Mushroom Farms, the growing division of South Mill Mushroom Sales, was the first mushroom farm to pass the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Mushroom Good Agricultural Practices (MGAP) audit. AMI congratulates Kaolin Mushroom Farms and South Mill Mushroom Sales for their leadership and commitment to the MGAP program.



(L to R) Kim Norton, Research & Development /Quality Assurance (QA) Technician; Sharron McGuigan, QA/Food Safety Manager; Beatriz Lopez, QA Coordinator; Dorene Choffel, Agriculture Commodity Supervisor, PA Dept. of Agriculture. Not pictured, Mike Moran, leader of the Kaolin/South Mill initiative.

"This is a milestone and a tremendous achievement," said AMI President Laura Phelps. "We expect many more farms in the coming months to successfully pass the MGAP audit."

The MGAP program provides a set of standards and procedures that mushroom growers can use to enhance and document safe mushroom growing practices. MGAP standards are consistent with current food safety guidelines for the fresh produce industry described in the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) document "Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables."

The Kaolin/South Mill audit took place just one day after 12 USDA auditors from across the country visited Chester County for farm tours. The development of the USDA-sanctioned MGAP audit is a major accomplishment for the mushroom industry. It is only the third commodity-specific audit that USDA has approved – the other two are for leafy greens and tomatoes.

"The mushroom industry can be proud of its pro-active approach to food safety by developing this program as a good business practice instead of as a response to pressure by regulators following a food safety incident," said Phelps.

"The educational component of

an industry-wide food safety program began 10 years ago when Dr. Luke LaBorde of Penn State University offered seminars in both Pennsylvania and California focusing on fresh growing operations from which he developed the first set of standards," Phelps said. "The industry is fortunate to have Dr. LaBorde's expertise in providing a sound scientific and technical basis for this program."

AMI would like to thank Ken Peterson and Nate Tickner of the Fresh Products Branch of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service for their diligence and guidance in the development of the MGAP audit. Members of the AMI Food Safety Task Force have also put hundreds of hours of work into the program, which includes 14 Standards, Goals and Guidelines for implementation. The USDA audit is based on these standards and the documentation required to validate them. AMI continues to work with private, third-party food safety auditing companies to adopt the MGAP standards.

The MGAP is applicable only to production areas, although mushroom farms can be audited on the generic USDA audit for Parts 3 (packing), 4 (storage and transportation), 5 (traceback) and 7 (preventative food defense procedures) if they choose. Both the farm and packing

facilities at Kaolin and South Mill were audited.

"This MGAP audit, which was the result of an extraordinary amount of hard work by many industry leaders including Dr. LaBorde and Laura Phelps, will establish a 'best practices' baseline that all growers should adhere to," said John Pia, South Mill Mushroom Sales. "Mushroom growers who do not embrace this inevitable industry direction will find themselves with no place to sell their product. While the cost of compliance is significant, the cost of non-compliance is devastating. Most significantly in my mind was the 'will do' attitude contributed by so many people who carved time from their demanding schedules on behalf of this effort. My thanks to all."

AMI will be holding training seminars on implementation of the MGAP program. Growers in Pennsylvania who successfully pass a USDA MGAP audit are eligible for a \$400 cost share from the PA Department of Agriculture, made possible through the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant program.

For information on the MGAP program, or to sign up your farm for a MGAP audit, contact the AMI Washington office for details or email the USDA contact, Ken Peterson: ken.peterson@usda.gov or 202/720-4560. **mn**

# United States Department of Agriculture



This is to verify that **South Mill Mushroom Sales Inc.; Kennett Square, Pennsylvania**  
has successfully passed the initial elements of the voluntary

*USDA Audit Program for*

**GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES & GOOD HANDLING PRACTICES**

To verify continued adherence to the program, please visit <http://www.ams.usda.gov/gapghp>

*Whole Mushrooms- House Packing Facility, Storage and Transportation, and Traceback*

*Rebecca A. Stetter*

Fresh Products Branch

**December 2008**

Date Valid for One Year