



# Sustainable Food Group Sustainability Standard™ General Regulations

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Sustainable Food Group  
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## Introduction

- a. The Sustainable Food Group Sustainability Standard™ Certification is a private scheme that incorporates mandatory and optional requirements for the certification of specialty crop products at an international level.
- b. These General Regulations detail the Sustainable Food Group Sustainability Standard process and the duties and requirements of the scheme owner, its certification bodies and applicants seeking certification for their agricultural products.

## Standard Scope

- a. The scope of the certification is focused on sustainability of practices used to produce crops.
- b. The Sustainable Food Group, a project of the IPM Institute of North America, Inc., has established minimum requirements for applicant performance in the growing, storing, cooling, packing, or processing of agricultural products.
- c. The intent is for applicants to receive certification by a third-party certification body, recognizing performance in the sustainability categories™ associated with each production stage.
- d. The intent is for applicants to undergo the audit as a stand-alone sustainability inspection or have it conducted in conjunction with a food safety audit.
- e. An explanation of the audit requirements is provided in the current documents of the Sustainability Standard Scheme:
  - i. Sustainable Food Group Sustainability Standard - General Regulations
  - ii. Sustainable Food Group Sustainability Standard – Checklist
  - iii. Sustainable Food Group Sustainability Standard – Audit Guidelines
- f. The Sustainable Food Group may issue additional normative documents as needed.
- g. The Sustainable Food Group will internally review audit documentation annually and make changes as needed. Reissuing documentation will take place as needed, e.g., in response to a change in sustainability best practices.
- h. Periodic, triennial review of the scheme will be conducted with feedback from all users taken into consideration. Changes to the scheme will be sent to stakeholders for comment.
- i. The Scheme Owner shall carry out triennial reviews of the operation of the scheme and take any necessary action to ensure compliance with sustainability best practices.
- j. English is the primary language for the audit documentation. Translations in different languages will be made as needed.
- k. Official documentation and translations can be found on the Sustainable Food Group's website: [www.sustainablefoodgroup.org](http://www.sustainablefoodgroup.org)

## Legislation

The Sustainable Food Group Sustainability Standard uses existing laws, regulations and recommendations as parameters in the development of the standard to help ensure applicant compliance and to establish a set of minimum requirements for a sustainability certification. If laws or regulations are not in place regarding the current practices that the applicant is using, a certain level of risk assessment is recommended to ensure minimum requirements for certification are being met.

## **Guidance for the Management of Certification Bodies**

- a. Certification for the Sustainability Standard can only be performed by approved Certification Bodies (CBs). Certification activities shall be carried out by personnel who have the competence requirements to meet all management, administrative, technical and auditing functions.
- b. The CB must have a documented and implemented quality system that contains all the needed requirements for conformance with the scheme. The information of the quality system required for conformance must be made available to the Scheme Owner when requested.
- c. A designated member of the CB staff shall be responsible for the quality system's development, implementation and maintenance. This person, the Scheme Manager, will be the contact for the management of the Scheme.
- d. The CB must be accredited according to the ISO/IEC Guide 65, ISO/IEC 17021 or ISO/IEC 17065. The Accreditation Body must be affiliated to the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and signatory to the Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA). The CB will provide proof of accreditation during the onboarding process.
- e. CBs shall be accredited within one year from the date of application to the Accreditation Body. If the accreditation is not obtained within this period, the Scheme Owner shall review the situation and appropriate actions will be implemented.
- f. The list of approved and provisionally approved CBs will be made publicly available by the Scheme Owner on the Sustainable Food Group website.
- g. The Scheme Owner will define a set of indicators of performance for CBs, which will be monitored according to a risk based program that will consider the number of certifications issued by the CB, products certified, the types of operation, complaints received and any other that the Scheme Owner considers representative.
- h. The Scheme Owner has the faculty to execute on-site inspections at the CB offices, evaluate the auditors regarding their technical skills (which can include shadowing auditors), review audit reports, review any materials conducted under the Sustainability Standard scheme certification process or request information or documentation regarding CB's accreditation, audit reports and corrective actions and anything pertaining to the fulfillment of this agreement. All costs associated with these supervisions are to be covered by the CB.
- i. CBs shall notify the Scheme Owner in a timely manner regarding any relevant changes to their ownership, management structure or constitution.
- j. In the case of any possible conflict or problems that could bring the Sustainability Standard into disrepute, the Scheme Owner and the CB shall agree on the appropriate action to take.
- k. Certification bodies are required to use the Azzule database to facilitate the Scheme Owners ability to analyze performance and make improvements to program documents and procedures.

## **Audit Duration and Frequency**

- a. An approved CB will be responsible for evaluating if an organization meets the requirements of the Sustainability Standard to receive certification. The CB will also determine audit duration.
- b. The audit duration should be approximated by the CB when scheduling audits and adjusted as needed with the following considerations:

- i. Type of operation(s) to be certified (e.g. producer or processor)
  - ii. Number of operations to be certified
  - iii. Size of the operation(s)
  - iv. Number of products and similarity of production process
  - v. Complexity of the production and/or handling processes
  - vi. Company preparation level
- c. The audit duration will be recorded per organization and the operations included in the certification process. The audit duration comprises the entire audit process, from opening meeting to the closing meeting with the organization where non-conformances are indicated. CBs should justify significant audit duration deviations. The following table provides guidelines for approximate audit durations:

Operation Type	Approximate Duration (hours)
Ranch	4
Greenhouse	3
Storage & Distribution Center	3
Cooler/Cold Storage	3
Packinghouse	3
Processing	5

*Estimated audit duration table*

- d. The due date for the subsequent audit will be 36 months from the date of the previous audit and not from the previous certificate issue date. In year two, the CB will conduct a desk audit to confirm continued compliance. The desk audit will consist of documentation review and non-compliance follow up (if needed).
- e. This frequency may be modified by factors such as:
- i. Modification of the scope and/or operation's location during the certificate validity.
  - ii. Seasonality of the products; up to 3 months' extension of current certificate expiration date with justifiable circumstances.
  - iii. Quantity and type of non-conformities detected at the time of the audit (e.g., a re-audit or a re-visit may be required in order to receive certification).
  - iv. Additional visits may be required due to insufficient evidence of corrective actions.
- f. These or other situations must be evaluated and documented by the CB defining the audit frequency required for each applicant, as well as justification for any modification.

### **Auditor Requirements**

Certification Bodies are responsible for ensuring that auditors performing the inspections are in conformance with the following minimum requirements and have evidence to demonstrate their conformance.

#### Qualification/education

- i. Auditors must have education in an agricultural/crop based, food or bio-science related discipline or, as a minimum, have successfully completed a higher education course or equivalent qualification in one of those disciplines, with a degree, diploma or a certificate from a recognized institution, as described in the GFSI Guidance, v6.2, Part II, Annex 3 or any subsequent revisions to such guidance.

## Experience

### i. Work experience

- It is preferred that an auditor have five years of experience in the agricultural and/or food industry but as a minimum, they must have at least two years of experience in areas such as quality assurance or food safety functions in food production or manufacturing, retailing, inspection or enforcement. Some examples of food production experience are listed in the “Categories Table: Taken from GFSI Guidance Document: Part II, Annex 1 – GFSI Scope of Recognition.
- All auditors must pass the Sustainability Standard exam to be initially approved, and subsequently when there is a new version of the scheme or as required by the Scheme Owner. The exam includes knowledge and understanding of the following topics:
  1. Sustainability Standard normative documents
  2. Relevant food/agriculture related legislation
  3. Agricultural production (horticultural, grains, and pulses)/manufacturing processes
- This examination should be taken by all approved auditors each time there is a new version of the scheme and before conducting audits using the new version.

### ii. Audit experience

- Auditors must have a minimum of 10 audit days or 5 audits of practical auditing experience on performing audits of agricultural operations. This experience can be as third or second party auditor or shadowing an approved auditor. Information about the audit experience shall be documented, including details like: dates, audited organization, type of operation being audited and role of the candidate auditor.

Formal auditor training. The auditors must have successfully completed the following courses:

- i. Recognized training in audit techniques based on QMS or FSMS, with duration of one week/40 hours or equivalent.
- ii. Approved Sustainability Standard Auditor Training as defined by the Scheme Owner.

## Auditor assessment

- i. For an auditor’s initial approval, a shadow audit assessment must be performed by an already approved auditor during an official Sustainability Standard audit. This will include an assessment of the new auditor’s knowledge of the following items:

- Sustainability Standard normative documents.
- Agricultural production (horticultural, grains, and pulses)/manufacturing processes and access to relevant laws and regulations and be able to apply them when appropriate.
- Quality systems and specific audit techniques.

- ii. The auditor assessment shall be documented and contain all the information found in the example template distributed by the Scheme Owner. The assessment report will describe the details and outcome of the assessment.

#### Technical supervisor

- i. The CB must appoint at least one person to be a Technical Supervisor (TS), with the following criteria:
  - Meets the qualification/education and working experience of an auditor.
- ii. The TS will have the following responsibilities:
  - Maintain the competence of CB personnel by training them when there is a new scheme version.
  - Be the person who clarifies technical issues with CB personnel and audited organizations.
  - Act as a technical contact with the Scheme Owner.
  - Sign-off approval of new auditors for the CB.

#### Continued training

- i. To maintain the approved auditor status, there should be evidence of at least five audits or seven on-site audit working days per year against the Sustainability Standard to maintain the schemes and industry knowledge.
- ii. The Certification Body has the responsibility to ensure that their auditors are current on good practices for each option the auditors are approved for and are able to apply relevant laws and regulations. The Certification Bodies shall maintain records of all relevant training taken by the auditors.

#### Attributes and competencies

- i. The Certification Bodies must have a system in place that ensures auditors are conducting and behaving in a professional manner. The assessment (including shadow audit assessment) of the auditors should cover evaluation of their personal attributes and behavior.
- ii. Certification Bodies must be able to demonstrate that the auditors meet the requirements for approval to maintain their competence for the Sustainability Standard. CBs must keep complete records of auditors' qualifications, experience, training, supervised audits, assessments, sign-off, re-approval and others, while they have a work relationship and by a minimum period of two years.
- iii. Certification Bodies will be responsible for registering auditors in the Sustainability Standard database, providing information about their qualifications, experience, training, assessment, auditing scopes, etc., and to keep this registration updated when changes occur.

#### **Conflicts of Interest**

- A. Certification Bodies and the personnel involved in the certification process must have a signed contract or agreement that commits them to:
  - i. Avoid any conflict of interest in the certification activities, with regard to services (training and/or consultancy) provided to those applying for certification. There



- must be a minimum of a three-year period between providing any services and performing a Sustainability Standard audit.
- ii. Declare any potential conflicts of interest to the CB management when assigned duties related to an applicant in the program.
  - iii. Be free from any commercial interest in the companies or products to be certified.
  - iv. Maintain the confidentiality of all client specific information except as required by this standard or by law.

## **Certification Process**

### **A. Application**

- i. Applicants must provide the Certification Body with the information defining the scope of the certification they want to achieve for their operations. The information should at minimum include the following:
  - Organization details
  - Contact information
  - Details about the operation(s) to be included in the scope of the certification. For field operations, each site can either be called a “Ranch” or a “Greenhouse”. In the case of a facility operation, each site could either be called a “Storage & Distribution Center”, “Cooling/Cold Storage”, “Packinghouse” or “Processing”.
  - Field operation products covered in the scope of the certification.
- ii. The commodities must be present in the field the time of the audit.
  - Where a commodity is not present at the time of the audit but the operation wishes to include it the scope of their certification, it may be considered if this commodity has similar growing processes as the commodities audited, and the same personnel involved.
  - The auditor will indicate on the audit report what products were observed at the time of the audit, similar products not observed and products that are neither similar nor seen at the time of the audit. The auditor is to include specific details in the scope of the audit and throughout the audit report as to which products were observed at the time of the audit and which records were reviewed. If the commodity is not grown by the field operation during the previous growing cycle (12 months) they cannot be considered in the audit scope. Records of production of the additional products should be available for review.

The facility must be running and the commodities must be present in the operation during the audit.

- Where a commodity is not present at the time of the audit, but the operation wishes to include it the scope of their certification, it may be considered to have similar growing processes as the commodities audited, and the same personal involved.
- The auditor will indicate on the audit report what products were observed at the time of the audit, similar products not observed and products that are neither similar nor seen at the time of the audit. The auditor is to include

specific details in the scope of the audit and throughout the audit report related to which products were observed at the time of the audit and which records were reviewed.

-Process description of a flow chart, with step-by-step details of the production process and equipment moved, must be available during the time of the audit. If the commodity is not grown by the field operation during the previous growing cycle (12 months) it cannot be considered in the audit scope. Records of production of the additional products should be available for review.

- iii. Desired audit period based on the seasonality of the crop and validity of the current audit certificate.
- iv. Language for the audit to be performed in and language to be used in the audit report.

#### Audit execution

- i. The audit will be conducted with the most recent versions of the Sustainability Standard normative documents.
- ii. The Sustainability Standard Audit is split into 18 categories. Each section contains questions detailing the specific section.
  - a) Environmental Certifications
  - b) Minimum Requirements
  - c) Environmentally Sensitive Areas
  - d) Environmental Emergency Management
  - e) Fertilizer and Pesticide Drift
  - f) Air Quality
  - g) Soil Erosion
  - h) Soil Health
  - i) Waste Disposal
  - j) Advisory Team
  - k) Water Conservation
  - l) Energy Conservation
  - m) Natural Resource Reuse
  - n) Materials Recycling
  - o) Work Environment
  - p) Sustainability and Stewardship
  - q) Crop-specific Standards
  - r) Informational
- iii. Each section of the audit has its own point value for a cumulative total of 2260 points.
- iv. The scope of certification should be clearly defined to determine how the audit will be structured for each applicant organization. Ownership of the different areas, locations, activities or crops of the company applying for certification are elements to consider when deciding what types of operation(s) will be included in the scope. That decision is to be made by the auditee. The auditor must perform the audit based on the defined scope.

## Evaluation

### Conformance by individual questions

- i. To verify conformance to the Sustainability Standard requirements, the Sustainable Food Group Sustainability Standard - Questions and Expectations will be used.
- ii. Each question of the Sustainable Food Group Sustainability Standard - Questions and Expectations has its own possible score.
- iii. The auditor must evaluate and answer each individual question.
- iv. The possible answers for each question are:
  - Yes
  - No
  - Not applicable (N/A)
- v. Each question in the Sustainable Food Group Sustainability Standard - Questions and Expectations will be looked at individually and answered based on the observations of the auditor.
- vi. If an auditee does not achieve complete compliance of one of the questions in the Sustainable Food Group Sustainability Standard™ - Questions and Expectations document, partial points may be awarded. In this case there is a section in the audit document named "Rationale".
  - In this section the auditor will explain in detail why the program participant met full, no or partial compliance.
  - This section will also be used for Auditors to explain in detail what modifications program participants must make in order to receive full compliance point values in future audits.

### Scoring system

- vii. Each question in the Sustainable Food Group Sustainability Standard™ - Questions and Expectations has as assigned possible score.
- viii. Depending on the level of compliance the participant has met, a certain number of points will be awarded. This point total is determined by the auditor based on their observations.
- ix. If a question is not applicable to the type of operation being audited, point values for that question should not be included in the possible total score.

### Score calculation

- a. The Overall Total Score will be calculated for each operation, considering the total sum of points obtained in the entire audit, divided by the total possible points in the entire audit, represented as a percentage.
- b. The scores shall be displayed in rounded down percentages.
- c. This calculation should be repeated for each operation included in the scope of the certification.

### Automatic failure

- a. There is a section named Minimum Requirements in the Sustainability Standard - Questions and Expectations document. If **full compliance** is not met for any of these questions, the audit will result in automatic failure.

- b. Applicant will be informed of the automatic failure by the auditor during the time of the audit.

#### Special circumstances

- i. Automatic Failure
  - a. Besides failing to meet the minimum requirements, automatic failure can result from deliberate illegal activities, violence or threats towards an auditor, bribery, falsified records, etc. or finding serious safety issues during the audit
- ii. Corrective Actions
  - a. The CB has the right to use all information the organization has provided as evidence of corrective actions to affect other questions in addition to the one being evaluated.
- iii. Certification Decision
  - a. The CB has the right to take all information collected during the certification process into consideration when making the decision to grant certification to the specific organization.
- iv. Suspension/ Revocation of Certification
  - a. The CB has the right to use all of the information gathered on the certified organizations and operations to suspend or revoke current certifications if illegal actions or serious safety issues are discovered.
- v. Significant Safety Events
  - a. All certified organizations must inform their certification body about any safety related prosecutions or any other issues related to safety that affect the overall scheme.
- vi. Early Re-Evaluation of a Certification Organization
  - a. The certified organization must inform the CB of any changes that affect the sustainability of their product, changes to the requirement of the certification scheme standard, changes of ownership and/or management.
  - a. If the CB has reason to believe there is a compliance issue regarding certification requirements, this is cause for re-evaluation. In this case a second site visit may be conducted to verify conformance of Sustainability Standards.

#### Surveillance audits

- i. Surveillance Audits Performed by the CB
  - a. Each CB has the option to perform surveillance audits. Surveillance audits will be performed using the current Sustainable Food Group checklist, and the selected organization with certified processes will need to pass the audit as if it were a regular audit order to maintain certification.
    - i. This is currently an option for CBs that will later be mandated by the Scheme Owner with an allotted percentage of the certified operations that will need to receive surveillance audits.
  - b. The CB will notify the operation in writing of the surveillance audit no sooner than 48 hours prior to the day of the audit.

- c. The operation can only reject a surveillance audit once. A second surveillance audit rejection from the operation will result in a suspension of certification.
- ii. Surveillance Audits Performed by the Scheme Owner
  - a. As part of the Sustainability Standard Integrity Program, the Scheme Owner will perform sporadic auditor assessments. The purpose is to ensure that qualified auditors are performing the audits properly according to the Sustainability Standard scheme.
    - The audited operations will be required to accept a second person on-site during the audit.
    - The additional person on-site during the auditor assessments will have no say during the audit nor will they point out any deficiencies to the auditor at the time of the audit.
  - b. The Scheme Owner will also have the option to perform auditee assessments, which will consist of the Scheme Owner performing an on-site audit for a certified operation. These Surveillance audits will be performed using the current Sustainability Standard - Questions and Expectations document, and the selected organization with certified processes will need to pass the audit as if it were a regular audit in order to maintain certification.
    - By performing these audits, the Scheme Owner will be able to verify auditor performance (based on the prior audit report) to what was observed at the time of the Surveillance audit.
    - The audited operations will be required to accept a second person on-site during the audit.

### **Requirements for Audit Reports**

- a. The audit report will be distributed through the Azzule database.
- b. After each audit, the auditor must enter the information into the Azzule database to generate a preliminary audit report within 15 days.
- c. The audit report will be written in the language that the applicant requests. Any language used by the CB to generate the audit reports is acceptable by the Scheme Owner but the information entered into the Azzule database must be available in English.
- d. Every audit report shall include as a minimum the following information:
  - i. Name of the CB
  - ii. Name of the applicant organization
  - iii. Details about the operation under certification
  - iv. Date and time of the audit
  - v. Name and version of the Sustainability Standard normative documents used for certification
  - vi. Audit scope – details of the process under certification
  - vii. Product(s) observed during audit, similar product(s) not observed and product(s) applied for but not observed
  - viii. Names of all personnel involved in the audit from the applicant organization, including the organization contact
  - ix. Auditor name
  - x. Audit scoring summary

- xi. Answers and comments for each of the questions in the Sustainability Standard checklist.
- xii. Shippers (customers of the auditee) designated during the application process (if applicable)
- e. Every audit will generate a non-conformance report that will give a summary of all non-conformances found in the audit, with the corresponding comments and details for each non-conformance.

**Non-conformances and Corrective Actions**

- a. If the applicant organization does not receive a passing score, they must analyze the non-conformances raised during the audit and address the deficiencies detailed in the audit report. The applicant organization must undergo this process if they wish to become certified. To have the corrective actions evaluated by the CB, the applicant organization must submit evidence of the action taken. This process must be completed before the organization’s next audit is scheduled.
- b. Evidence of corrective actions can be in the form of documents, records and/or photographs and must show that the non-conformance has been addressed. The evidence must be verified by the CB during the next audit in order to have the non-conformance closed and be considered for certification.
- c. The applicant organization should be aware that some non-conformances may not be able to be corrected due to the issue that has been detected and outlying circumstances.

**Certification Decision**

Evaluation of scores

- a. Based on the outcome of the final audit report, the online auditing system will calculate the score for each operation to determine if they have attained the minimum score needed for certification.
- b. The certification decision shall be based on a combination of scores from each question.
  - i. To achieve certification all operations must meet all Minimum Requirements (Table 1) and attain an 85% audit score or higher (1921 points out of 2260) in order to become certified at the advanced level.
  - ii. Minimum Requirements include all requirements in the Sustainability Standard audit covering the use of biosolids, genetically modified organisms, meeting legal requirements and maintaining records (Table 1).

**Table 1. Sustainability Standard Minimum Requirements**

Section	Q#	Question	Total Points	Available Answers	Expectations
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Minimum Requirements	1.02.01	Is there a written policy statement prohibiting the application of both untreated and treated biosolids to production sites for at least one year prior to production?	10	Y/N	A written policy available for inspection contains a clear statement prohibiting the application of both biosolids (treated sewage sludge) and untreated sewage to all sites in production for at least one year prior to production. The policy is communicated and applied to all operations in the scope of the application.
<b>Section</b>	<b>Q#</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Total Points</b>	<b>Available Answers</b>	<b>Expectations</b>
Minimum Requirements	1.02.02	Is there a policy that any genetically modified (GM) ingredients will be disclosed to the buyer?	10	Y/N	A written policy available for inspection includes a clear statement that any GM content will be disclosed to the buyer. If a GM variety of the product is available on the market (e.g., zucchini, yellow squash, sweet corn, potato, papaya) and the organization does not communicate GM content to buyers, a written seed-supplier certification and/or third-party test results are available indicating no GM content.
Minimum Requirements	1.02.03	Is there a policy that legal requirements be met for all pesticide and nutrient applications and for employment, and employee health and safety?	10	Y/N	A written policy available for inspection includes a clear statement that all operations in the scope of the application will comply with all applicable laws and regulations of the jurisdiction(s) governing the production location and addressing labor, worker health and safety, and handling, storage and application of all pesticides and nutrients. If operations participate in the Whole Foods Market Responsibly Grown Rating System, a signed agreement on compliance with laws is acceptable.

Minimum Requirements	1.02.04	Are there complete and legible <b>pesticide</b> application records for the current season that include location, date, time, material applied, rate, applicator name, application method, wind speed and direction, air temperature and target pest?	10	Y/N	Pesticide application records are complete and legible, and available for at least three years for all operations in the scope, including location, date, time, material applied, rate, applicator name, application method, wind speed and direction, air temperature and target pest. For new or second-year applicants, there is a written policy clearly stating that these records will be maintained for a minimum of three years going forward.
<b>Section</b>	<b>Q#</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Total Points</b>	<b>Available Answers</b>	<b>Expectations</b>
Minimum Requirements	1.02.05	Are there complete and legible <b>nutrient</b> application records for the current season that include date, time, material applied, rate, applicator name and application method?	10	Y/N	Nutrient application records are complete and legible, and available for at least three years for all operations in the scope, including location, date, time, material applied, rate, applicator name and application method. For new or second-year applicants, there is a written policy clearly stating that these records will be maintained for a minimum of three years going forward.

#### Issuing certification

- a. Certification will be issued individually to each operation that complies with the minimum score needed. If there is more than one field or facility operation separate audits should be issued to each operation. Certification will be granted to each operation that meets the minimum scoring requirements.
- b. Certification is valid only for certified operations.
- c. Certification is valid for a maximum of 36 months from the certification date.
- d. The certificate must be issued from the Sustainable Food Group and Azzule.

#### Complaints and appeals

- a. The CB shall have a procedure in place to handle the complaints and appeals which will be available publicly.

#### Sanctions

##### Sanctioning of certification bodies

- a. A CB will be suspended if:
  - i. The CB's accreditation has been suspended



- ii. The CB does not pay the agreed fees
  - iii. The CB improperly uses the Azzule or Sustainable Food Group Logo
  - iv. An issue is discovered by the Sustainability Standard Integrity Program
  - v. The CB does not abide by the requirements of the General Regulations, License Agreement or other Scheme requirement
- b. A CB will have its approval revoked if:
- i. Evidence of fraud is found
  - ii. The CB declares bankruptcy
  - iii. A suspension related issue is not adequately resolved

#### Sanctioning of certified organizations

- a. If the CB finds a non-conformance with the Scheme documentation during inspection of a certified organization, a sanction (suspension or revocation) will be issued.
- b. All sanctions will be in writing and will include the nature of the non-conformance, the time frame of resolution (if applicable) and provisions for escalation of sanctions if the non-conformance is not corrected within the specified period.
- c. Only the CB may lift a suspension sanction after sufficient corrective actions have been submitted with verification either through written or visual evidence and/or an on-site visit.
- d. Note, the CB can issue the sanction to an entire certified organization or narrow it to a specific certified product(s) or specific operation(s) within the scope of the current certification.
- e. There are two types of possible sanctions to organizations:
  - i. Suspensions - an organization's certification shall be suspended if:
    - A non-conformance is found to be an immediate threat to the public.
    - An inspection results in an automatic failure.
    - If a critical safety issue is detected during an audit (e.g., automatic failure, special circumstance, etc.), then the CB should consider suspending existing certificates related to this new observation(s).
    - The organization improperly uses the Sustainability Standard logo or trademark.
    - An organization is involved with an illegal activity or serious food safety issue.
  - ii. Revocations - an organization's certification shall be revoked if:
    - An organization does not pay the agreed-to fees.
    - Evidence of fraud is found.
    - A suspension related issue is not adequately resolved.
    - The organization declares bankruptcy.
    - An organization that has had its certification revoked shall not be accepted for certification in the Sustainability Standard program for a period of six months after the date of revocation.
- f. The CB shall always notify the Scheme Owner in a timely manner and in writing of any sanction applied to a certified organization, as well as update the system to reflect those changes.
- g. A list of all suspended operations (those suspended after receiving certification), and those operations "not certified due to special circumstances" where the operation was "not certified" based on reasons other than score, is compiled and available to CBs.

### **Distribution of Audit Reports**

- a. Certification bodies must provide information for each certification process, including but not limited to audit details, outcome and the certification status to the Scheme Owner by using the Azzule database or other means established by the Scheme Owner.
- b. The documented audit reports generated by the certification process for each operation, including those submitted through the Azzule database should be provided to the applicant, the CB and the Scheme Owner.
- c. Ownership of the audit report, determination of details made available and authorization for access shall remain with the applicant. The CB will ensure confidentiality except where required by law. The CB will document and all communication between the CB and applicant. The CB will not distribute any communication or certification activity information to an outside party without the applicant's authorization.

### **Extension of Scope of Certification**

- a. An organization's certified operation can apply for an extension of scope to their current certification for:
  - i. Increased growing area of an already certified operation if the operation has "like commodities" in terms of risk along with justifiable circumstances.
  - ii. Adding products to already certified operations with justifiable circumstances.
  - iii. If products are approved and added to the current report, the product(s) will be added to the "similar product(s) not observed" or "product(s) applied for but not observed" categories. Only the "similar product(s) not observed" will be included on the certificate.
- b. Justifiable circumstances will be reviewed at the CB level and all relevant information such as: similarity (risks, processes, location and personnel) between new products and already certified products; and any additional information the CB considers as part of their risk assessment will have to be evaluated before a decision regarding a request for extension of scope of increased growing area and/or adding new commodities is granted.
- c. The CB will determine if the need for a visit to the organization in order to increase the growing area, adding of commodities to already certified operations and/or adding a new process to the certificate (e.g., a new packing line, automated chopper, etc.).
- d. In the case of adding a new operation to an already certified organization, the organization may be required to have a full new audit for that particular operation (if the audit for the new operation takes place greater than 30 days after the original audit date). This is required because the standards may have changed since the original organization and/or the implementation of these standards may be different relative previous operation audits.

### **Use of Logo and Registered Trademark**

- a. The Sustainability Standard trademark and logo may only be used with the permission from the Scheme Owner.
- b. The Sustainability Standard logo must always be obtained by the CB from the Scheme Owner. This will ensure that it contains the exact corporate color and format.

- c. The CB is responsible for the control of the use of the Sustainability Standard trademark and logo on certified operations. The rules for the use of the logo and trademark will be defined in the License Agreement signed between the Scheme Owner and the CB (Exhibit C of the CB license agreement) and in the Sub-License Agreement signed between the CB and each organization. Infringement of the rules by either CBs or organizations could lead to sanctions.
- d. Organizations can only use the trademark and/ or logo when there is a valid Sustainability Standard certificate linked to that organizations and making clear reference to the certified operations. The logo can only be used for business to business communications.
- e. Approved Certification Bodies can use the trademark and/or logo for promotion of their accredited Sustainability Standard certification activities in business-to-business communication and on their accredited Sustainability Standard certificates.

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