



WALMART ACCEPTS HEALTHY GROWN AS A VALID IPM CERTIFICATION PROGRAM



Wisconsin's Healthy Grown awarded access to the Walmart U.S. Pollinator Health Position

By Deana Knuteson, University of Wisconsin-Madison Department of Plant Pathology and Healthy Grown Coordinator

Wisconsin's Healthy Grown[®] has recently been awarded access to the Walmart U.S. Pollinator Health Position as a valid Integrated Pest Management (IPM) certification program meeting the retailer's requirements.

Healthy Grown documents IPM, sustainability, and ecological restoration efforts and certifies potatoes, carrots, and onions under the high-bar program.

Growers implement landscape-level restoration practices on wetlands, prairies, forests, and other natural habitats, providing certified value to non-production acreage.

Starting with the 2025 season, those certified in the Healthy Grown program can provide their documents to Walmart and will be able to sell produce into the retail giant's stores.

In 2020, Walmart started to prioritize regenerative agriculture and identify programs that require IPM practices and promote pollinator health.

Those goals are already incorporated into the Healthy Grown standard. Since Healthy Grown has been working on sustainability goals since 2000, staff shared the program with Walmart's sustainability experts and demonstrated what Wisconsin has already accomplished.

Above: Healthy Grown potatoes are windrowed at an Alsum Farms & Produce field in Grand Marsh, Wisconsin.

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During the summer of 2024, the Healthy Grown standard and its corresponding certification program were reviewed by the IPM Institute that ranks the validity of external programs and ensures they are verified and maintain the rigor needed to meet Walmart’s goals.

PASSING THE REVIEW

This past September, Healthy Grown passed that review and received accreditation to be one of the Walmart approved programs.

According to the retailer’s corporate website, “Walmart has been reviewing third-party certifications that verify IPM adoption or that are protective of pollinator health and include robust IPM criteria.”

Healthy Grown is now listed as one of the third-party accredited programs. Only 18 programs fit under their current pollinator protection criteria, and Healthy Grown is proud to be one of them. Details on the Walmart sustainability initiative can be found here: <https://corporate.walmart.com/policies>.

Currently, Healthy Grown accounts for roughly half of the fresh market potato acreage in Wisconsin.

Over the years, Wisconsin’s IPM certification program has provided some positive gains into marketplace access and helped position growers as preferential produce suppliers

for various outlets.

While these gains have helped growers and marketers locally and advanced the program, the news of Walmart accepting Healthy Grown catapults it into the mainstream of national sustainability efforts.

Above: Potatoes are put into storage at Okray Family Farms, a certified Healthy Grown operator in Plover, Wisconsin.

While Walmart is just one company, this could be the start of much larger gains in the marketplace.

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POSITIVE RESULTS

Such positive results are achieved based on relationships between the growers, industry, and University of Wisconsin faculty and staff who work together to promote proven research, educational programming and grower-driven innovative solutions.

In all, this is why Healthy Grown has been successful in advancing



Above: Healthy Grown certifies potatoes, onions and carrots, the latter like these freshly dug by Alexandra and Rod Gumz of Gumz Farms, LLC, which participates in the high-bar program.

research-based, sustainable production programs on grower farms.

Starting in 2025, Walmart will be requiring 100% of their growers to be audited and provide documentation to verify that they are certified under one of the retailer's accredited programs.

Walmart will require details by September 1 of each year to be eligible, and since Wisconsin has the certification system in place, more

of the state's growers should consider Healthy Grown for their IPM requirements.

This exciting news from Walmart provides an avenue for expanding Healthy Grown's reach and increasing its national recognition.

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Joe Seis lets his daughter, Jessie, ride in the tractor with him as he harvests potatoes at Sterling Farms, LLC, a Healthy Grown member.



Potatoes are harvested for The Little Potato Company at Coloma Farms, which participates in the Healthy Grown program.

To be ready, new growers are encouraged to reach out now to learn about the process.

Current staff, growers, and suppliers are here to help, so anyone interested can get hands-on advice to start the program. From farm and production needs to paperwork details, and ultimately to sales and marketing, help is available.

For details and more information, contact Deana Knuteson (dknuteson@wisc.edu), Julie Braun (jbraun@wisconsinpotatoes.com) or Dana Rady (drady@wisconsinpotatoes.com).

BC^T



Rob Nurry burns buckthorn and other invasive shrubs near an Okray Family Farms field. Growers implement landscape-level restoration practices on wetlands, prairies, forests, and other natural habitats as part of the Healthy Grown program.

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