ACERTA
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CERTIFICATION GUIDELINES

Integrated Farm Assurance (IFA). Scope: Aquaculture

Sub-scope: Finfish, Crustaceans and Molluscs. Version 5.2 Feb 2019

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CAUSE OF THE NEW REVISION:

- Changes in personnel that make up the AQUA Technical Department.
- Changes in work operations due to the update of internal documents and ACERTA Customer Relationship Management.
- Inclusion of regulations for the distribution of ACERTA audit report to third parties.
- Inclusion of two sections: sanctions and burden of proof.
- Changes in certificate suspension period after unfavorable decision.
- Changes in section of claims, appeals and lawsuits.

Certification Guideline Index

1. GLOBALG.A.P. CERTIFICATION SYSTEM BY ACERTA.

1.1. Introduction.

This document describes the certification processes for producers to be certified with ACERTA for the Programme GLOBALG.A.P. Integrated Farm Assurance (IFA) Scope: Aquaculture.

The scope of GLOBALG.A.P. AQUA Certification covers the following:

- The controlled production process of primary products of finfish, crustaceans, and molluscs at all stages of their life cycle and to those species listed on the GLOBALG.A.P. approved product list. It does not cover wild fish/catch, extractive fisheries, or wild harvest. Passive collection of seedlings from the planktonic phase is allowed.
- Only products included in the GLOBALG.A.P. product list, published on the GLOBALG.A.P. website, can be registered for certification. The GLOBALG.A.P. product list is not limited and can be extended based on demand.
- Only products that are produced by producers themselves. Producers cannot receive certification to produce products that are not produced by themselves.

1.2. Registration in the IFA-GLOBALG.A.P. Programme: Application procedure.

1.2.1. Applicants.

An applicant:

- Cannot register the same product more than once with different CBs.
- Cannot register the same product more than once under different certification options.
- Can register different products with different CBs and/or different certification options.
- Cannot register production sites (Production Management Units) or group members in different countries with ACERTA (Exception: GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat may give exceptions in a case-by-case revision or these exceptions may be included into the National Interpretation Guidelines).

a) New Applicant.

When a new applicant contacts ACERTA in order to get information of the certification in accordance with the Integrated Farm Assurance (IFA)-GLOBALG.A.P. Programme, Scope: Aquaculture, ACERTA's Commercial Department or the Technical Department (consisted of the team of internal auditors of ACERTA) also contacts the applicant to confirms under which option the applicant wants to be certified and send him the document ***GG AQUA Certification request form*** (*) and the document ***GG AQUA - GRASP INFORMATION*** (*) requesting necessary information to propose a cost estimate.

(*) ***GG AQUA Certification request form*** (hereinafter ***Certification request form***): document where it is registered the general info of the producer/producer group, the scope of certification, the information regarding to the PHUs (if the post-harvest handling activities are included into the scope), declarations regarding to the legal ownership of the products produced, Parallel Production, Parallel Ownership and purchase of certified products, production sites identification and the specific information of all products (hereinafter when we say product we refer to the produced species that are going to be certified) and the ***Annex to GLOBALG.A.P Certification Agreement*** (including ***GLOBALG.A.P. Sublicense and Certification Agreement*** and ***Data Access Acceptance on GLOBALG.A.P. Database***. ***GLOBALG.A.P. Sublicense and Certification Agreement*** is the contract between the Certification Body (CB) and the producer. Sets the legal framework in order to grant the GLOBALG.A.P. Certification.

The Certification request form also includes two links to the ***Guide for Use of the ACERTA Brand*** and to the ***GLOBALG.A.P. Certification Guidelines***.

(*) ***GG AQUA - GRASP INFORMATION*** (hereinafter ***GRASP Information):*** document where it is registered the general info of the producer/producer group (if there is a peak season, accommodation provided by the company, any minor employed and subcontracted activities), and the information about number of employees, employment type and distribution, both for production sites and PHUs).

Once the ***Certification request form is*** received and ***reviewed,*** using the ACERTA Customer Relationship Management the quotation **(*)** is made and reviewed by the Administration Manager.

(*) ***ACERTA QUOTATION for GGAP - AQUA*** (hereinafter **Quotation**): Includes the costs derived from the certification process and a specification of the items detailed in it: application procedure, management of the information in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database, certification inspection/audit, issuing of the "report", decision taking, issuance of the certificate (where applicable) and, at the customer's request, any previous visit to the facilities. The official GLOBALG.A.P. fees are also indicated in the quotation, according to the latest version published by GLOBALG.A.P., and a calculation is made of the estimated expenses for the auditor's travel and maintenance. The method of payment is also specified in the quotation.

The applicant who wants to begin the certification shall send this quotation appropriately accepted. The Technical Department includes the accepted quotation in the ACERTA Customer Relationship Management and files the computerized copy in the corresponding folder in local server.

Once the accepted quotation is received, the Technical Department will send the applicant the related documentation:

- ***SGC Certification Agreement*** (hereinafter ***Certification Agreement***), annex to the ***Certification request form,*** between ACERTA and the applicant company, document where the conditions which will regulate the commercial relationship are specified. The duration of the contract will be 1 year.
- ***GRASP Assessment agreement*** (hereinafter ***GRASP Agreement***), between ACERTA and the applicant company, document where the conditions which will regulate the commercial relationship about GRASP are specified. The duration of the contract will be 1 year.

b) Certification Renewal: Previously certified applicant.

Registered producers and/or producer groups with certified products must re-register annually their certified products **before the certificate expiry date.**

For this purpose, between 2 and 4 months before the expiry date, the Technical Department informs the holder of the certificate (or the relevant office) of the new activities of the certification maintenance to be carried out, by sending the documents to be completed and/or signed:

- ***Certification Request Form,*** which includes the ***GLOBALG.A.P. Certification Guidelines***, ***Sublicense and Certification Agreement*** and ***Data Access Acceptance on GLOBALG.A.P. Database***.
- ***Quotation.***
- ***Certification Agreement.***
- ***GRASP Agreement.***

However, ACERTA shall apply the rules for initial (first) inspection/audit if the certificate expired for more than 12 months.

When a producer changes from one CB to another CB or requests the services of a new CB, it is not considered a first inspection/audit, but subsequent inspection/audit.

1.2.2. Request Form.

Once the Technical Department has received all the documents related to the applicant's certification request:

- The Technical Department reviews the ***Certification Request Form*** sent by the applicant (including the data provided detailing production sites and Produce Handling Units, and when options 2, the identification of the producers).
- A folder is also created in the local server for each applicant, appropriately identified with its corresponding year, country and producer's name in order to file and maintain electronic records.
- Once the ***Certification Request Form*** is reviewed and closed, the Technical Department will register the producer/Producer Group (including all group members) in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database (if the producer / producer group is registered with ACERTA for the first time) and will accept the information provided in the certification request form in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database, always within 28 calendar days. The ***Certification Request Form*** is considered closed once the signed ***Certification Agreement***, ***Quotation*** and the ***Annex to GLOBALG.A.P. Certification Agreement*** are received, and it has been verified that all the data in the ***Certification Request Form*** are complete and correct. The Database will automatically send to the applicant an email confirming the file acceptation by ACERTA and his/her GGN. If the producer has its own GLN, he must declare it and it must be used.
- The Technical Department assigns a registration number (only for producers registered with ACERTA for the first time).
- The registration number (inscription number) for producers under option 1 and producer groups consists of the word ACERTA, followed by a four digit number.

Example: ACERTA 0012.

- The inscription number for producer members belonging to a Producer Group (option 2) consists of the word ACERTA, followed by a four digit number (the registration number of the Producer Group that belong to), plus a middle dash and another two digits for the identification of the producer included in the producer group.

Example: ACERTA 0012 – 04

- The Technical Department sends the producer an email confirming that the company has been registered in the database, as well as its GLOBALG.A.P. number (GGN) and ACERTA registration number.
- The Technical Department registers the applicant's request in the ACERTA Customer Relationship Management and, once the accepted ***Quotation*** and the signed ***Certification Agreement*** and ***Annex to GLOBALG.A.P. Certification Agreement*** are received, will be created the file number. The ACERTA´s file number consists of the acronym "GGACU", the code assigned to the customer, the digits corresponding to the year in which the work is carried out and the number of works carried out to this customer in this year (assigned by the ACERTA Customer Relationship Management).

Example: GGACU.00344-08/001

Any objective evidence found that indicates that the applicant has been misusing the GLOBALG.A.P. claim shall lead to the exclusion of the applicant from certification for 12 months after evidence of misuse. In addition, the applicants will be listed, and the list must be checked before registration in the database. Any case of misuse shall be communicated to the GLOBALG.A.P. members.

GLOBALG.A.P. registration fees are generated once ACERTA registers and accepts the aquaculture products in GLOBALG.A.P. database. This admission starts the invoicing of registration costs. Only ACERTA is allowed to register and accept products in the GLOBALG.A.P. database.

1.2.3. Evaluation of Request Form and Issuing of Working Order.

The Operation Manager, the GLOBALG.A.P. Scheme Manager or the Technical Department (approved inspector/auditor by ACERTA) will draw up a working Program by using the ACERTA Customer Relationship Management from the review made to the ***Certification Request Form***. He/she will assign an auditor team, determine the appropriate working days, define the interval of dates to undertake the inspections/audits, and inform the auditor or auditor team, in writing, of the assignation and sample to be carried out, and the necessary details of the inspection/audit to be carried out.

This communication is called a ***Working Order*** and will include the ***Certification Request Form*** attached.

The communication of the ***Working Order*** is reflected in the ACERTA Customer Relationship Management.

1.3. Previous visit.

At the applicant's request it to ACERTA, a previous visit can be carried out.

Initially, the designated auditor team for carrying out the work agrees the date of the visit with the applicant usually by telephone or email. Then, the applicant is sent the Audit Plan, where the date of the visit is confirmed, and all the information and activities to be carried out and the persons involved, are detailed. Simultaneously, the auditor sends a copy of this document to the Technical Department, to be registered in the ACERTA Customer Relationship Management and filed it in its corresponding folder on the server.

The visit will be carried out by the auditor team, either ACERTA own staff or subcontracted, and it will begin with an initial meeting with the producer or his/her representative. In this previous visit, the compliance of the producers and production sites detailed by the applicant will be assessed in accordance with the GLOBALG.A.P. Program (a production site is defined as a production area -farm- that is owned or rented and ultimately managed by one legal entity and where the same resources, workers, equipment, are used). It will end with a closing meeting and the findings will be mentioned to the producer.

The auditor team who carries out this visit will prepare a ***Previous Visit Report***, where all non-compliances detected will be detailed and the applicant will be informed of the continuation of the process moving forward. The Technical Department will send a copy of this report to the applicant within 15 days from the end of the previous visit.

In this stage of the process, the applicant shall not be requested a corrective action proposal, in the event of any non-compliance being detected.

1.4. Audit.

If a previous visit has been carried out, from the reception of the report, the applicant may contact ACERTA in order to request the continuation of the process. In the same way, ACERTA will be able to contact the applicant if the time elapsed since the report was sent is considered long enough to know the applicant's intentions as to the continuation of the certification process.

It can be possible that from the initial ***Certification Request Form*** to the inspection/audit, one or more modifications related to the scope to be certified can arise. If any change is made regarding the initial recorded information, the producer shall inform ACERTA to carry out the corresponding changes.

Only in the case of remote inspections/audits, the producer must send to ACERTA the document ***GLOBALGAP & GRASP Agreement for remote audits*** duly filled out and signed as a signal of acceptance of all the conditions applicable to this kind of inspections/audits.

REMOTE inspections/audits for all certification options will be carried out following the current official GLOBALG.A.P. Remote Procedure.

In case the producer opts to use the **Off-site Module** exclusively under the **Remote** Audit Procedure, the process will follow the current official GLOBALG.A.P. procedures.

Once the Technical Department and/or the inspector/auditor agrees on the date of the audit with the producer, the Operations Manager is informed, and the ***Working Order*** is issued.

In preparation for the inspection/audit, the auditor / inspector will confirm that the information received is correct.

When all the issues related to the scope of the inspection/audit have been set, the inspector/auditor will prepare the ***Audit Plan*** and send it to the applicant, who must return it signed as a sign of acceptance, to finally be sent to the ACERTA's Technical Department, which will file it in its corresponding folder on the local server. If the applicant does not agree with any aspect, he/she will be able to notify it within the 3 subsequent days after the communication. In this case, the inspector/auditor or the Technical Department and the applicant shall have to reach an agreement and a new ***Audit Plan*** will be sent.

The applicant is aware that only the inspectors/auditors identified in the Audit Plan or equivalent document can perform the inspection/audit and commits to report immediately ACERTA in case of any incidence in this regard, as well as prevent access to the facilities of persons who claim to act on behalf of ACERTA but who are not identified in the aforementioned documents.

The auditor / inspector shall communicate to the Technical Department any information found during the inspection/audit that it is not correctly reflected in the ***"Certification Request Form"*** or in the ***"Working order"***. This communication is made through the "Comments / Updates" box located in the "Front Page" tab of the ***GG AQUA Audit Report*** document.

If on the day of the inspection/audit, the auditor / inspector considers that it would be reasonable to change the sample because of a justifiable cause, she/he will be able to do it, but it will be necessary to communicate it to AQUA Operations Manager and following the criteria specified in Chapter 2: Inspection Methodology of GLOBALG.A.P. Control Programme (only Spanish version).

Once the scope of the inspection/audit has been definitely set, especially the number of producers included in case of Options 2 and the minimum inspections required (in accordance with the criteria established in Chapter 2: Inspection Methodology of GLOBALG.A.P. Control Programme (only Spanish version)), the cost corresponding to the registration fees established by GLOBALG.A.P. will be charged to the customer.

1.4.1. Inspection/Audit Development.

The certification inspection/audit will begin with an initial meeting in which the auditor team and the representatives of the company will be introduced. The methodology to be followed during the inspection/audit will be explained and the power point document "Presentation of the GLOBALG.A.P. Programme" may be used.

During the inspection/audit, for both **options 1 and options 2**, the methodology described and defined in the GLOBALG.A.P. Programme will be followed.

The inspection/audit will finish with a closing meeting in which the auditor team will inform the representative of the company of the inspection/audit findings, identifying all the control points in which non compliances have been detected (differentiating Major Musts, Minor Musts and Recommendations).

a) OFF SITE / ON SITE MODULE.

ACERTA, its management as well as its technical and commercial departments, after evaluating the producers that certifies and given the voluntary status to offer the OFF SITE module, has decided **NOT TO OFFER the OFF SITE Module** to its clients. Therefore, all announced inspections/audits will be exclusively conducted using the **ON SITE Module** format, with the exception of inspections/audits carried out remotely, which may include the **OFF SITE** Module (as stated in point 2.3 of the Control Programme (only Spanish version)).

1.4.2. Documents.

The following documents will be used during the on-site inspection/audit:

GG AQUA Audit Report (hereinafter ***Audit Report***): the inspector/auditor must always use the current revision of the document. This document is composed of different tabs: ***Instructions***, ***Front Page***, ***IFA Checklist***, ***Traceability Test***, ***IFA Results***, ***and CA Plan***. All of them are integrated in the same document, but the most relevant are listed below:

- ***IFA Checklist:*** the inspector/auditor must verify compliance with all control points and compliance criteria, leaving a written record in the comments of all documents and evidence reviewed.
- ***Traceability Test:*** the inspector/auditor must carry out a traceability test.
- ***IFA Results:*** are the conclusions of the inspection. At the end of the inspection, the inspector/auditor will print the appropriate page of the ***Audit Report*** and the company's representative and the inspector/auditor will both **sign the preliminary results of the inspection/audit** as evidence of this being carried out, and a **copy will be given to the auditee** detailing the non-compliant control points detected, which can be modified in the technical review and decision phase if needed. An electronic copy will be sent to ACERTA's Head Office. A documented or electronic confirmation by the producer is equal to the 'signature' of the producer. In this document the inspector/auditor will indicate if the detected non-compliance is a non-conformance.
- ***SGC Results:*** are the conclusions of the SGC audit. At the end of the audit, the auditor will print the appropriate page of the ***Audit Report*** and the company's representative and the auditor will both **sign the preliminary results of the SGC audit** as evidence of this being carried out, and a **copy will be given to the auditee** detailing the non-compliant control points detected, which can be modified in the technical review and decision phase if needed. An electronic copy will be sent to ACERTA's Head Office. A documented or electronic confirmation by the producer is equal to the 'signature' of the producer. In this document the auditor will indicate if the detected non-compliance is a non-conformance.
- ***CA Plan:*** Each non-compliance will be detailed together with the inspector's/auditor's motivation in a *Corrective Action Plan* – a table that is part of the electronic file ***Audit Report*** – and a copy of this table will be given to the producer to facilitate the implementation of the corrective actions (if needed), who must be returned filled out together with evidence of the corrective actions implemented.

EMPLOYEE CODES GGAP-GRASP: document for exclusive internal use that collects and traces the name, surnames and position of the people mentioned throughout the justification of the control points, to whom a consecutive code is assigned (e.g.: E1) to maintain their anonymity in the ***Audit Report.***

Note: Notifications about changes on certification requirements is done through ACERTA's web site: www.acerta-cert.com and/or by email.

1.4.3. Timing.

The deadline for closing the CA PLAN will be:

I. If the non-compliance implies a non-conformance:

(See Control Programme (only Spanish version) Chapter 3: Assessment criteria).

The inspected/audited company will prepare and submit the corrective action proposal, which shall include the description of the measures taken to solve the non-conformance, the term for its implementation and the responsible person, as well as the evidence of the implementation and, where appropriate, the effectiveness of these measures. The applicant has the following timeframes to close the CA PLAN:

(i) For Initial Certification Inspections:

- This section is applicable to producers seeking GLOBALG.A.P. Certification for the first time, and to producers who want to add a new product to an already existing GLOBALG.A.P. certificate.
- A maximum term of **3 months since inspection/audit date**.
- If an individual producer or producer group does not comply with **100% of Major Must and 95% Minor Must control points** within 28 days after an initial inspection/audit, the status "open non-conformance" is set in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database.
- The status "open non-conformance" cannot be given to producer group members' products.
- If the status "open non-conformance" is set and no corrective actions are sent to close the CA PLAN in a maximum term of **3 months since inspection/audit date** an initial inspection/audit will need to be performed again at producer's expense to continue with the certification process (harvesting process will not need to be observed again).

(ii) For Renewal Inspections:

- A maximum term of **28 calendar days since the last inspection/audit date.**
- Each non-conformance shall be assessed in accordance with *Chapter 3: Assessment Criteria.*
- If **28 calendar days have passed after the initial inspection/audit** before closing the CA PLAN, ACERTA will set the status "suspension of product" in database.

If the non-conformance is against a **Major Must, the General Requirements or contractual**, the period given for compliance before suspension is applied will be decided between the audit team and the Operations Manager or Scheme Manager. This period shall never exceed 28 days and may be shortened according to the criticality of the non-conformance in terms of safety of workers, environment and consumers. An immediate suspension shall be issued where a serious threat to food safety, the safety of workers, the environment, consumers and/or product integrity. The decision will be communicated through a direct communication by warning letter.

If no corrective actions are sent in the established time, ACERTA will apply the required sanction.

In the case that non-compliances are non-conformances, the auditor / inspector must send all the related documents to the Technical Department within 7 calendar days after the non-conformance is considered closed, always within 28 days (or 3 months if the Open Non-Conformance Status has been issued) after inspection/audit.

When assessing the corrective actions, the adequacy of the measures taken to solve the non-conformances, their implementation stage and their effectiveness will be considered. For this purpose, other inspections/audits, analyses, etc., can also be required, being this determined, in that case, by the Operation Manager or Scheme Manager.

In this case, the applicant will be informed of the necessity of undertaking a new inspection/audit, its scope and his/her acceptance, in writing, of the additional costs derived from it, which will be specified also in writing. Once the applicant has accepted it, the Administration Manager will issue and send the corresponding invoice to the applicant.

II. If the non-compliance does not imply a non-conformance:

(See Control Programme (only Spanish version) Chapter 3: Assessment criteria).

The producer will be able to choose if he wants to make and submit the corrective action proposal, which shall include the description of the measures taken to solve the non-compliance, the term for its implementation and the responsible person, as well as the evidence of the implementation and, where appropriate, the effectiveness of these measures.

In this case, the evidence of corrective actions will be sent to the auditor / inspector **within 7 calendar days after inspection/audit date**.

The auditor should send all the above documents to the Technical Department no later than 7 calendar days after inspection/audit date if the producer chooses not to submit corrective actions and 14 calendar days after inspection/audit date if the client chooses to submit the corrective action proposal.

In both cases, from the conclusions obtained from the assessment of the corrective action proposals provided by the applicant, the auditor / inspector makes the **"Corrective Action Assessment Report"** – format included within the digital file **Audit Report** (CA PLAN) – which includes the table of the Corrective Action Plan submitted by the company, where each corrective action has been reviewed by the auditor / inspector, the final result of compliance level and the advice about the certification (or not certification) is stated.

The auditor/inspector in charge of the file is responsible for giving the Technical Department all the appropriate documentation in electronic format: Complete ***Audit Report*** (including ***Traceability test***, ***Final conclusions of the audit*** and ***Corrective Action Assessment Report***), evidence of implementation (where applicable) provided by the company, ***Preliminary results of the audit*** signed by the auditor team and the company's representative and ***EMPLOYEE CODES GGAP-GRASP.***

1.5. Certification decision.

All the reports will be filed in electronic format by the Technical Department in the corresponding folder in the local server, which is the responsible of this action.

In order the certification decision to be taken, the responsible person, in accordance with the decision-making structure detailed in the quality procedure "Assessment of the results and certificate awarding", will take into account what is described in the chapter 3: Assessment Criteria of GLOBALG.A.P. Control Program.

To begin the decision-making process, the Technical Department will be in charge of providing the documents to be assessed, including at least: **Certification Request Form,** Complete ***Audit Report*** (including ***Traceability test***, ***Final conclusions of the audit*** and ***Corrective Action Assessment Report***), evidence of implementation (where applicable) provided by the company, ***Preliminary results of the audit*** signed by the auditor team and the company's representative and ***EMPLOYEE CODES GGAP-GRASP.***

The Technical Department will be responsible for this process to be completed, providing to the person responsible for making the **decision** with all the necessary documents for that purpose.

The certification decision will not be delayed more than **28 calendar days** after the producer has shown sufficient evidence of corrective actions and closed the Corrective Action Plan, or 28 calendar days since the last inspection/audit date, in the case that non-compliances detected do not imply a non-conformance.

1.6. Notification of certification decision and Certificate.

1.6.1. Favorable decision.

As soon as the decision has been satisfactory, according with Control Programme Chapter 3: Assessment Criteria, the Technical Department shall update the information in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database and will send an automatic notification to the registered e-mail confirming the certification of the producer.

The Technical Department will issue the ***Certificate of Conformity*** and ***Technical Annex*** for the corresponding GGN, including all the information required by the General Regulations and according to the information available in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database at that moment, and will send it once the payment of the corresponding invoice has been verified. If the payment has not been confirmed at the time of issuance, the Technical Department will inform the producer of the favourable decision and will send the Certificate as soon as the payment has been confirmed.

Additionally, the documents ***GLOBALG.A.P. User Guidelines of trademark*** and ***GG AQUA Notification of results*** will be provided to the producer.

Validity dates of the certificate will be the following:

Valid from:

- Initial certification: The initial date of validity is the date on which the ACERTA makes the certification decision.
- Subsequent certifications: The "valid from" date for subsequent certificates issued shall always revert to the "valid from" date in the original certificate except when the certification decision is made after the expiration of the previous certificate. In this case the "valid from" date shall coincide with the date of the certification decision.

Valid to:

- Initial certification: Date "valid from" plus 1 year minus 1 day. ACERTA may shorten the certification cycle and the validity but cannot prolong it unless an extension is given following Point 1.11 of this document.
- Subsequent certifications: The validity date for subsequent certificates issued shall always revert to the "valid to" date on the original certificate.

If a new product is added during the validity of a certificate, the certification cycle (valid from-valid to) is kept as it was.

If a certificate that was not extended nor "re-accepted" expires and the subsequent inspection/audit (to be performed by the same CB) is going to take place in less than 12 months after the expiration date, a new certification cycle should start. The old cycle can be reinstated by setting the same "valid to" date as before (ACERTA shall apply the rules for initial (first) inspection if the certificate expired for more than 12 months).

The cycle remains the same if the certificate was extended.

a) Other considerations.

ACERTA or their subcontracted parties may issue communications other than the certificate related to the producer status (registered, audited, etc.) as long as it is clear that it is not a certificate and it contains the sentence: The actual GLOBALG.A.P. status of this producer is always displayed at:

https://database.globalgap.org/globalgap/search/SearchMain.faces

b) Initial inspections and products registered for the first time.

This section is applicable to producers seeking GLOBALG.A.P. Certification for the first time, and to producers who want to add a new product to an already existing GLOBALG.A.P. Certificate.

No inspection/audit can take place until ACERTA has accepted the applicant's registration.

Each production process for products (aquaculture species) registered and accepted for certification for the first time **must be completely assessed** (all applicable control points must be verified) **prior to issuing the certificate**.

In initial inspections, once the decision is favourable, a Certificate of Conformity will be issued including all the products whose production process has been completely assessed.

A product that has not yet been harvested after an initial audit, or a new product (not registered in previous cycle) in a renewal audit, shall not be included in the certificate.

It is possible to add a new product to an already existing certificate during an unannounced inspection (Option 1 without QMS) or during a surveillance inspection (Option 2/Option 1 with QMS), provided all applicable control points for this product are verified.

Products that are harvested before registration with GLOBALG.A.P. cannot be certified.

Records that relate to harvest or product handling before the producer has registered with GLOBALG.A.P. are not valid.

In case of multiple species included in the certification process, of which all requirements of the protocol could not be inspected in harvest during the main inspection, then the rules specified in the Control Program point 2.3.2 Certification / Renewal Inspection: section III. Moment – Multiple species, will be followed. Only with a favourable decision for this evaluation, the Certificate and Technical Annex can be modified to include all the species.

c) Renewal Inspections/Audits.

In subsequent years, the certificate issued after the favourable decision of the renewal inspection/audit, will include all the renewal species (those that were registered and inspected for this cycle and were in previous certificate) even if the harvest process was not inspected for all of the species during the audit. The certification cycle (validity of the certificate) will be set for each legal entity (GGN) and will be sole and the same for all inspected/audited production sites/producers, regardless of the dates on which they have been inspected/audited.

1.6.2. Unfavorable decision.

The **certification decision will be unfavorable** when any of the conditions are breached. In each case, the corresponding sanction will be applied.

When the decision is unfavourable, the applicant may communicate his/her disagreement within the following **30 calendar days** after receiving the certification decision notification, or it may request an extraordinary inspection which will have to be carried out within six months, having previously accepted the additional costs derived from it.

If the applicant does not agree with the decision, the Technical Department will provide him/her the Appeals registration form. Once ACERTA has received it duly completed, the appeal procedure described in the quality procedure "Complaints, appeals and lawsuits" will be followed.

1.6.3. Sanctions.

Three types of sanctions exist within GLOBALG.A.P.: **Warning**, **Suspension** and **Cancellation**.

- If non-conformance is detected, the ACERTA shall apply a sanction.
- If a clear link has been established between a producer and public health outbreak by a reputable governmental regulatory authority, suspension of the certification shall be imposed while a review of the producer's certification is performed.
- Producers cannot change CB until the non-conformance that led to the respective sanction is satisfactorily closed.
- ONLY ACERTA or the producer group that has issued the sanction is entitled to lift it, provided there is sufficient and timely evidence of corrective action (either through a follow-up visit or other written or visual evidence).

a) Warning.

A Warning will be issued for non-conformances detected.

If there is a non-conformance detected during the audit, the producer must be served a warning when the inspection is finalized (In the Audit Results). This is a provisional report that could be overridden by the Operational Manager or Scheme Manager of Global G.A.P.

The period for solving the non-conformances is stablished in the point "1.4.3 Timing" of GLOBALG.A.P. Control Program.

For non-conformances that have not been found in the audit, ACERTA will establish the deadlines for implementation of the corrective actions based on the type and severity involved by the appropriate non-conformance.

If the cause of warning is not solved in the stablished period, the producer will be sanctioned with a suspension.

b) Suspension.

ACERTA, or a producer group, shall issue a Suspension when a certified producer/producer group cannot show evidence of corrective action in the established time or when Non conformances have not been solved, after exceeding the warning time.

A product cannot be partially suspended for an individual producer (single or multisite); i.e., the entire product must be suspended.

ACERTA can issue a suspension for certain products or for all products of the certified product scope.

ACERTA can lift those product suspension of Option 1, Option 1 Multisite with and without QMS producers and Option 2 Producer groups that ACERTA has imposed. Producer groups can lift those product suspension of their accepted producer members that the producer group has imposed.

ACERTA shall issue an immediate suspension where a serious threat to food safety, the safety of workers, the environment, consumers and/or product integrity (i.e., selling non-certified products as certified). This situation will be communicated through a direct communication by warning letter.

After the suspension is applied, ACERTA, or the Producer group, will set a time period allowed for correction. This time shall be, at maximum, till the next harvest period / season (no more than 12 months).

During this time (period of suspension), the producer will be prevented from using the GLOBALG.A.P. logo/trademark, license/certificate or any other type of document that has any relation to GLOBALG.A.P.

ACERTA, or the producer group, who has issued the suspension, **shall lift it** when there is sufficient evidence of corrective action by the producer within the period stipulated by ACERTA (either by means of a **complementary** audit, on-site or off-site, announced or unannounced, which may be a complete inspection or only an evaluation of the evidence presented, whose expenses will be borne by the producer, or by submitting written or visual evidence).

If the cause of the suspension is not resolved within the time period set, the certificate and the producer will be sanctioned with a cancellation.

The suspension remains as long as ACERTA or the producer group does not lift it or impose a cancellation.

In case of producers who do not close the non-conformances during the renewal within the 28 days period established in the CA Plan, the negative decision to suspend the certificate must be made immediately, on the 29 day after the inspection/audit date. Therefore, the inspector/auditor must send the closed pack no later than the 29th, notifying the situation by telephone to the Technical Department to guarantee that it receives this information and can act immediately, as required by GLOBALG.A.P.

- **Self-declared product suspension.**

A producer or producer Group may voluntarily ask ACERTA to temporarily suspend one or more of his/her product(s) unless ACERTA has established a sanction previously.

This suspension will not delay the renewal date, nor will it allow the producer to avoid paying registration and other applicable fees.

The deadline for closing non-compliance is set by the producer/producer group himself/themself, which must be agreed upon with ACERTA, but must be closed out before ACERTA may lift the suspension.

The same applies for a member of a producer group, who may voluntarily ask his/her group to temporarily suspend his/her product(s). Also here, the deadline for closing non-compliance is set by the producer himself, which must be agreed upon with the respective producer group QMS but must be closed out before the Producer Group may lift the suspension.

In the GLOBALG.A.P. Database the product status “self-declared suspension” shall be set for the respective products.

c) Cancellation.

A Cancellation of the contract will be issued where ACERTA finds evidence of fraud and/or lack of trust to comply with GLOBALG.A.P. requirements, where:

- ACERTA finds evidence of fraud and/or lack of trust to comply with GLOBALG.A.P. requirements.
- A producer/producer group cannot show evidence of implementation of effective corrective action before the suspension period set by the ACERTA / producer group has elapsed.

In this case, the technical department will request to GLOBALG.A.P. database the company to be cancelled and the same day of the cancellation, a certificate will be issued whose validity date is the date of cancellation.

The cancellation of the contract will result in the total prohibition of the use of the any logo/trademark, License/certificate, or any device or document that could relate to GLOBALG.A.P.

The producer that has had a Cancellation sanction applied shall not be accepted for GLOBALG.A.P. certification until 12 months after the date of Cancellation.

Decisions on sanctions will be made considering the clauses established in the GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulations: Notifications and Appeals.

1.6.4. Burden of proof.

In the case of information (e.g., MRL exceedance, microbial contamination, etc.) about a GLOBALG.A.P. certificate holder, which could have a potential impact on the certified status/claim being transmitted to the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat, it is the responsibility of the certificate holders and ACERTA to refute the claim by verifying and providing evidence of compliance with the GLOBALG.A.P. Standards.

If the certificate holders and do not provide the requested evidence of compliance within the period of time defined by ACERTA, the corresponding sanction will be applied.

The findings and actions taken shall be reported to the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat within the defined period of time by ACERTA.

ACERTA will provide the requested evidence of compliance within the period of time defined by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat, other way, ACERTA will be exposed to be sanctioned according to the sanctioning procedures described in the GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulations.

In case the evidence includes laboratory analyses, accredited laboratories (ISO 17025) and independent sampling (according to the rules as set out in the relevant CPCC) shall be included.

1.6.5. Distribution of the ACERTA audit report to third parties.

Copies of the ACERTA audit report, objective evidence of corrective action implementation, or a fully completed audit checklist may only be provided to third parties if the producer authorizes access in writing, except upon request of the regulatory authorities in accordance with the applicable national legislation or the Accreditation Body.

Upon request by the producer, ACERTA will provide the full audit report and the fully completed audit checklist, when it is definitive, as soon as possible. When the automatically generated report (including the checklist) is available in the GLOBALG.A.P. system, this report must be used.

When GLOBALG.A.P. requests it, ACERTA will upload/transfer the full audit report to the GLOBALG.A.P. database (e.g. Remote audits).

Before externally distributing the ACERTA audit report, it must be protected against unauthorized modification or alteration.

1.7. Surveillance inspections.

The surveillance inspection is carried out in order to add a species that has not been inspected during the initial/renewal inspection/audit, according to the point 2.3.2 Certification / Renewal Inspection: section III. Moment – Multiple species of ACERTA's Control Program (only Spanish version).

When a certificate holder, producer/producer group, with a valid certificate wants to increase production for the same species or add a production site that currently is not included in the certificate, the situation will be evaluated as described in 1.10 Registration of additional producers/production sites, and it will be decided if a surveillance inspection is needed.

Also, ACERTA shall carry out surveillance inspections of producers to all the companies certified under option 2 during the valid period of the certificate.

Methodology for conducting these audits is described in Chapter 2 of ACERTA's Control Program (only Spanish version).

1.8. Unannounced inspections/audits.

ACERTA shall carry out unannounced inspections to 10% of the certified producers in Option 1 and Option 1 multisite without QMS during the valid period of the certificate.

ACERTA shall carry out unannounced audits of the Quality Management System (QMS) to 10% certified producers in Option 2 and Option 1 multisite with QMS during the valid period of the certificate.

The methodology to carry out these inspections/audits is explained in Chapter 2 of ACERTA's Control Program.

In the case of a favourable decision of an Unannounced Inspections/Audits, ACERTA will send to the auditee a letter informing of the favourable report issued (***GG AQUA Notification of results***).

1.9. Unannounced Reward Program

Option 1 Producers and Option 1 Multisites without QMS producers may opt to participate in the Unannounced Reward Program.

Producers must meet the following criteria:

- They have been certified during at least two consecutive years; and
- On both years the producer complied 100% with Major Musts and at least 95% with Minor Musts **on the day of the inspection**; and
- Had no pending sanctions during the last two years.

In case a non-conformance is detected or the producer changes CB the clock will be reset to year zero. The producer will need to demonstrate compliance during two consecutive years with the above-mentioned criteria in order to participate on the Unannounced Reward Program.

The characteristics of the program are:

- The applicant will inform to ACERTA that is interested in being audited under this program by selecting the corresponding option in ***Certification request*** during the registration process.
- Under the Unannounced Reward Program, producers will be excluded from the additional 10% unannounced inspection. However, the annual inspection will be unannounced following the same rules described for unannounced audits.
- Inspections under the Unannounced Reward System shall always be carried out using **the entire IFA checklist**, according to the relevant scopes and sub-scopes.

- Participants of the Unannounced Reward Program are excluded from the off-site module inspection methodology.
- Participation in the Unannounced Reward Program is registered as an attribute in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database.
- In justified circumstances (e.g. complaint follow up), CBs still have the right to schedule unannounced inspections during the certificate validity period.
- If the producer also needs to be audited for an add-on and the add-on rules explicitly exclude unannounced add-on assessments, the producer will not be able to participate in the Unannounced Reward Program.
- If the producer applies, together with GLOBALG.A.P., for the certification of other announced schemes, they will not be eligible for the Unannounced Reward Program.

1.10. Registration of additional producers/production sites.

a) Option 1.

Additions in case of Option 1 may be carried out during the cycle of validity of a certificate, always subject to a favourable certification decision taken by ACERTA and based on in situ audit or in a documentary study. This decision will be taken by the Operations Manager.

The decision shall depend on the type of addition and the existing risk. That risk shall depend on several aspects**: the percentage of the addition, if there are new species, if the species belongs to a producer or group of producers previously inspected** (see section 2.3.2. - Certification / Renewal Audit), **the location of the new production site, etc**.

Prior to carrying out any change of scope requested by a producer, the producer must send to ACERTA the document **GG AQUA Request of Change of Scope (extension-reduction)** with the detailed and updated information regarding the requested extension/reduction of the number of sites/production- This document will be added to the corresponding file of the producer (Application) as an annex of the Application Request Form. In this document the conclusions about if a new audit prior to the change of scope is necessary or not will also be registered.

b) Option 2 and Option 1 Multisite with QMS.

During the period of validity of the Certificate, new Producers (in Option 2) / Production Sites (in Option 1 Multisite with QMS) may be added to the list of registered producers / production sites. The producer group or producer Option 1 Multisite with QMS is responsible for **immediately communicating any changes to ACERTA**, addition or withdrawal to/from the previous list provided to ACERTA.

Prior to carrying out any change of scope requested by a producer, the producer must send to ACERTA the document **GG AQUA Request of Change of Scope (extension-reduction)** with the detailed and updated information regarding the requested extension/reduction of the number of sites/production- This document will be added to the corresponding file of the producer (Application) as an annex of the Application Request Form. In this document the conclusions about if a new audit prior to the change of scope is necessary or not will also be registered.

Up to 10% of new Producers / Production Sites can be added in one year to the certified list without the necessary requirement of a new audit.

When the number of approved registered producers / production sites increase by **more than 10%** in one year, further external sample inspections of the newly added producers / production sites (as a minimum the square root of the new producers / production sites) and/or optionally a review of the QMS will be required to be performed by ACERTA during that year **before** additional producers / production sites can be added to the approved list.

Regardless of the percentage by which the number of approved registered producers / production sites increases in one year, when the newly registered farms increase the area of previously approved registered products by **more than 10%** in one year, or there is a change of 10% in the producers (in Option 2) or production sites (in Option 1 multisites with QMS), ACERTA shall demand further external sample inspections (as minimum the square roof of the new producers/ production sites) and/or optionally a review of the Quality Management Systems will be required during that year **before** additional farms or producers can be added to the approved list.

Regardless of the number of producers / production sites / farm area, if a new product is to be added to the certificate between surveillance and certification audits, an inspection shall be carried out to the square root of the producers growing the new product (species).

Moreover, members of a producer group may leave the group and register with another group with any of the products (species) that were already registered under the following conditions:

- There isn't any pending sanction on the group member issued by the Group or any issues, relevant to the member, raised by ACERTA that have not been closed out,
- The contract between the group and the member is respected,
- When the group has ceased to exist and/or is cancelled by ACERTA
- Or in special cases where FoodPlus needs to agree on a case by case.

1.11. Extension of the certificate validity.

ACERTA may extend the certificate beyond the 12 months for a maximum period of 4 months (12 months + 4 months, 16 months in total), only if there is a valid reason, which has to be recorded. The following conditions must be met:

- On producer's demand, ACERTA (the CB who issued the certificate extended) re-accepts the product in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database for the full next cycle within the original validity period of the certificate.
- The full certification license fee and registration fee shall be paid for the next cycle.
- The producer shall be re-inspected during the extension period.

The only reasons that are considered to be valid for an extension are the following:

- ACERTA wants to schedule the on-site inspection/audit after the certificate has expired in order to observe a certain part of the production process because it was not seen in the previous inspection/audit, because it is considered to be a high-risk process in terms of product safety, or to be able to see a newly added product, process or a new or particular member of a producer group.
- ACERTA needs to be able to extend some certificates because of resource restraints.
- ACERTA was not able to conduct the on-site inspection/audit and/or the producer was not able to receive the CB inspection/audit due to circumstances beyond its control (force majeure) e.g.: natural disaster, political instability in the region, epidemic or unavailability of the producer due to medical reasons.

The producer cannot change the CB in the cycle subsequent to the one for which the extension was granted. In this case, the cycle remains the same.

1.12. Transfer between Certification Bodies.

Transfer between Certification Bodies takes place when a producer that is found in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database changes from the original GLOBALG.A.P. approved CB (outgoing CB) to ACERTA (accepting CB).

Only producers found in the GLOBALG.A.P. database and that are **not sanctioned** will be accepted by ACERTA. Producers must first solve any outstanding sanction before being able to transfer to ACERTA. Moreover, for accepting the transfer, the producer shall sign the Sublicence and Certification Agreement with ACERTA.

ACERTA will keep the existing GGN of the transferred producer/producer group.

When a producer or producer group is changing the certification body with which they are associated, they will communicate to ACERTA Certificación, S.L. the previous registration number(s) (GGN) they had with the former certification body or any other one with which the applicant was previously registered in accordance with the GLOBALG.A.P. Programme. This information shall be detailed in the ***Certification Request Form***. Failure to do this will result in an additional surcharge of the registration fee of EURO 100 to an Option 1 producer and EURO 500 to an option 2 producer group, that will be charged to the producer or producer group.

A certificate is not transferable from one owner to another when a production site changes the legal entity or owner. In this case a complete inspection, following the rules for renewal audit, is required. The new legal entity shall receive a new GGN.

Individual producer members of a producer group are not allowed to leave the group and register with another group (for the products registered) if there is any pending sanction on the producer issued by the group, or there are any issues relevant to the producer raised by the CB that have not been closed.

1.12.1. Producer transfer.

This type of transfer of a producer from other CB to ACERTA takes place after the producer's certificates has expired as long as there is no binding service contract between producer and the original CB. The producer will apply for certification for the next cycle to ACERTA. It is not necessary to wait until the current certificate has expired to initiate certification request to ACERTA.

Prior to any transfers the Operations Manager or Scheme Manager or the Technical Department will carry out a review of the certification status of the potential customer checking the GLOBALG.A.P. database and documents provided.

Minimum requirements to be reviewed:

- Firstly, **a search in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database** will be carried out, in order to verify the current status of the producer and the certificate – in terms of authenticity, duration, and scope of activities covered in respect of the site or sites wished to be transferred.
- In particular, when a producer **has a sanction** applied by the outgoing CB, which **has not yet been closed out**. In cases where sanctions are outstanding, the sanction must be resolved and closed out with the outgoing CB **before** any transfer of the producer to ACERTA.
- Whether any **contractual commitments** with the outgoing CB are still outstanding, which would impede a correct transfer.
- A consideration of the last evaluation/re-evaluation reports, subsequent surveillance reports and any outstanding non-conformances arising there from. This consideration should also include any other available, relevant documentation regarding the certification process (i.e.: handwritten notes, verification list, complaints received, and corrective actions taken, etc.).

Two situations are possible:

a) Expired certificate.

If the date of acceptance (signing of Sublicence and Certification Agreement) and the date of audit are AFTER the certificate from the outgoing CB expired, because it is only possible to audit during a specid harvest time, there will be a period when the producer does not have a valid certificate.

If the certificate with the other CB has expired when ACERTA receives the request form, ACERTA will carry out an **initial audit** (see point 1.6.1. b about Initial inspections and species registered for the first time).

b) Valid certificate.

If the date of acceptance (signing of Sublicence and Certification Agreement) and perhaps also the date of audit is BEFORE the certificate from the outgoing CB expired, the certification decision can only take effect as soon as the certificate expires. In this case, the certification cycle of the producer will remain the same as before. If, during the validity of the certificate issued by the outgoing CB, the accepting CB detects non-conformances that are not closed after 28 days, then ACERTA shall inform GLOBALG.A.P. about the non-conformances detected so that appropriate actions can be taken.

If the producer has a valid certificate with the other CB when ACERTA receives the request form, ACERTA will carry out a **renewal inspection** (see point 1.6.1. c about Renewals).

If during a producer transfer, in the renewal audit ACERTA did not observe the harvest of all products included in the certification scope during the renewal audit, an unannounced inspection (within the 10% rule) shall be scheduled during the following 12 months, in order to inspect the harvest process of products not yet seen.

1.13. Complaints, appeals and lawsuits.

For the purposes of this document, the following definitions are established:

COMPLAINT: An action taken by an applicant or certification holder, or by an interested third party, expressing in writing their disagreement with the way ACERTA has acted during the evaluation processes.

APPEAL: This is the action taken by an applicant or certification holder, by which he/she complains in writing against the decision taken by ACERTA in relation to the evaluation process that affects him/her. It may be due to discrepancies in the scope or because the certificate has been denied, suspended, or cancelled.

LITIGATION: This is the discussion established through judicial or extrajudicial channels between ACERTA and the applicants, certificate holders or former certificate holders, regarding a disagreement in the resolution of appeals, or for other causes that exceed the entity's capacity to resolve them.

Complaints: Any natural or legal person may lodge a complaint against ACERTA. Complaints may be communicated through formal channels; this is through the form available to the public on the ACERTA's website. If someone tries to make a complaint verbally or by a written means other than the above-mentioned, they will be asked to do so through the indicated channel so that the complaint is recorded, and the information is not misrepresented when it is transferred between people outside the entity.

This information is sent to ACERTA's General Management, who will designate the person who will contact the claimant to acknowledge receipt and clarify any doubts that may arise in this regard.

ACERTA will try to inform the interested party of the decisions taken within a maximum of 10 working days from receipt of the complaint.

Appeals: Any customer or applicant for certification may lodge an appeal against decisions taken by ACERTA.

All appeals must be managed using the form available to the public on ACERTA's website. Appeals will be finalised within 30 calendar days from the date of receipt. Once the detailed and thorough appeal investigation process has been completed, a final response will be communicated in writing.

Litigation: For the resolution of litigations that may arise from certification activity or any other disputes that relate to ACERTA with another party, the resolution of any discrepancies shall be governed by the provisions set forth in the certification agreement.