ACERTA
WEBUILDCONFIDENCE

CERTIFICATION GUIDELINES

Integrated Farm Assurance (IFA). Scope: Aquaculture

Sub-scope: Finfish, Crustaceans, Molluscs and Seaweed. Version 6 September, 2022

Edited by:	Revised by:	Approved by:	Issue
Technical Department  Date: 27/10/2025	AQUA Operations Manager  Date: 27/10/2025	Quality Manager  Date: 28/10/2025	09

CAUSE OF THE NEW REVISION:

Update to Chapter 1.11. COMPLAINTS, APPEALS AND LITIGATIONS

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) version 6 Smart edition (IFA v6 Smart) and to the Integrated Farm Assurance version 6 GFS edition (IFA v6 GFS standard).

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

- The controlled production process of primary products of finfish (refers to fresh water and marine finfish and other fish, e.g., flatfish, eels, etc.), crustaceans, molluscs and seaweed (refers to seaweed or marine macro-algae; brown, red or green) 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.

At all stages, seedlings (ova and/or juveniles) shall originate from producers with GLOBALG.A.P. registration/certification. Brood stock shall be obtained through an aquaculture breeding program. If wild-caught brood stock is used, it shall originate from a fishery that has proven that it is ecologically managed. Passive collection of seedlings from the planktonic phase is allowed for molluscs' spat.

Aquaculture certification cannot be achieved for wild aquatic species/catch that is not farmed.

Postharvest handling of aquaculture products by the same legal entity as the farm shall also demonstrate compliance with the postharvest/mass balance and traceability sections of the P&Cs applicable to aquaculture in order for the producer to achieve certification.

The scope of certification clearly defines the scientific name of the farmed species in the electronic certificate issued in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems.

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

1.2.1. <u>Applicants.</u>

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 (as an individual producer and as a member of a Producer Group).
- 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).

- Producers shall register with the same certification body (CB) for the aquaculture certification and for the GLOBALG.A.P. Risk Assessment on Social Practices (GRASP). Registration for GRASP shall follow the GRASP general rules.

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.

If ACERTA is notified that a producer will not continue with the certification for the next cycle, it must take sufficient precautions to avoid situations in which reference is made to an expired certificate for products harvested after its expiration.

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 audit, but subsequent 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 all relevant information to the assessment of the scope (as 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 XXXX.

- 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. Certification Options.

The methodology and level of the audit during the certification process will depend on the following points and will be defined based on the information collected in the ***Certification Request form.***

- CERTIFICATION OPTION
- PRODUCTION SYSTEM
- PARALLEL OWNERSHIP
- HARVEST EXCLUDED
- POSTHARVEST HANDLING OPERATIONS

a) Certification Option.

For GLOBALG.A.P. certification, the word "producer(s)" refers to the persons (individuals) or companies (companies, individual producer or group of producers) that are legally responsible for the production processes and the products in the corresponding scope, sold by those people or companies.

Producers can request certification for the following options:

I. Option 1 – Individual Certification with a single site.

An individual producer (legal entity) that constitutes a Legal Entity that manages a single site or location that may or may not be its property, but that meets the following characteristic:

- The product is, at all times, the property of the Option I producer.
- If there are different owners of the farms, they agree to transfer their management to the Option I producer.

In addition, the associated producers will sign a document agreeing that the management is carried out by the company. Once certification is obtained, the individual producer will be the certificate holder and the certificate will only be associated with one production site.

II. Option 1 – Individual Certification with multiple production sites without implementation of a QMS (Multi-site Producer).

An individual producer (legal entity) that constitutes a Legal Entity that manages several production sites or locations (feed mills) that do not operate as separated legal entities.

The legal entity holding the certificate is legally responsible for the whole production of the feed mills registered in the production location, whether owned or rented, as well as for its inclusion in the market.

The product sold as Option 1 – Multisite without implementation of a QMS must be traceable to the legal entity that holds the certificate.

Once certification is obtained the legal entity / producer will be the certificate holder.

III. Option 1 Producer with Multiple Production Sites (multisite producer) with implementation of a QMS.

An individual producer (natural or legal person or a group of natural/legal persons) forming a Legal Entity that owns multiple production sites (locations) that do not operate as separate legal entities but have implemented a Quality Management System (QMS).

In this case, the requirements applicable to the Quality Management System (QMS) will also be audited.

The applicant is responsible for ensuring that all producers and production sites within the scope of certification comply at all times with the requirements of the certification.

Once certification is obtained the legal entity / producer will be the certificate holder.

IV. Option 2 – Group Certification.

A group of producers operating as separate legal entities applies for group certification under the GLOBALG.A.P. standard (Option 2). The group, as a legal entity, is the certificate holder once certification is obtained.

The group must have an implemented QMS and comply with the rules set forth in the "GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulation - Rules for Producer Groups and Multisite Producers with QMS."

The group members are legally responsible for their production locations, whether owned or rented. Each registered member is responsible for the production of their products, even if it occurs under the group's common QMS. The producer can only sell their products as certified through the producer group.

The applicant is responsible for ensuring that all producers and production sites within the scope of certification consistently comply with the requirements of the certification.

In this case, the requirements applicable to the QMS will also be audited.

It is not possible to register the same product under more than one certification option. However, it is possible to register different products under different certification options.

b) Production System.

The level for the audit of producers or producer groups that process more than one product (species) will be decided based on production systems; in this regard, the following production systems are differentiated:

a) Broodstock, hatcheries y land-based pre-farming (does not include harvesting or handling).
b) Land-based farming (FW / SW) (always includes harvesting and may or may not include handling).
c) Marine facilities farming (always includes harvesting and may or may not include handling).

c) Parallel Ownership Declaration.

We talk about parallel ownership when individual producers, producer groups, or members of a producer group own the same product, partly as certified and partly as non-certified under GLOBALG.A.P. This can occur if they produce or purchase non-certified products of the same type they produce and have registered for certification.

Parallel ownership also applies if not all members of a producer group producing a product registered for certification are included in the scope of the certificate.

It is not considered Parallel Ownership when:

- An individual producer produces one product as certified and another product as non-certified (e.g., certified sea bream and non-certified sea bass)
- A producer or producer group buys additional certified products from another GLOBALG.A.P. certified producer.
- A certified producer handles products as a subcontractor for non-certified producers, meaning the certified producer does not purchase the non-certified products.

Any applicant who owns both certified and non-certified products (of the same type) at any time must inform ACERTA for registration in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems for parallel ownership, and ACERTA shall inspect the corresponding traceability and segregation system. If the PO registration is done during the validity of the certificate, it would imply an extraordinary audit to assess compliance with specific requirements and update information in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems.

This extraordinary audit cannot be used as a corrective action for a non-conformity detected by ACERTA. The company will be penalized and must implement corrective actions for the entire production.

Producer groups must also include a clear identification of their member producers who purchase/produce non-certified products of the same products included in the scope of certification.

If an applicant wants to register for parallel ownership at the beginning of the season because they are unsure whether they will also purchase or produce non-certified products (and were not registered for parallel ownership in the previous season), ACERTA must assess whether the applicant has traceability and segregation procedures prepared and ready to be implemented. When the purchase or harvesting of non-certified products begins, the individual producer/producer group must immediately inform ACERTA, and ACERTA shall request evidence of the implementation of traceability and segregation procedures (through documents or an on-site audit conducted by ACERTA).

Certified and non-certified products can be handled within the same product handling unit.

While the production of certified and non-certified GLOBALG.A.P. products on the same production site (parallel production) is not allowed for aquaculture, the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat may make exceptions, considering each case individually.

The GLOBALG.A.P. identification number is used to validate the certificate.

The individual producer/producer group registered for parallel ownership must identify all final products ready for sale (either at the farm level or after product handling) with the GLOBALG.A.P. identification number of the individual producer/ producer group if the product is certified. The GLOBALG.A.P. identification number should not be used to label non-certified products.

In the case of multisite producers with a QMS and producer groups, the QMS must ensure the correct use of the GLOBALG.A.P. identification number.

Parallel ownership shall be specified on the certificate of the individual producer/producer group and must be visible in the online validation of the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems. In the certificate annex, parallel ownership must be declared per member of the producer group, production site, and/or product handling unit, and per product.

d) Harvesting exclusion.

In the Aquaculture scope, excluding the harvest at final farming facilities (on land or at sea) prior to slaughter is not possible. Only the points of control related to harvest can be marked as Not Applicable for producers who are not responsible for the final farming, such as hatcheries or pre-farms.

Whenever the harvest, whether carried out by the producer or subcontracted, takes place while the product remains the property of the producer, all points of control related to harvest must be included in the audit and in the certificate

e) Post-harvest handling

Product handling includes any post-harvest manipulation of the product, such as storage, fresh sales in packaging, freezing, evisceration, filleting, smoking, etc., or any manipulation where the product may come into physical contact with other materials and substances. Specific process details (for each product) applicable to the producer should be included in the checklist comments.

The post-harvest handling activities carried out by the same legal entity as the aquaculture farm shall also be audited

The post-harvest handling activities shall always be included when the product belongs to the producer during handling (whether done by the producer or a subcontractor), unless there is written evidence (contract, agreement, etc.) that the producer does not have control over packaging/handling/storage/labeling, and in that case, the product is not returned to the producer, and the producer is no longer legally responsible for the product.

I. Handling excluded.

Post-harvest handling activities will not be included in the scope of the audit if the handling is carried out when the product is no longer owned by the applicant. This should be reported in the registration process and reflected in the certificate.

II. Handling excluded.

Manipulation will be included in the scope in these cases, and ACERTA, following the specific standards of GLOBALG.A.P. for the Aquaculture scope, shall inspect all post-harvest handling units (PHUs). When a group of producers Option 2 or a multisite producer Option 1 (with or without QMS) has more than one post-harvest handling unit, all units shall be audited while in operation (there should be no sampling of post-harvest handling units).

If a producer does not carry out product handling at their own post-harvest handling unit but at another producer's facility that holds GLOBALG.A.P. certification (including product handling), ACERTA may accept the certificate from another OC, or it may decide to conduct its own audit of the product handling unit (PHU).

1.2.4. Definitions.

Production site: A production area (e.g., fields, plots, ponds, ranches, etc.) that is owned or rented and ultimately managed by one legal entity, and where the same input factors (e.g., water supply, workers, equipment, stores, etc.) are used.

One site may contain several nontouching areas (areas that do not share a common border; noncontiguous) and produce more than one product.

All production sites where the product(s) originating from production processes that are included in the GLOBALG.A.P. certification scope are produced, shall be identified and registered.

Requirements for production sites:

- All production sites shall be owned or leased and must be under the direct control of the legal entity.
- For production sites that do not belong to the legal entity, there shall be a signed document indicating clearly that the site owner has no responsibility, influence, or decision-making capacity regarding productive operations in the leased area. Written contracts shall be in place between each owner of production sites and the legal entity, including the following elements:
  - Name and legal identification of the certificate holder/member producer.
  - Name and/or legal identification of the owner of the production site.
  - Contact address of the site owner.
  - Details of each production site.
  - Signatures of representatives from both parties.
- The certificate holder is legally responsible for all registered production, including the distribution of the product in the market.

Product Handling Unit (PHU): Facilities in which products are handled. All PHUs in which products registered as originating from GLOBALG.A.P. certified production processes are handled shall be identified and registered.

For Options 2 and Options 1 Multisite with QMS:

- The PHU (Product Handling Unit) can be considered central if it handles, and/or packages, and/or stores products from more than one member/site of the producer group/multisite producer with QMS.

- The PHU can be owned by the producer group, or one or more members of the producer group, or it can be subcontracted.

1.2.5. 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 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.

Once the Technical Department and/or the auditor/farm 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 audit, the auditor/farm auditor will confirm that the information received is correct.

In the subsequent years (renewals), a minimum of 10% of all certified producers, certified by ACERTA under Option 1 without QMS and 10% of applicants under Options 2 / Option 1 MS with QMS, must undergo unannounced inspections for each standard covered by the GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulation (IFA v6 Smart and IFA v6 GFS).

In these cases, ACERTA will not notify the producer/group of producers in advance for IFA v6 GFS audits. For IFA v6 Smart audits, the notification for the unannounced audit conducted by ACERTA should not exceed 48 hours (two working days).

In the exceptional case that it is impossible for the producer to accept the proposed date (due to medical reasons or other justifiable causes), the producer will have one additional opportunity to accommodate the unannounced visit. There must be objective evidence of the justification available (e.g., a medical document).

If there is no evidence of a justified reason, the producer must accept the unannounced audit conducted by ACERTA or face suspension. The producer should receive a written warning if the first proposed date is not accepted, regardless of whether the rejection is justified or not. The producer will receive another 48-hour notification for a new unannounced audit in the case of IFA v6 Smart audits conducted by ACERTA, or will undergo another unannounced audit without prior notification in the case of IFA v6 GFS audits. If that audit cannot take place, a suspension of all products (i.e., certificate suspension) will be issued. The suspension will be lifted once the unannounced audit has been conducted.

During the registration process, the producer/producer group may define a maximum of 15 days during which they will not be available for an unannounced audit.

When all the issues related to the scope of the audit have been set, the auditor/farm 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 auditor/farm auditor or the Technical Department and the applicant shall have to reach an agreement and a new ***Audit Plan*** will be sent. The submission of the Audit Plan is not applicable for unannounced IFA v6 GFS audits, as advance notification is not allowed.

The applicant is aware that only the auditors/farm auditors identified in the Audit Plan or equivalent document can perform the 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. In the case of unannounced IFA v6 GFS audits, the auditor/farm auditor will send an email to ACERTA's Technical Department after the end of the initial meeting, and the Technical Department will then email the auditee informing them that the personnel identified in the email can conduct the audit.

The auditor/farm auditor shall communicate to the Technical Department any information found during the audit that it is not correctly reflected in the ***"Certification Request Form"*** or in the ***"Working order"***. This communication is made through the email in which the farm auditor sends the file for technical review and decision.

If on the day of the audit, the auditor/farm auditor 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 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 audit, including the auditor's travel expenses, GLOBALG.A.P. fees, report review, and certificate issuance, if applicable will be charged to the customer.

1.4.1. Audit Development.

The certification/renewal 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 audit will be explained and the power point document "Presentation of the GLOBALG.A.P. Programme" may be used.

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

In the case of a multisite producer Option 1 without QMS, before the certificate can be issued, all production sites where the products registered for certification are produced shall be audited. The result shall be combined into a single checklist that includes all registered sites and summarizes the outcome for the entire legal entity (producer).

In the case of a multisite producer Option 1 with QMS or a producer group, a checklist must be completed for the QMS and for each sampled member/site/PHU. In this case, the result is not summarized but communicated separately for each member/site, PHU, and QMS. The result (including date and duration) for each member/site must be confirmed by the responsible member/site/PHU (by signing the checklist or result list, including date and duration).

At the conclusion of the entire audit process conducted by ACERTA, a comprehensive written report shall be prepared. This report shall summarize the audit activities, provide evidence and objective information about how the producer complies with the standard requirements, and, if applicable, list any non-compliances and/or non-conformities identified.

During the closing meeting, the individual producer or the representative of the producer group shall sign or confirm the audit result conducted by ACERTA. This confirmation shall include, at a minimum, the date and duration of the audit (start and end times), the name of the ACERTA auditor, the scope of the audit conducted by ACERTA, the audited sites, the group members, facilities, the result (in %) of compliance for different P&C levels, and the list of results. A documented or electronic confirmation by the producer is accepted as equivalent to the producer's signature. In the case of a digital signature, it must be authentic and valid (i.e., JPG images are not considered valid signatures).

Compliance is indicated with a "Yes" (when compliant), a "No" (when not compliant), or N/A (if not applicable). P&Cs marked as "No N/A option" should not be answered as "not applicable." There are exceptions where the P&C is not applicable, and the response should be "Yes" with proper justification.

Comments shall be recorded following the audit methodology guide, when available, to allow for the review of the audit history after the event. Comments shall include details of the evidence reviewed during the audit conducted by ACERTA. If no audit methodology guide has been published for a specific scope or standard, it is mandatory to provide comments for all Major Obligations and QMS P&Cs compliant, non-compliant, and not applicable, as well as for all non-compliant and not applicable Minor Obligations P&Cs audited in all audits conducted by ACERTA. This applies to audits conducted by ACERTA. Comments and evidence, such as which document(s) were sampled, which workers were interviewed, etc., shall be specific to the site and product and included in the checklist to ensure that all P&Cs have been properly audited for all applicable sites and products.

The audit report conducted by ACERTA shall include the following information:

- All data fields marked as mandatory in Audit Online Hub (formerly inspection notes).
- Scope of the audit conducted by ACERTA: information about the company, site, product handling unit, and product, according to GLOBALG.A.P. record data requirements.
- Calculation of the total of Major Musts, Minor Musts, and applicable Recommendations P&C, and the percentage of compliance achieved for each level.
- List of non-compliances, non-conformities, and agreed-upon follow-up actions with the producer (includes relevant P&C, details of results based on objective evidence, deadline for corrective action, a description of the corrective action agreed upon with the producer, reference to objective evidence of the implementation of the corrective action, results of the assessment of the corrective action [open/closed], and relevant dates for these actions).
- Conclusion regarding whether the producer complies with the standard.
- Name of the reviewer(s)/person making the certification decision as recorded in the GG AQUA Technical Review and Decision document.
- Stage of the audit report conducted by ACERTA, i.e., preliminary or final.

ACERTA will use the audit report template provided by the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems.

Copies of the audit report conducted by ACERTA, objective evidence of the implementation of corrective actions, and/or the fully completed audit checklist must be provided to regulatory authorities when requested, according to applicable national legislation. They should also be provided by default to the GLOBALG.A.P. secretariat and, when requested, to the accreditation body. Additional disclosure is only required if the producer grants access through written authorization.

The report from ACERTA (e.g., audit report conducted by ACERTA, corrective action report), the audit checklist (completed and externally distributed), and all documentation related to the audit will be protected against editing on ACERTA's server, accessible only to authorized personnel.

The fully completed audit checklist must include all applicable P&C, requested comments, results, and objective evidence of the implementation of corrections and/or corrective actions.

When the destination country (as registered in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems) includes the U.S. and/or Canada, ACERTA will provide the final audit report, including the completed audit checklist, to the producer no later than the certification decision moment.

Furthermore, if any producer requests it, ACERTA must provide the complete audit report, including the completed audit checklist, within five business days from the certification decision. It is not mandatory to send the report before it undergoes internal technical review. If the automatically generated audit report (including the checklist) is available in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems, this report should be utilized.

When required by the GLOBALG.A.P. secretariat, the audit report conducted by ACERTA and the completed audit checklist must be uploaded/transferred to the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems.

ACERTA has an established process for handling requests for translations of reports (**SGC Report Translation Procedure**).

The initial audit shall cover the entire scope, including the harvesting activities for each product to be included in the certification, as well as product handling if included.

The applicant shall maintain records from the registration date onwards or for at least the preceding 3 months before the first audit, whichever is longer.

The registered aquaculture species must be present on the aquaculture farm at the time of the audit conducted by the Certification Body (OC). Post-harvest handling activities carried out by the same legal entity as the aquaculture farm shall also be audited.

When a group of producers Option 2 or a multisite Option 1 producer (with or without QMS) has more than one product handling unit, all units shall be audited while they are in operation (there should be no sampling of product handling units).

The producer may have applied for certification for more than one product, and these products may not have the same seasonal calendar (i.e., the harvest of one product may not coincide with the harvest of others). The requirements described above apply to product groupings based on similarities in the production system, harvest processes, and associated risks. For the products in these groupings to be added to the certificate, ACERTA's auditor must first audit all applicable P&C for each product. ACERTA is required to audit on-site the harvest and product handling processes, at least for one product in each product grouping (see section 1.4.3).

The Post Audit (Renewal or Re-certification) shall be conducted at the time when relevant aquaculture tasks and/or handling, not just storage, are taking place. The audit dates shall allow ACERTA to ensure that all registered products, even those not present during the audit, are managed in accordance with certification requirements. Audits outside of the season or when aquaculture activities are at a minimum shall be avoided. The entire certification scope shall be audited annually by ACERTA before issuing the certificate. This also applies if the producer changes the Certification Body (OC).

The subsequent audits can be conducted at any time during the audit window, which spans an eight-month period: from four months before the original certificate expiry date and (only if ACERTA extends the validity of a certificate in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems) up to four months after the original certificate expiry date. There shall be a minimum of six months between the two recertification audits. No audit by ACERTA can take place until the producer is re-registered in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems. The second registration process shall be completed before the follow-up audit date.

- If product handling is included in the certification scope, this audit shall be conducted while it is operational and shall be audited annually.

- If product handling is excluded from the certification scope, the audit shall be scheduled during the harvest period. The harvest period of at least one registered product from each product grouping shall be inspected at

least at one production site. Crop groupings (species) are based on similarities in production, harvest processes, and risks as described in section 1.4.3.

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

a) THREE-YEAR CYCLE

In both Option 2 and Option 1, the content of the audit conducted by ACERTA shall be organized in a three-year cycle:

- First audit conducted by ACERTA (for version 6): all requirements included in the applicable checklists (for QMS and farm audits).
- Subsequent (renewal) audit conducted by ACERTA (year 2): operational elements identified in the applicable checklists (for QMS and farm audits).
- Subsequent (renewal) audit conducted by ACERTA (year 3): operational elements identified in the applicable checklists (for QMS and farm audits).
- Recertification audit: all requirements included in the applicable checklists (for QMS and farm audits), like the initial audit conducted by ACERTA.

b) OFF-SITE / ON-SITE STAGE.

ACERTA, upon request from the applicant, may divide the announced audits—both the initial and subsequent audits—into 2 stages, to be verified by the same auditor/farm auditor:

- Off-site stage: The off-site stage shall take place no more than four weeks (28 days) before the on-site stage. It should involve an administrative review of documents submitted by the producer to ACERTA before the on-site stage. ACERTA shall schedule a deadline for the producer to submit the documents to be evaluated off-site. This date should also mark the beginning of the four-week period for conducting the assessment during the on-site stage.

  The documentation that the ACERTA auditor can audit off-site includes, for example, self-assessment, risk assessments, procedures required in various P&C, analysis programs (frequency, parameters, locations), analysis reports, licenses, the list of used phytosanitary products, evidence of laboratory accreditation, certificates or reports on subcontracted activities, records of pesticide/fertilizer application. Documentation may be supported by interviews and a remote audit conducted by ACERTA of the facilities.

  The off-site stage shall be recorded in the audit checklist, with sufficient comments for specific P&C. Comments shall be provided for all Major Obligations P&C and for all non-compliant or non-applicable Minor Obligations P&C, unless otherwise indicated in the audit methodology guide (if available).

- On-site stage: The on-site stage shall take place after the off-site stage and will involve an on-site audit conducted by ACERTA of the remaining content in the checklist, the production process, facilities/product handling units, and verification of the information already reviewed off-site. The on-site stage shall include, at a minimum, the inspection of good aquaculture practices and requirements related to food safety to determine compliance.

The date, time, and duration of both the off-site and on-site stages for each audit conducted by ACERTA shall be specifically confirmed via email by both the producer and ACERTA.

If non-conformities are identified throughout the entire farm audit process conducted by ACERTA (off-site and on-site stages combined), the countdown for the deadline to close them begins with the on-site closing meeting when the audit result is signed or specifically confirmed via email by the producer.

This system does not reduce the total duration of the audit but allows for a more efficient use of time on-site. The duration of the on-site stage should never be less than two hours.

In accordance with information security measures and data protection regulations, the producer and ACERTA shall mutually agree on the use of the platform for the audit conducted by ACERTA before its commencement.

Explaining to the producer which documents, activities, and facilities are anticipated to be audited through real-time video transmission (streaming) and which will be evaluated based on recorded information. If applicable, ACERTA shall also inform the producer of the people who need to be interviewed. Checking the compatibility of the IT platform between the producer and ACERTA by conducting a test meeting. Encouraging and considering the use of webcams, cameras, etc., if a physical assessment of an event is desired or necessary. Mutually agreeing on video and/or audio recording, screen captures, and the storage of evidence. ACERTA must keep records of the agreement. If there is no evidence of an agreement, IT should not be used for the off-site stage.

If the use of IT is impossible due to technical limitations (e.g., no phone or internet connection on the farm), the off-site stage is limited to the review of documents or records.

It shall be determined the feasibility of the audit conducted by ACERTA to ensure that the objectives of this audit can be achieved. The eligibility criteria to determine when it is appropriate to conduct an audit using ICT are as follows:

- An acceptable period for the off-site stage.
- The producer's ability to designate one or more representatives capable of communicating in the same language as the ACERTA auditor and using the agreed-upon platform.
- ACERTA's capacity and suitability to conduct the off-site stage in the chosen medium/forum.
- The availability of a list of activities, areas, information, and personnel participating in the off-site stage."

The off-site stage shall be conducted in quiet environments whenever possible to avoid interference and background noise (e.g., through speakers). Both parties should make every effort to confirm what has been heard, stated, and read throughout the audit.

The off-site stage shall be conducted in the same manner as the on-site stage, according to the general GLOBALG.A.P. regulations (e.g., opening meeting, clarification of results, non-conformities).

The start time, end time, and participants of the off-site stage shall be recorded. Evidence of the opening and closing meetings shall be retained, even if multiple sessions are conducted. An electronic acknowledgment is equivalent to a "signature."

In the audit report conducted by ACERTA, it shall be stated that the audit was conducted off-site, along with the software programs used and any technical issues encountered during the audit. If a connection cannot be maintained or satisfactory conditions are not met during the scheduled time for the off-site stage, the ACERTA auditor conducting the audit may conclude the audit before the scheduled time. This shall be documented in the audit report.

The audit conducted by ACERTA may continue later only if the auditor and the producer agree to do so. The continuation of the off-site stage shall follow the planning described earlier. This shall be confirmed during the opening meeting.

The following verification methods (tools) can be used:

- Interview with the individual producer or the representative of the producer group. Worker interviews can be conducted by phone or video call.
- Video call in which the individual producer or the representative of the producer group shows the records.
- Video call in which the individual producer or the representative of the producer group transmits a video of the site/facility to the ACERTA auditor. However, all observed evidence shall be recorded in the checklist. The video transmission of the site/facility can be carried out by the individual producer or the representative of the producer group, or by a designated person chosen by ACERTA; it doesn't necessarily have to be an auditor.
- Sending images/videos instantly during interviews. The files shall include information about the time and georeferencing of the location, or this information shall be available by other means.

- The audit report by ACERTA shall contain details about the different methods (tools) used during the audit to demonstrate the correct application of this procedure.
- ACERTA shall inform the producer about when, how, why, and what to do with the recordings, or when taking images or video footage. ACERTA will also specify which of these files will be kept as evidence, why, and for how long they need to be stored. The producer shall agree and, if applicable, provide consent and submit/transmit the evidence within the agreed-upon timeframe.

1.4.2. Documents.

The auditor/farm auditor shall use the audit reports provided on the GLOBALG.A.P. Audit Online Hub platform, which will include all applicable P&C, audit conclusions, and the corrective action plan.

During the closing meeting, the individual producer or the representative of the producer group shall sign or confirm the result of the audit conducted by ACERTA (including at least the date and duration of the audit [start and end times], the auditor's name, the scope of the audit conducted, audited sites, group members, facilities, the compliance result [%] for different levels of P&C, and the list of results). Documented or electronic confirmation by the producer is accepted as equivalent to the producer's signature. In the case of a digital signature, it must be authentic and valid (i.e., JPG images are not considered valid signatures).

Additionally, the ACERTA auditor will provide a copy of the identified non-compliances to the producer/group of producers to facilitate the implementation of corrective actions (if necessary). This document will indicate whether the identified non-compliances constitute a non-conformity.

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

- ***Traceability Test***: the auditor/farm auditor must carry out a traceability test.
- ***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.***

1.4.3. Products (species) to certify

a) *Initial audits and products registered for the first time.Documents.*

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 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 new product (initial audit or new product in a subsequent audit) may only be included in the certificate after all applicable points have been evaluated.

A new product may be added to an existing certificate with a scope extension audit as long as all applicable control points for that product are verified.

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

Records corresponding 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.

Based on the similarity of the aquaculture processes of the multiple registered species, ACERTA shall verify all control points for these product groupings before the product(s) is added to the certificate. Species groupings are based on the similarity in the production system, harvesting processes, and associated risks.

In each file, before issuing the corresponding work order, the harvesting method for each species will be verified to determine which species can be grouped, according to the criteria outlined below. Work orders will be issued considering product groupings (species).

b) Subsequent audits (Renewal)

In subsequent years, the certificate issued after the favourable decision of the renewal 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 audited production sites/producers, regardless of the dates on which they have been inspected/audited.

1.4.4. Audit Results.

a) Non-compliance (of a control point).

A Minor MUST or a GLOBALG.A.P. recommendation is not met in the checklist, according to the compliance criteria.

Comments on all control points considered non-compliant during the audits must be noted in the **Audit Report**. Always, after an audit, the calculation demonstrating compliance must be available.

For multi-site producers without QMS, the compliance level is calculated for the entire legal entity in a single checklist. Any applicable P&C, common to all sites, is to be considered for all sites.

b) Non-conformities.

Non-conformity (NC): Situation in which a GLOBALG.A.P. rule, necessary to obtain the certificate, is violated.

↳ **Non-conformities due to Major Musts: 100%** of all applicable control points that constitute **Major Musts and QMS control points are not met** (in the case of Option 2/Option 1 with QMS).

↳ **Non-conformities due to Minor Musts: 95%** of all applicable control points that constitute **Minor Musts are not met.**

↳ **Recommendations: no minimum compliance percentage required.**

↳ **Structural non-conformities:**

- A non-conformity detected repeatedly in various producers/production sites in the sample: **represents a systematic implementation issue**, resulting in an **QMS non-conformity.**
- Corrective actions shall include **all producers/production sites registered** for certification that may be affected by the same error/problem, not only those audited by ACERTA.

ACERTA will apply the corresponding sanction.

c) Non-conformities due to Contractual Matters.

Contractual non-conformity: Violating any agreement signed in the contracts between ACERTA and the producer related to GLOBALG.A.P. requirements.

An incomplete **"Food Safety Policy Declaration"** will result in a contractual non-conformity according to the GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulation.

The producer must comply with the signed agreements (GLOBALG.A.P. Sublicense and certification agreement and Service Agreement with ACERTA in its current versions).

The producer must meet the requirements defined in the GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulations applicable in its most current version.

ACERTA may impose the corresponding sanction on all products.

Examples: marketing a product that does not comply with legal requirements; false communication from the producer about GLOBALG.A.P. certification; misuse of the GLOBALG.A.P. trademark; failure to make payments agreed in the contractual conditions; etc.

1.4.5. 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) Part 1.4.4: Audit Results).

The 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 Audits and follow-up audits for the addition of new products (new species):

- This section is applicable to producers seeking GLOBALG.A.P. Certification for the first time and to producers who wish to add a new product (new species) to an existing GLOBALG.A.P. Certificate.
- **A maximum period of 3 months from the audit date is allowed**. If an individual producer or a group of producers fails to meet 100% of Major Compliance Points and/or 95% of Minor Compliance Points within 28 days following an initial audit.
- If the Non-Conformity is not resolved within **a maximum period of three (3) months from the audit date**, a new complete initial audit (at the producer's expense) must be conducted before the certification process can proceed, and the certificate can be issued (without the need to witness the harvest).

(ii) For Renewal Inspections:

- A maximum term of **28 calendar days since the last audit date.**
- Each non-conformance shall be assessed in accordance with *Part 1.4.4: Audit Results*.
- If 28 calendar days have passed after the initial inspection/audit before closing the CA PLAN, ACERTA must impose a certificate suspension within a period of 24 hours.

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 (see part 1.6.3 Sanctions).

In the case that non-compliances are non-conformances, the auditor / farm auditor must send all the related documents to the Technical Department in electronic format. This includes the Audit Report, which will contain the Corrective Action Plan (CA Plan), evidence of implementation provided by the company, and the auditor's final assessment.

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 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 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) Part 1.4.4: Audit Results).

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 / farm auditor **within 7 calendar days after audit date**.

In both cases, from the conclusions obtained from the assessment of the corrective action proposals provided by the applicant, the auditor /farm auditor makes the "**Corrective Action Assessment Report**" where each corrective action has been reviewed by the auditor, the final result of compliance level and the advice about the certification (or not certification) is stated.

The auditor in charge of the file is responsible for giving the Technical Department all the appropriate documentation in electronic format: **Audit Report, Traceability test** *and* **EMPLOYEE CODES GGAP-GRASP**. The Audit Report will include the Corrective Action (CA) Plan, including the corresponding evidence if the producer decides to propose corrective actions, and the auditor's final assessment.

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 "SGC Procedure for the Assessment of results", will take into account the levels of compliance described by GLOBALG.A.P.

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***, **Audit Report, Final Audit Conclusions, CA Plan**, ***Traceability Test***, and evidence of implementation (where applicable) provided by the company, ***Preliminary results of the audit*** signed by the auditor team and the company's representative (a documented or electronic confirmation by the producer is accepted as equivalent to the producer's signature. In the case of a digital signature, it must be authentic and valid; for example, an image is not valid.) 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.

1.5.1. Nivel de cumplimiento.

In order for the **decision to be favorable** for the **issuing/maintenance** of certification, it must be ensured that:

- 100% compliance with all applicable “Major Must” control points.
- 95% compliance with all applicable “Minor Must” control points.
- The Quality Management System (Option 2) comply all the requirements established in the document approved by GLOBALG.A.P., as specified by ACERTA, where all points related to this topic identified in the audit report must be fulfilled.
- Recommendations: No minimum percentage of compliance is required

Ina dition, the producer shall comply with the agreements signed — ***Sublicense & Certification Agreement*** and ***Certification Agreement*** with ACERTA in their current version— and with the requirements defined in the applicable GLOBALG.A.P. General Regularions in their current version (version 6).

1.6. Notification of certification decision and Certificate.

1.6.1. Favorable decision

As soon as the decision has been satisfactory, the Technical Department will update the data in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems.

The Technical Department, through the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems, will issue the **Certificate of Conformity** and the **Technical Annex** to the certificate holder. It will be sent once the payment of the corresponding invoice is verified.

If payment has not been confirmed at the time of issuance, the Technical Department will inform the producer about the favorable decision. In the case where the producer's destination countries include the U.S. and/or Canada, the Audit Report will also be attached, and the Certificate will be sent as soon as the payment of the invoice is 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 considertions.

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?init=1

1.6.2. Unfavorable decision

The certification decision will be unfavorable if any of the necessary conditions for obtaining the certificate are not comply. 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, ACERTA provides a complaints and appeals form on its website for its clients. 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.**

- When a non-conformity is detected in a producer, at the QMS level, or at the member/site level, ACERTA must impose a sanction (warning, suspension, or cancellation).
- Producers/Producer Groups 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 (not compliance with the P&C, GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulations or contract requirements).

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. or the decision-making committee for the case.

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 within a period of 24 hours.

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.

Only ACERTA has the authority to lift the suspensions it 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).

If a clear link has been established between a producer and a public health alert outbreak by a competent government authority, ACERTA must impose the certification suspension while a review of the producer's certification is carried out.

If a producer has been declared by a court of law as an offender of national or international law, and these actions may jeopardize the reputation and credibility of FoodPLUS GmbH and/or the GLOBALG.A.P. standard, ACERTA must suspend the producer's certificate immediately. If ACERTA fails to do so, GLOBALG.A.P. has the right to report to the accreditation body and change the status of the certificate in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems to invalidate it. In such a case, ACERTA must accept civil responsibility for this matter.

After the suspension is applied, ACERTA, will set a time period allowed for correction. This period will normally be one month, but ACERTA reserves the right to shorten or extend this period depending on the severity of the suspension cause, but it will never exceed 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.

c) 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 may occur if the producer faces challenges in meeting the relevant GLOBALG.A.P. standard and requires more time to address any non-conformities

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. IT Systems the product status "self-declared suspension" shall be set for the respective products.

d) 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.
- ACERTA finds evidence indicating that the producer has misused the GLOBALG.A.P. declaration. Any case of misuse can be reported to members of the GLOBALG.A.P. Community.
- 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 (for all the products and producers/sites) of the use of the any logo/trademark, License/certificate, or any device or document that could relate to GLOBALG.A.P.

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

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.

ACERTA may carry out additional audits or on-site visits to investigate the claims.

ACERTA shall inform the GLOBALG.A.P. secretariat about the results and actions taken within the defined timeframe.

If the certificate holders and ACERTA 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.

If the certificate holder or a member of the producer group faces a claim related to food safety (i.e., potentially involved in a foodborne outbreak), overall worker welfare, environmental protection, or animal welfare, or has been involved in a legal process or declared by a court of law as an offender of national or international law, and these actions may jeopardize the reputation and credibility of FoodPLUS GmbH and/or the GLOBALG.A.P. standard, the certificate holder must inform ACERTA within 24 hours.

1.7. Surveillance Audits.

The surveillance inspection is carried out in order to add a species that has not been inspected during the initial/renewal 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 1.8 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. 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 or by an approved auditor for the scope.

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).

1.9. Extension of the certificate validity.

The validity of a v6 Smart certificate can be extended beyond the normal 12-month period, for a maximum period of 4 months. If the certificate has expired, it cannot be extended.

ACERTA shall have the necessary registration documents for the next certification before an extension is granted (signed contract and sublicense agreement, and complete application).

ACERTA must have written confirmation from the producer for the extension, clearly communicating that this action means the OC cannot be changed for the next certificate.

ACERTA must have written confirmation from the producer for the extension, clearly communicating that this action means the OC cannot be changed for the next certificate.

Before an extension is granted, the corresponding official fees of the GLOBALG.A.P. system must be paid in full for the next certificate.

The producer must be audited during the extension period. The producer cannot change the OC for the certificate following the granted extension.

The validity period of the certificate remains the same if there was an extension, meaning the next certificate validity must be calculated by subtracting the extension period duration from the normal 12-month validity period.

If the certificate has expired for more than 12 months, ACERTA must apply the rules corresponding to an initial audit.

The validity of the v6 GFS certificate can be extended beyond the usual 12 months for a maximum period of 4 months, following the same rules as for a v6 Smart certificate, but only if there is a valid reason. 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.

1.10. Transfer between Certification Bodies.

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

The transfer of producers between OCs can occur when a producer's certificate has expired and also if there is no binding service contract between the producer and the outgoing OC. The outgoing OC can shorten the validity of the certificate issued to facilitate the transfer, but always in mutual agreement with the producer and in coordination with the accepting OC to avoid gaps in certification.

Only producers found in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT Systems 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.

If the signing of the Sublicense and Certification Agreement, along with the date of the audit conducted with the incoming OC, occurs after the expiration date of the certificate issued by the outgoing OC, there will be a period during which the producer lacks a valid certificate. In this case, the audit conducted by ACERTA will be considered as an initial audit (see section 1.4.3 a) Initial audits and/or products registered for the first time).

However, if the signing of the sublicense and GLOBALG.A.P. certification agreement, and perhaps the date of the audit conducted by the incoming OC, precede the expiration date of the certificate from the outgoing OC, then the certification decision can only take effect after the previous certificate has expired. In this case, the audit conducted by ACERTA will be considered a Subsequient Audit (Renewal or Recertification) (see section 1.4.3 b).

The outgoing OC remains responsible until the expiration of its certificate. The producer can sign a sublicense and GLOBALG.A.P. certification agreement with ACERTA while their agreement with the outgoing OC is still valid. The sublicense and GLOBALG.A.P. certification agreement are binding for ACERTA only when the outgoing OC has released the producer's unique GLOBALG.A.P. identification number in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems.

If, during the validity of the certificate issued by the outgoing OC, ACERTA detects non-conformities that are not resolved within 28 days, the outgoing OC must be informed so that it can take appropriate follow-up actions.

In the case of a transfer of a producer with a valid certificate from the outgoing OC, the registration of products in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems may not be completed before the audit conducted by ACERTA, and the certification decision may not be made within 28 days following the ACERTA audit/closure of non-conformities. This will occur with the expiration date of the certificate with the outgoing OC.

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 200 to an Option 1 producer and EURO 700 to an option 2 producer group, that will be charged to ACERTA or the client.

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 or as an Individual Producer (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.

1.11. Complaints, appeals and lawsuits.

Detailed information regarding the management process for complaints, appeals and lawsuits is available on ACERTA Certification's website: https://acerta-cert.com/en/appeals-and-complaints/

1.12. Summary Table Information on Inspection Level

OPTIONS	INTERNAL ASSESSMENT	EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT: CERTIFICATION BODY INITIAL AUDITS (CERTIFICATION) / SUBSEQUENT (RENEWAL)
OP 1	IL: Production Site and PHUs. F: 1/year R: PRODUCER D: COMPLETE	***INSPECTION LEVEL:*** Production Site and PHUs. ***FREQUENCY:*** 1/year (To inspect all production centers during harvest, taking into account the rules for multi-species production centers). If it is not possible to schedule a Follow-up Audit, or exceptions. ***TIMING:*** 1st year - To check all species during harvest, when different harvesting methods are used. After registration in GLOBALG.A.P. and records of at least 3 months before the audit Subsequent years – From 4 months before the certificate expiration. At least 10% of renewals annually per standard must be inspected on an unannounced basis (10% for v6 Smart with notification not exceeding 48 hours/2 working days and 10% for v6 GFS without prior notification). ***RESPONSABLE:*** Auditor or farm auditor. ***DOCUMENTS:*** Complete CL complying with the 3-year cycle (see 1.4.1. a).
OP 1 MULTISITE (SEVERAL SITES GLOBALG.A.P.) WITHOUT QMS	IL: All Production Sites and PHUs F: 1/year R: PRODUCER D: COMPLETE	***INSPECTION LEVEL:*** All Production Sites and PHUs. ***FREQUENCY:*** 1/year (To inspect all production centers during harvest, taking into account the rules for multi-species production centers). If it is not possible to schedule a Follow-up Audit, or exceptions. ***TIMING:*** 1st year - To check all species during harvest, when different harvesting methods are used. After registration in GLOBALG.A.P. and records of at least 3 months before the audit Subsequent years – From 4 months before the certificate expiration. At least 10% of renewals annually per standard must be inspected on an unannounced basis (10% for v6 Smart with notification not exceeding 48 hours/2 working days and 10% for v6 GFS without prior notification). ***RESPONSABLE:*** Auditor or farm auditor. ***DOCUMENTS:*** Complete CL complying with the 3-year cycle (see 1.4.1. a).

OPTIONS		INTERNAL ASSESSMENT	EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT: CERTIFICATION BODY INITIAL AUDITS (CERTIFICATION) / SUBSEQUENT (RENEWAL)	EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT: CERTIFICATION BODY SURVEILLANCE AUDIT
OP 2 - OP 1 MULTISITE (SEVERAL SITES GLOBALG.A.P.) WITHOUT QMS Multisite producers and Producer groups	***QMS***	IL: SGC F: 1/year R: INTERNAL AUDITOR D: CL QMS + PHU	***INSPECTION LEVEL:*** Quality Management System ***FREQUENCY:*** 1/year (To inspect all production centers during harvest, taking into account the rules for multi-species production centers). If it is not possible to schedule a Follow-up Audit, or exceptions. ***TIMING:*** 1st year - To check all species during harvest, when different harvesting methods are used. After registration in GLOBALG.A.P. and records of at least 3 months before the audit Subsequent years – From 4 months before the certificate expiration. At least 10% of renewals annually of multisite producers with QMS and Producer Groups must be inspected on an unannounced basis (10% for v6 Smart with notification not exceeding 48 hours/2 working days and 10% for v6 GFS without prior notification). ***RESPONSABLE:*** Auditor. ***DOCUMENTS:*** CL QMS (+ PHU)	***NA***
	PRODUCERS / SITES	IL: All producers / Production sites F: 1/year R: INTERNAL AUDITOR D: Complete CL	***INSPECTION LEVEL:*** 1st year √Producers / Production Sites (including all the species). Subsequent years : √ Producers / Production Sites suctracting those audited in the previous follow-up audit , (as long as reduction requirements are met: no NCs are detected in the previous follow-up audit and no structural NCs are detected in the SGC). Within each producer, at least the farm with the highest risk. The communication of the selection of members/sites should not exceed 48 hours (2 working days). For the v6 GFS standard, at least 20% of the selected members/sites will be done on an unannounced basis (without prior notice), and at least 25% of the members/sites will be randomly selected. For the v6 GFS standard, the selection should aim to cover all members/sites over a period of 10 years. ***FREQUENCY:*** 1/year (To inspect all production centers during harvest, taking into account the rules for multi-species production centers). ***TIMING:*** After the SGC Audit. 1st year - To check all species during harvest, when different harvesting methods are used. After registration in GLOBALG.A.P. and records of at least 3 months before the audit Subsequent years – From 4 months before the certificate expiration. ***RESPONSABLE:*** Auditor or farm auditor. ***DOCUMENTS:*** Complete CL for each producer/site complying with the 3-year cycle (see 1.4.1. a).	***INSPECTION LEVEL:*** 50% de √ Producers / Production Sites Within each producer, at least the farm with the highest risk. ***FREQUENCY:*** 1/year ***TIMING:*** During the validity of the certificate, respecting a 30-day interval between two visits. The communication of the selection of members/sites should not exceed 48 hours (2 working days). For the v6 GFS standard, at least 20% of the selected members/sites will be done on an unannounced basis (without prior notice). ***RESPONSABLE:*** Auditor or farm auditor. ***DOCUMENTS:*** Complete CL for each producer/site complying with the 3-year cycle (see 1.4.1. a).
	PHUs	IL: All the PHUs F: 1/year R: INTERNAL AUDITOR D: Complete CL	***NIVEL DE INSPECCIÓN:*** Always all PHUs while they are operational. ***FREQUENCY:*** 1/year ***TIMING:*** After the SGC Audit and while it is operational. ***RESPONSABLE:*** Auditor or farm auditor. ***DOCUMENTS:*** Complete CL for each PHU.	***NA*** *(All PHUs are audited during the certification/renewal audit).*