**GAPs for Vegetable and Fruit Growers: Cultivating a Peer Education Network in Minnesota**

**Specialty Crop Block Grant (pending, as of 9.13.12)**

**Timeline: Dec 2012 – Dec 2013**

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**On Farm GAPs Education Team**

The goals of this project are to increase the number of growers who understand and adopt food safety practices and create their own farm food safety plans. As a result of this work, more growers will have the information, skills and knowledge necessary to successfully develop and document their own farm food safety plans.

**There are 2 major activities associated with this grant:**

**GOAL 1:** **Host 3 GAPs/food safety plan workshops** to provide in-depth food safety information for fruit and vegetable growers in Minnesota. Each of these workshops will also have an “on-farm” component, where we bring participants onto an operational farm to see food safety in action. At least 60 growers will attend these workshops. Farmers can be new or veteran farmers who are interested in food safety and adopting a food safety plan.

**Timeline:** Dec 2012 – March 2013

**Potential locations**: SW, NW, NE

**GOAL 2: Train 8 growers to be peer mentors.** To complement our workshops, we will develop a network of growers to teach and promote GAPs within Minnesota. Project staff and partners will identify 8 growers to serve as Grower Mentors. All Grower Mentors will be expected to participate in a food safety workshop (see Goal 1). Project staff will conduct a farm walk-through at the farm of each Mentor at the beginning of the growing season. Each Grower Mentor will complete Cornell University’s 20-hour online GAPs education course. Next, each Grower Mentor will visit at least 3 other neighboring farms to walk through the farm, reviewing a farm food safety checklist (developed by project staff). If items need improvement, the mentor will suggest what can be improved, or indicate that the mentee should contact our team for more assistance. At project end, the Grower Mentors will meet as a group to share insights and best-practices for spreading food safety knowledge learned over the season. Mentors will be paid for their participation.

**Timeline**: February – Dec 2013

**Potential locations**: Goal is to have representatives from each region of the state.

Project staff will also develop 3 food safety–related short videos as a part of the project