ACERTA
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GLOBALG.A.P. CERTIFICATION GUIDELINE

Integrated Farm Assurance. Scope: Crops Base

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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) Sub-scope: Fruit and Vegetables.

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

- The controlled production process of primary products. It does not cover wild/catch, wild fish/catch or crops harvested in the wild.
- 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 for the production of products that are not produced by themselves.

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

1.2.1. Applicants

An applicant:

- May not register the same product with different Certification Bodies.
- May not register the same product with different certification options.
- May register different products with different CBs and/or different certification options.
- May not register Production Sites or group members in different countries with ACERTA. (Exception: The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat may grant exceptions on a case-by-case basis or within national interpretation guidelines).

a) New Applicant

When a new applicant contacts ACERTA to get information of the certification in accordance with the Integrated Farm Assurance (IFA)-GLOBALG.A.P. Programme, Sub-scope: Fruit and Vegetables, ACERTA's Commercial Manager contacts him as well, and confirms under which option the applicant wants to be certified.

The applicant is requested some basic information which will let ACERTA make the appropriate quotation.

Next, by the ACERTA management computer system (SIG), the quotation, which will be reviewed by the Administration Manager, is made.

The quotation includes the costs derived from the certification process and a specification of the items detailed in the said costs: application procedure, management of the information in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database, certification inspection, issuing of the ***"report"***, decision taking and at the customer's request, a previous inspection to the facilities. 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 quotation accepted in the SIG and files the computerized copy in the corresponding folder in local server.

Once the accepted quotation has been received, the Technical Department will send the applicant the related documentation.

- ***"Certification Request Form"***, document to be sent back to ***ACERTA*** completed to formalize the certification procedure. In this document the information concerning all the vegetable products (species) to be certified will be detailed
- ***"Certification Agreement",*** 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.
- ***"Certification Guideline"***, document where the activities included in the certification process are detailed.
- ***"Declaration for Options 1"*** (in case of Cooperative societies - Options 1 individual producer)

- ***"Sublicence Agreement"***. Contract between the Certification Body (CB) and the producer. Sets legal framework to be granted the GLOBALG.A.P. Certification.

If the producer does not commit to continue with the certification for the next cycle, the CB shall make sufficient provisions to avoid situations where one certificate could be used to cover more than one harvest and growing cycle of the same annually harvested crop, e.g., by shortening the certificate validity.

b) Subsequent Certification: Previously certified applicant

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

For this purpose, 6 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:

- ***Predefined quotation***
- **"*Certification Request Form*"**
- ***"Certification Agreement"***
- **"*Certification Guideliness*"**
- ***"Declaration for Options 1"***
- ***"Sublicence Agreement***

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

When a producer changes from one CB to another, it is not considered a first inspection, but subsequent inspection.

1.2.2. Request Form

After the Technical department has received all the documents related to the Applicant certification request:

- The Technical Department reviews, then, the **"Certification Request Form"** sent by the (including the data provided detailing production sites and Produce Handling Units, the fields, and when option 2, the identification of the producers

- A folder is also opened in local server for each applicant, appropriately identified with its corresponding code to file and keep the records.

    - Once the "Certification Request Form" is reviewed, ACERTA will register the producer/Producer Group in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database, (if the producer / producer group is registered with ACERTA for the first time) and accept the information related to the request in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database, always within 28 calendar days after the registration, and the Database sends automatically to the applicant a mail confirming the file acceptation by ACERTA and his/her GGN.

    - If the producer has applied for its own GLN, this number shall be reported and ACERTA will register the organization under its own number in database and withdraw the GGN accordingly. The GLN replaces the GGN in the GLOBALG.A.P. system.

- The Technical Department assign 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 number of four digits.

  Example: ACERTA XXXX.

  The inscription number for producers belonging to option 2 consists of the word ACERTA, followed by a number of four digits (reg number of Producer Group that are belonging 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 registers the applicant's request in the ACERTA's SIG and create the file number: The file number consists of the acronym "PEU", the code assigned to the customer and 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 system).

Example: PEU.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 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. Scope Options

Inspection methodology during the certification process will depend on the following points, and the information will be provided by the **"Certification Request Form."**

- **CERTIFICATION OPTION**
- **CROP SYSTEM**
- **PARALLEL PRODUCTION (PP) OR PARALLEL OWNERSHIP (PO)**
- **HARVESTING EXCLUDED**
- **HANDLING EXCLUDED**
- **HIGH RISK CROPS**

a) Certification Option

For GLOBALG.A.P. Certification, the term "producer(s)" refers to persons (individuals) or businesses (company, individual producer, or producer group) that are legally responsible for the production processes and the products of the respective scope, sold by those persons or businesses.

Only products that are produced by producers themselves. Producers cannot receive certification for the production of products that are not produced by themselves.

The following options are available for the producers:

I. Option 1- Individual Certification

An individual producer (individual/juridical person or Group of individual/juridical persons) constituting a legal entity, who manages only one Production Site These Agricultural Production Units or fields either owned or not, but always meeting these two requirements:

- The crop shall be always owned by the producer Option 1
- If there are different owners, these shall commit to transfer its management to the producer Option 1

Furthermore, the associated producers shall sign a document stating their agreement to the management carried out by the company.

II. Option 1 – Multisite without Implementation of a QMS

An individual producer (individual/juridical person or Group of individual/juridical persons) constituting a legal entity, who manages more than one Production Sites that do not function as separate legal entities.

The single legal entity holding the certificate is legally responsible for all registered production of all products from its location, whether owner or rented, including placing the product on the market.

The product/crop sold from option 1 – multisite without QMS could be traced back to one single legal entity that is the certificate holder.

The individual producer / organization will be the certificate holder once certified.

III. Option 1 – Multisite with Implementation of a QMS

An individual producer (individual/juridical person or Group of individual/juridical persons) constituting a legal entity, who manages more than one Production Sites that do not function as separate legal entities, but where a QMS has been implemented. In this case the QMS Rules must apply. All production locations (sites) belong (owned or rented) to the certified legal entity (the producer/ company).

In this case the QMS Rules shall apply.

The individual producer / organization will be the certificate holder once certified.

The single legal entity holding the certificate is legally responsible for all registered production of all products from its location, whether owner or rented, including placing the product on the market. The product/crop sold from option 1 – multisite with QMS could be traced back to one single legal entity that is the certificate holder.

IV. Option 2

Producer Group: Group consisted of producers (with its respective production areas) searching for certification in accordance with GLOBALG.A.P.. The structure of the group must allow the implementation of the Quality Management System for the whole group. The group, as a legal entity, will be the certificate holder once certified but the group members are separate and individual legal entities.

The producer group members must be legally responsible for their respective production locations (rented or owned). Each registered member must be responsible for the production of their products, although this takes places under the common QMS of the group. The producer can sell his/her products as certified only through the group.

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

In this case the QMS Rules shall apply.

Where a number of producers are legally responsible for the productions of their products (own the products) – regardless of if they own or rent the site/ location/ farm – those members shall not be part of an option 1 multisite operation, but shall be members of an option 2 producer group (or certified as option 1 producer individually)

b) Crop System

Inspection methodology is specified for the inspections to be carried out to producers or producer group growing more than one product, whenever all of them are obtained by the same productive system; in this sense, the following productive systems per each sub-scope can be differentiated:

a) Open field crops (fruits, vegetables, and herb products)
b) Protected / covered crops (in a greenhouse). A crop is considered “covered” when it is grown beneath or within a structure – with or without building foundations – where the cropping environment has some kind of overhead protection (not including individual plant / tree covers, nets, low tunnels, hail protection, mulches or anything that it is not a greenhouse) during the production of that crop. The cover can be made of plastic, glass or other similar materials, and must be accessible by persons (walk-in possible)
c) Perennial crops (tree crops) (only for Fruits and Vegetables sub-scope)

c) Possibility of statement of Parallel Production or Parallel Ownership:

According to the General Regulations of GLOBALG.A.P., a producer has the possibility to produce or trade the same product (specie) in certified and non-certified status, always meeting some conditions that make possible Parallel production or Ownership.
Any applicant/certificate holder (individual producer, multisite or producer group) who owns GLOBALG.A.P. and non-GLOBALG.A.P. products (of the same product) at any time needs to register for Parallel Production (PP) or Parallel Ownership (PO).

I. Definitions

Parallel Production (PP):

PP is a situation where individual producers, producer members or producer groups produce the same product partly as certified and partly as non-certified. It is also considered PP if not all the members of a producer group producing a product that is registered for certification are included in the scope of the certificate.
Example: A producer grows apples. Only a part of the apple production will be certified.
A situation in which a farmer produces one product as certified and another product as non-certified is not Parallel Production (e.g.: apples certified and pears non-certified).

Parallel Ownership (PO):

PO is a situation where individual producers, producer members or producer groups buy non-certified products of the same products they grow under certified production.
Example: A producer grows certified apples and buys non-certified apples from other producer(s).

It is not considered PO if:
A producer/producer group buys additional certified products from another GLOBALG.A.P. certified producer(s)
A certified producer handles products for non-certified producers as a subcontractor, i.e., the certified producer does not buy the non-certified products.

II. Requirements:

In order to put into practice, the Parallel production or Ownership of GLOBALG.A.P. certified and non-certified products – of the same accepted products, the following statements will be followed:

- *The producer shall inform ACERTA about PP/PO* during the registration process. Producer groups shall also include clear identification of their producer members who buy/sell non-certified products of the same products included in the scope of certification (and, therefore, also the products that have to be registered as "with PO" for each producer member). When a member of a group implements PP/PO, the group must register for PP/PO.

- *ACERTA shall register in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database for "Parallel Production/Ownership"* (which will be visible on the GLOBALG.A.P. Certificate and via online certificate validation). Where a group member implements Parallel Production or Parallel Ownership, the group shall register for Parallel Production or Parallel Ownership.

- *The different production sites shall be specified within the legal entity*: at least one jointed production site for all certified processes and one other jointed production site for all the non-certified processes.

- *Parallel production within the same production site is not possible*. Individual producers (Option 1, Option 1 Multisite with or without SGC, and individual producers within a producer group) for each registered product cannot have GLOBALG.A.P. and non-GLOBALG.A.P. products produced within the same production site.

- In crop certification, parallel production in one production site is not allowed unless there are distinctive visible differences detectable by the average consumer between the certified and non-certified product.

- *A producer can declare Parallel Production / Ownership in any moment since his registration, but*:

    1) During the validity of his certificate, ACERTA will have to carry out an extraordinary audit to check the applicable control points and update the information in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database and the paper certificate.
    2) It cannot be used as corrective action against a non-conformity detected by ACERTA. The company will be sanctioned, and it will have to implement corrective actions for the whole production.

- *Registration of Parallel Ownership at the beginning of the season*: when they are not sure whether they will buy non-certified products. ACERTA shall evaluate that the traceability and segregation procedures are available and ready for implementation. When the purchase of products from non-certified sources begins, ACERTA shall require evidence of implementation (documentation or on-site assessment).

- *All products shall be traceable to the respective production sites on the farm and when leaving the farm*: certified and non-certified products are fully segregated at all times. The traceability and recording system shall reflect the implementation of parallel production.

- *Parallel ownership*, when non-certified products are sourced, *within the same production management unit (= PHU)*, however, is possible.

- *The "Traceability and Segregation" section in the All Farm Module shall be applicable*

- *Product from a non-certified production sites shall not be moved to certified production site.*

- *The GGN is used to validate the certificate.* It is made available via the identification of the final products with the producer's GGN, where the product originates from a certified process, which is an obligation for all producers registered for PP/PO.

d) Harvest Exclusion

If produce is sold in the field before harvest and the buyer is responsible for harvesting, the harvesting section (FV.5) in the Control Points and Compliance Criteria can be excluded from the producer's certificate.

As long as the harvesting process (whether carried out by the producer or subcontracted) takes place while the produce belongs to the producer, all points relating to harvest shall be included in the inspection and the certificate.

"Harvest exclusion" applies where the produce does not belong to the producer anymore at some point in time prior to harvest commencing and the producer has no control over the harvesting process. It is also not an activity that is subcontracted by the producer.

The producer shall apply for exclusion per product during registration with detailed justification.

ACERTA will make the decision as to whether harvesting may be excluded or not based on the following requirements.

- The producer shall have a contract with the buyer that states that the harvester/buyer will do all of the following:
    - Take ownership of the produce before harvesting.
    - Take responsibility for ensuring that harvest takes place only after the Pre-Harvest Interval (PHI) has been observed.
    - Handle the produce after harvest (not just during harvest).
    - Buy all the produce (Harvest Exclusion is not possible if the producer harvests some part of the crop and sells another part before harvest).

- If the producer does not know the buyer at the time of registration with GLOBALG.A.P., the following shall be provided:
    - ✓ A **declaration from the producer** to inform the buyer (new owner who is harvester AND post-harvest handler) about the Pre-Harvest Interval (PHI).
    - ✓ A **contract with the buyer** as soon as the buyer has been identified that includes all issues under point.

If harvesting is excluded for the producer or producer group, produce handling shall also be excluded for that producer or producer group.

e) Post-Harvest Produce Handling

Produce handling includes any type of post-harvest handling of products such as storage, chemical treatment, trimming, washing or any other handling where the product may have physical contact with other materials or substances. Details of the specific process (per product) applicable to the producer have to be included in the checklist notes.

Produce handling shall always be included as long as the product belongs to the producer during handling (by the producer or subcontractor), unless there is written evidence (contract, agreement, etc.) that the producer has no control over the packing/handling/storage, the product is not returned to the producer and the producer is not legally responsible for the product anymore.

I. Produce handling excluded

In these cases, Produce Handling is excluded of the scope:

- If produce handling does not take place under the ownership of the applicant, it shall be declared during registration and indicated on the certificate.
- Produce handling shall not be included when harvesting is excluded (see Harvest Exclusion above).

II. Produce handling included

In these cases, Produce Handling is included in the scope, but ACERTA may not inspect handling facilities:

- If the Produce Handling Unit (PHU) already has a post-farm gate food safety certification recognized by GFSI, the inspector shall inspect segregation and traceability (that is AF.11, AF 13, CB.1.1) as well as post-harvest treatments (FV.5.8.1-10) if applicable. unless there is a bilateral agreement between GLOBALG.A.P. and the GFSI recognized post-farm gate standard owner stating that these points are included in the scope of the post-farm gate certificate.
- If a producer does not perform product handling on farm, but at the facility of another producer who does have GLOBALG.A.P. Certification (including product handling), ACERTA may accept another CB's certificate or may decide to perform its own inspection of the PHU.

f) HIGH Risk Crops

High risk products are identified in the 'GLOBALG.A.P. Product List'.
High-risk products include
Fresh herbs, leafy greens,
Berries,
Cantaloupe melons,
Any other product associated with known foodborne disease outbreaks

1.2.4. Definitions

Production site: A production area (e.g., fields, plots, orchards, farms, 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 non-touching areas (areas that do not share a common border; non-contiguous) and production of more than one product on the same site is possible. All production sites where the product(s) 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 rented and under the direct control of the legal entity.
- For production sites that are not owned by the legal entity, there shall be a signed document, which includes a clear indication that the site owner does not have any responsibility or input or decision capacity regarding the production operations over the rented-out site. There shall also be written contracts in force between each production site owner and the legal entity that include the following elements:
    - Certificate holder/producer member name and legal identification.
    - Name and/or legal identification of the site owner.
    - Site owner contact address.

- Details of the individual production sites.
- Signature of both parties' representatives.

Product Handing Unit (PHU): Facilities where products are handled. All PHUs were GLOBALG.A.P. registered products are handled shall be identified and registered.

Field (cultivation homogeneous unit), plot, orchard, or greenhouse; Separate units of land within a production site, which summed up as a whole, form a production unit.

1.2.5. Request Form evaluation and Working Order

The Operation Manager, Scheme Manager or an approved auditor / inspector designed by ACERTA will draw up a working programme by using the SIG from the review made to the "Certification Request Form". Based on the information provided by Certification request, he/she will assign an auditor team, determine the appropriate working days, and define the interval of dates to undertake the audits and inform the auditor or auditor team, in writing, of the assignation and sample to be carried out, by the **"*Working order*"**.

1.3. Previous visit

At the applicant's request, **ACERTA** will perform a previous visit.

Initially the designated auditor team for carrying out the work agrees the date of the visit with the applicant by telephone. Then, the applicant is sent the Audit Plan, where the date of the inspection is confirmed, and all the information and activities to be carried out and the persons involved, are detailed. Simultaneously, the auditor sends the Technical Department a copy of this document, to be registered in the SIG.

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 the previous audit, the compliance of the producers and farms detailed by the applicant in accordance with the GLOBALG.A.P. Programme will be assessed.

The previous visit will finish with a meeting in which the conclusions obtained will be commented.

The auditor team who carries out this visit will make a Previous Visit Report, where all non-compliances detected will be detailed and the applicant will be informed of the continuation of the process from then on. 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.

1.4. Audit

If a previous visit has been carried out, from the reception of the report, the applicant might 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 with regard to the continuation of the certification process.

It can be possible that from the initial **"*Certification Request Form*"** to the inspection, 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 auditor designated has received the **"*Working order*"**, the audit date will be agreed with the applicant (by telephone, email…)

With a view to the organization of the inspection, the auditor / inspector will confirm that the information received is correct.

In subsequent years, a minimum of 10 % of all certified producers the CB has certified per scope under Option 1 without QMS, shall be inspected unannounced and 10% of Producer groups / Option 1 MS with QMS applicants.

In those cases, there shall be no notification in advance of the intended unannounced visit. If it is impossible for the producer / producer group to accept the proposed visit, the producer will receive one more chance at an unannounced inspection. The

producer shall receive a written warning if the first proposed attempt has not been accepted. If the visit cannot take place for non-justifiable reasons, a suspension of all products will be issued.
The producer / producer group may nominate, during registration, a maximum of 15 days where they are unavailable for an unannounced audit.

When all the issues related to the scope of the inspection have been set, the auditor will make the **"*Audit Plan*"**, and send it to the applicant and ACERTA's Technical Department. 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 / inspector or the Technical Department and the applicant shall have to reach an agreement and a new **"*Audit Plan*"** will be sent.

The auditor / inspector shall communicate to technical department any information found during the inspection that it is not correctly reflected in ***"Certification Request Form"*** or in **"*Working order*".**

The applicant is aware that only the 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.

If the day of the audit, the auditor / inspector considers that it would be reasonable to change the sample because of a justifiable cause, she / he will be able to do it, but it will be necessary to communicate it to ACERTA Head Office and under the criteria specified in Chapter 2 Inspection methodology of Control Programme.

Once the scope of the inspection has been 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 for the certification in accordance with GLOBALG.A.P. Control Programme*), the cost corresponding to the registration fees established by GLOBALG.A.P. will be charged to the customer.

1.4.1. Audit development

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

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

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

The initial inspection shall cover harvesting activities of each product to be included for certification, as well as produce handling if it is included. Other field work can be checked at a different time where feasible, but this is not obligatory.
The inspection shall take place as close to harvest as possible for the inspector to verify as many control points as possible.

The inspection shall be carried out at a time when relevant agronomic activities and/or handling (but not only storage) are being carried out. Inspection timing shall allow the ACERTA to gain assurance that all registered crops, even if not present at the time of inspection, are handled in compliance with the certification requirements. Inspections off-season or when the farming activities are minimal shall be avoided.

- If produce handling is included in the certification scope, the produce handling facility(ies) shall be inspected annually. This inspection shall be carried out while in operation. Only when ACERTA has carried out a risk assessment that clearly shows that the risk is low, can produce handling be inspected during operation once every 2 years. The risk assessment should consider the product(s) being packed as well as known food safety incidences related to the respective product(s) and any directives from GLOBALG.A.P. to look at specific points. ACERTA shall keep justification of the reason for the chosen inspection timing on record. This exception is only applicable for Option 1 producers without QMS.

- If produce handling is excluded from the certification scope, inspection has to be scheduled during harvest season at least every 2 years. In the respective year, the harvest season of at least one registered product per

product grouping has to be inspected. Crop groupings are based on similarities in production and harvest processes and their risks. (See section 1.6.1.b)

a) OFF SITE / ON SITE MODULE

ACERTA, by applicant request, may divide announced inspections (both initial and subsequent) into 2 modules, which shall be verified by the same auditor/inspector:

- Off-site module: This consists of a desk review of documentation sent by the producer to the CB before the inspection.
- On-site module: This consists of an on-site inspection of the remaining content of the checklist, the production process on-site, and verification of the information assessed off-site.

The methodology of this module will be defined in the Annex ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY OFF-SITE/ON-SITE of this document.

1.4.2. Documents

The following documents will be used:

1. ***Audit report*** (Cover / On-field Check list / Quality System Check list).
The auditor / inspector must use the currently approved Audit Report file. ***Traceability test:*** The auditor / inspector must carry out a traceability test.

2. ***Final Conclusions of the Audit*** (Field results/Field results with FV5 Major/ QS Results)
Then, the auditor / inspector will print the appropriate page of "***Preliminary conclusions of audit"***, selected from the electronic file ***"GLOBALG.A.P. Check list"*** and the company's representative and the auditor / inspector will both sign the "***Final conclusions of the Audit***" as evidence of this being carried out (or it will be send by email to the auditee) and **a copy will be given to the auditee** detailing the non-compliant control points detected. An electronic copy will be sent to ACERTA Head Office.

The producer/producer group representative shall sign or confirm the inspection and audit outcome (including at least the scope of the inspection/audit, the result in % of compliance for the different levels of control points, list of findings and duration) during the closing meeting. A documented or electronic confirmation by the producer is equal to the 'signature' of the producer.

3. ***Corrective Action Plan*** (CA PLAN) - ***Corrective Action Assessment Report*** (CA PLAN)
Each non-compliance will be detailed together with the auditor's / inspector's motivation in a ***Corrective Action Plan*** – a table taking part of the electronic file ***"GLOBALG.A.P. Check list"*** (CA PLAN) – and a **copy of this table** will be given to the producer/producer group to facilitate the implementation of the corrective actions (if it will be necessary). In this document the inspector would mark if the non-compliance detected means a non-conformance.

1.4.3. Crops to be certified

a) Initial inspections and Crops registered for the first time.

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

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

Each production process for products 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 favorable, a Certificate will be issued including all he products whose production process has been completely assessed.

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

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

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

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

In case of crops which have not been assessed during harvesting in the first year, but the harvest has been assessed in a crop of the same group, once the harvest period has started the field notebook with the treatments undertaken and the appropriate residues analyses shall be verified (in office or in situ) before taking the certification decision and before including them in the certificate.

In general, the following **crop harvest groups** could be considered per sub-scope:

1. Mechanical harvest: the only method of harvesting. In this case there is no need to observe the harvest while in operation. It is sufficient to check only the machine and harvesting machine operation related records after or before the harvest.
2. Manual harvest of low-risk products (without using water or ice). The product is low risk when:
    - Always cooked before eating, (for example, potato, sweet potato, corn…)
    - Dry nuts, or
    - Product with pathogen reduction step after harvest (still unprocessed)
3. Manual harvest of high-risk products (without using water or ice). All other product that are not included under low risk are considered high risk. *
4. Harvest that involves water or ice
5. Packing in field (packed in the field in the final consumer packaging)

* **Clarification:** this classification on groupings of crops based on similarities of the production process and harvesting activities, is not related to the high-risk crop types defined for the application of the rule of not sampling members / sites in audits Options 2 / Options 1 Multisite with SGC.

When the harvest of a crop that belongs to group 4 or 5 of the previous list of harvest groups by crop is observed, it will be considered that the manual harvesting processes prior to the application of water or packing in the field is observed (activities belonging to to groups 2 or 3 to which the crop in question corresponds).

b) Renewal crops

In the subsequent years, the certificate issued after the favorable decision of the Subsequent (Renewal) audit, will include all the renewal crops (those that were registered and inspected for this cycle and contained in previous certificate) although all these crops were not inspected during harvest.

1.4.4. Audit results

a) Non-Compliances

Non-compliance (of a control point): A Minor Must or recommendation in the GLOBALG.A.P. checklist is not fulfilled according to the Compliance Criteria.

All motivations must be entered in the ***"Checklist"*** for all control points that are found to be non-compliant during the inspection. In all cases, after an inspection; the calculation to show compliance (or non compliance) must be available (Audit Results signed by the producer).

b) Non-Conformances

Non-conformance: A GLOBALG.A.P. rule that is necessary for obtaining the certificate is infringed

Major Must Non-Conformances.

- When **100%** of the applicable "**Major Must**" control points or "**QMS**" control points **are not met**.

Minor Must Non-Conformances.

- When **95%** of the applicable "**Minor Must**" control points **are not met**.

Structural Non-Conformances:

- A Non- conformance which is detected repeatedly in several producers/ Production Sites of the sampling: a systematic implementation problem exists, therefore a QMS non-conformance shall be imposed as result.
- The corrective actions shall include all the registered producers/ Production Sites which could be affected by the same problem/mistake, not only those inspected by ACERTA.

ACERTA will apply the corresponding sanction.

c) Contractual Non-Conformances.

Contractual Non-Conformances: Breach of any of the agreements signed in the contract between the CB and the producer related to GLOBALG.A.P. issues.

ACERTA may impose a sanction on all the products.

Case examples: trading with a product that does not comply with legal requirements; false communication by the producer regarding GLOBALG.A.P. certification; GLOBALG.A.P. trademark misuse; or payments are not made following contractual conditions; etc.

1.4.5. Timing

The deadline for closing Caplan will be:

I. In the case that the non-compliance requires implies a non-conformance

(See Control Program Chapter 3: Assessment criteria)
The inspected company will be able to make 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. For this purpose, the applicant has:

(i) For Initial Inspections

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

☛A maximum term of **3 months since inspection date**.

☛ If an individual producer or producer group does not comply with **100% of Major Must and 95% Minor Must control points** within 28 days after an initial inspection, the status "open non-conformance" is set in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database.

☛ The status "open non-conformance" cannot be given to producer group members' products

☛ If the status "open non-conformance" is set and no corrective actions are sent in a maximum term of **3 months since audit date** an initial audit needs to be performed to continue with the certification process (not necessary the product in harvest).

(ii) For Subsequent (Renewal) Inspections

☛ A maximum term of **28 calendar days since inspection date**.

☛ Each non-conformance shall be assessed in accordance with *Chapter 3: Assessment Criteria*.

☛ If **28 calendar days have passed after the initial audit** before corrective evidence is not provided, ACERTA will be set the status "suspension of product" in database.

If the non-conformance is against a **Major Must, contracts, or the General Requirements**, the period given for compliance before suspension is applied will be decided between the audit team and the Operation 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. This situation 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 section 1.6.3 Sanctions.

In the case that the non-compliance requires a non- conformance, the auditor / inspector must send all the related documents to the Technical Department as soon as the Non-Conformance is considered closed, within 28 days (or 3 months if the Non-Conformance Status has been lifted) after inspection.

When assessing the corrective actions, the adequacy of the measures taken to solve the nonconformance, its implementation stage and its 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 the corresponding invoice and send it the applicant.

II. In the case that the non-compliance does not require a non-conformance

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 will be sent to the auditor / inspector within **7 calendar days after inspection date**.

The auditor should send all the above documents to the technical department no later than 1 week if the producer choose that he does not want to submit the corrective action and 2 weeks if they client choose to submit the corrective action proposal.

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

The auditor in charge of the file is the responsible for giving the Technical Department all the appropriate documentation, in electronic format ***Audit Reports***, ***Traceability test***, ***Final Conclusions of the audit***, ***Corrective Action Assessment Report*** and ***evidence of implementation*** (where applicable) provided by the company.

1.5. Certification decision

All the reports will be filed in the corresponding folder in electronic forma in local server by the technical department.

In order the certification decision to be taken, the responsible person, in accordance with the decision-making structure detailed in the quality procedure PC-03 "Assessment of the results and certificate awarding", will consider what is described in the chapter 3 Assessment criteria of GLOBALG.A.P. Control Program.

To begin the decision-making process, the Technical Department will be in charge of providing the documents to be assessed, including at least: ***Certification Request Form***, ***Audit Reports***, ***Final Conclusions of the audit, Traceability Test, Corrective Action Plan Assessment Report*** and ***evidence of implementation*** provided by the company.

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

The certification decision will not be delayed more than **28 calendar days since inspection date, or 28 calendar days** after the producer has shown sufficient evidence of corrective actions, in the **case that the non-compliance requires a non-conformance**.

a) Level Of Compliance

In order the **decision to be favorable** to the certification awarding, the following requirements shall be met:

- **100% of "MAJOR Musts" control points** is met.
- At least **95%** of **"MINOR Musts" control points** is met.
- **Quality Management System** (Option 2) complies with **all the requirements established** in the document approved by GLOBALG.A.P.; for that purpose, ACERTA establishes that all the control points related to this issue and identified in the document "Checklist, Option 2" have to be met.
- **Recommendations:** No minimum percentage of compliance required

In addition, the producer shall comply with the signed agreements with ACERTA – Sub License Agreement and Certification Agreement in current version – and with the defined requirement in the GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulations in current version.

The assessment criteria used in the **scope extension** and follow-up inspections carried out during the certification maintenance process will be the same as those followed in the certification process.

1.6. Notification of certification decision and Certificate

1.6.1. Favorable decision

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

The Technical Department will issue the certificate and send it to the holder the **Certificate of conformity and Technical Annex**, including all the information required by the General regulations and according to the information available in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database and will send it together with GLOBALG.A.P. User guidelines of trademark once the payment has been confirmed.

If the payment is not confirmed, the technical department will inform to the producer about the satisfactory decision and will send the certificate once the payment has been confirmed.

Validity dates of the certificate will be the following:

Valid from:

Initial certification: The initial date of validity is the date on which the CB makes the certification decision (e.g., 8 February 2016).

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 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.

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 and not "re-accepted" expires and the subsequent inspection (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.

Other considerations

ACERTA or their subcontracted parties may issue communications other than the certificate related to the producer status (registered, audited, etc.) if 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: www.globalgap.org/search.

1.6.2. Unfavorable decision

When the decision made is unfavorable, the applicant will be able to communicate his/her disagreement within the following 30 calendar days after receiving the certification decision.

If the applicant did not agree with the decision, the Technical Department will provide him/her the Appeals record. Once ACERTA has received it duly completed, the appeal procedure described in the quality procedure PC-05, “Complaints, appeals and lawsuits” will start.

1.6.3. Sanctions

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

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

a) Warning

A Warning will be issued for **non-conformances** detected.

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

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

For non-conformities 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 nonconformity.

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

b) Suspension

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

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

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

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

ACERTA shall issue an immediate suspension where a serious threat to food safety, the safety of workers, the environment, consumers and/or product integrity. This situation will be communicated through a direct communication by warning letter.

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

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

ACERTA, or the producer group, who has issued the suspension, shall lift it when there is sufficient evidence of corrective action by the producer. This evaluation may take place on- or off-site. If done through an on-site inspection, announced or unannounced, it may be a full inspection or evaluating only the submitted 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 if the CB or producer group does not lift it or impose a cancellation.

Self-declared product suspension:

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

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

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

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

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

c) Cancellation

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

a) ACERTA finds evidence of fraud and/or lack of trust to comply with GLOBALG.A.P. requirements

b) A producer/producer group cannot show evidence of implementation of effective corrective action before the suspension period set by the ACERTA / producer group has elapsed.

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

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

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

1.6.4. Burden of Proof

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

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

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

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

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

1.6.5. Distribution of the ACERTA audit report to third parties

Copies of the ACERTA report, the objective evidence of implementation of the corrective actions, or the fully completed inspection/audit checklist shall only be provided to other parties if the applicant producer provides access by written authorization except to the regulatory authorities when requested according to the applicable national legislation, and the AB and CB.

The ACERTA report (e.g., audit report, corrective action report, etc.) and the completed inspection/audit checklist distributed externally, must be protected, or otherwise controlled to prevent unauthorized modification or tampering prior to distribution.

When the producer requests it, ACERTA shall provide the full CB report and the fully completed inspection/audit checklist when final, within 5 business days. However, when the report and/or checklist has not been finalized at the time of request, the report and/or checklist shall be delivered to the producer or producer group within 28 days. When the automatically generated report (including the checklist) is available from the GLOBALG.A.P. system, this report shall be used.

When GLOBALG.A.P. requires it, the ACERTA report and the completed inspection/audit checklist shall be uploaded/transferred into the GLOBALG.A.P. database.

ACERTA will have processes in place to address situations when translations of the reports are requested.

1.7. Scope Extension Inspections

The Scope extension inspections is carried out in order to add a crop, if a crop has not been inspected during the initial (certification) / Subsequent (Renewal) audit, according to the point 2.1.2 Initial Inspection (Certification) / Subsequent Inspection (Renewal or re-certification) a) First year, Section IV. Moment – Multiple Crops

When a certificate holder, producer / Producer group, wants to add a surface (field, production site…) that currently is not include in the certificate, the situation will be evaluated as described in 1.10 Registration of additional producers/Production Sites, and it will be decided if a Scope extension audit is needed.

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

Methodology for these audits is described in Control Program Chapter 2: Inspection Methodology.

1.8. Unannounced Audits

For Option 1 and Option 1 MS without QMS: In subsequent years, a minimum of 10 % of all certified producers ACERTA has certified per scope under Option 1 without QMS, shall be inspected unannounced.

For Option 2 and Option 1 MS with QMS: ACERTA will carry out subsequent QMS unannounced audits for a minimum of 10 % of the certified producer groups and multisites with QMS annually.

There shall be no notification in advance of the intended unannounced visit. If it is impossible for the producer to accept the proposed visit, the producer will receive one more chance at an unannounced inspection. The producer shall receive a written warning if the first proposed attempt has not been accepted. If the visit cannot take place for non-justifiable reasons, a suspension of all products will be issued.

1.9. Registration of additional Producers/Production Sites/fields/PHUs

a) Option 1

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

The decision shall depend on the type of extension and the existing risk. That risk shall depend on several aspects: **the percentage extension, if there are new crops, if the crop belongs to a group of crops previously inspected** (see section 2.1.2 Initial Inspection (Certification) / Subsequent Inspection (Renewal or re-certification) a) First year, Section IV. Moment – Multiple Crops), **the location of the new farm, etc**.

All new PHUs shall be inspected prior to be included in the certificate.

b) Option 2 and Option 1 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 Option 1 MultiSite with QMS is responsible for communicating, immediately, any addition or withdrawal to/from the previous list to ACERTA.

In applicants without HR crops:

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

When the number of approved registered producers (in Option 2) or production sites (in Option 1 multisites with QMS) increase by more than 10% in one year, or a Certificate holder wants to register a new crop, then, a Scope extension inspection is needed.

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), a Scope extension inspection is needed.

All new PHUs will be evaluated to be decided by ACERTA if inspection whether needed or not.

In applicants with HR crops:

If the registered producer number or site number increases or the holder wants to include a new crop, a new Scope extension inspection will be needed.
All new PHUs shall be inspected prior to be included in the certificate.

Besides, members of a producer group can leave the Group and register with another group with any of the products that have been registered before under the following conditions:

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

1.10. Extension of the certificate validity.

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

- The product is re-accepted in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database for a full next cycle within the original validity period of the certificate.
- The full certification license fee and registration fee shall be paid for the next cycle.
- The producer shall be re-inspected during that extension period.

Here are the only reasons that are considered to be valid:

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

The producer cannot change the CB in the cycle after the one for which the extension was granted.

In this case, the cycle remains the same.

1.11. Transfer between Certification Bodies

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

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

ACERTA will keep the existing GGN of the transferred producer.

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) 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 a surcharge of the registration fee of EURO 100 to an Option 1 producer and EURO 500 to an option 2 producer group, that will be charged to the producer or producer group.

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

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

1.11.1. Producer Transfer

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

The Operations Manager or Scheme Manager or the Technical Department will carry out, by the database and documents provided a review of the certification status of the potential customer prior to its transfer.

Minimum Requirements to be reviewed:

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

Two situations are possible:

a) Expired Certificate

If the date of acceptance (signing of Sublicence and Certification Agreement) and the date of audit are AFTER the certificate from the outgoing CB expired, because it is only possible to audit during harvest, there will be a period when the producer does not have a valid certificate.
If the certificate with the other CB has expired when ACERTA receives the request form: ACERTA will carry out an **initial audit (**see point 1.6.1. b) Initial inspections and Crops registered for the first time)

b) Valid certificate

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

If the producer has a current certificate with the other CB when ACERTA receives the request form: ACERTA will carry out a **Subsequent (Renewal) audit**. **(**See point 1.6.1. c) Renewal crops)

1.4.6. Complaints, Appeals and Litigations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Appeals: Any customer or applicant for certification may lodge an appeal against decisions taken by ACERTA.
All appeals must be managed using the form available to the public on ACERTA's website. Appeals will be finalised within 30 calendar days from the date of receipt. Once the detailed and thorough appeal investigation process has been completed, a final response will be communicated in writing.

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

Note: Notification of changes to certification requirements is made through the ACERTA website: www.acerta-cert.com

SUMMARY: Information about level of inspection

OPTIONS	INTERNAL ASSESSMENT		CERTIFICATION/RENEWAL INSPECTIONS (Including Unannounced reward program)
OP 1	***LI***: PRODUCTION SITE ***F***: 1/year ***R***: PRODUCER ***D***: COMPLETE		***LEVEL OF INSPECTION:*** vF (including all crops) ***FRECUENCY:*** 1/year (to check all crops during harvesting in the first year, considering the rules of Multiple Crops). If it is not possible -> to plan Scope extension audit or exceptions. ***MOMENT:*** 1st year – to check all crops during harvesting in the first year. After registration in GLOBALG.A.P. and records of 3 months before the audit are necessary. In the following years – from 4 months from the expiry of the certificate. ACERTA will inspect unannounced a least 10% of all certified Option 1 / Option 1 MS without QMS producers. ***RESPONSIBLE:*** Inspector or Auditor ***DOCUMENT TO USE:*** Verification List complete (*Checklist*)
OP 1 MULTISITES (SEVERAL GLOBALG.A.P. PRODUCTION SITES) WITHOUT QMS	***LI:*** all PRODUCTION SITEs and PHUs ***F***: 1/year ***R***: PRODUCER ***D***: COMPLETE		***LEVEL OF INSPECTION:*** All PRODUCTION SITE´s and PHU´s and vF (including all crops) ***FRECUENCY:*** 1/year (to check all crops during harvesting in the first year considering the option of Multiple Crops). If it is not possible -> to plan Scope extension audit or exceptions. ***MOMENT:*** 1st year – to check all crops during harvesting in the first year. After registration in GLOBALG.A.P. and records of 3 months before the audit are necessary. In the following years – from 8 months from the expiry of the certificate and to try to check harvesting of 1crop, at least (main crop). ACERTA will inspect unannounced a least 10% of all certified Option 1 / Option 1 MS without QMS producers. ***RESPONSIBLE:*** Inspector or Auditor ***DOCUMENT TO USE:*** Verification List complete for each PRODUCTION SITE(*Checklist*)

OPTIONS		INTERNAL ASSESSMENT	CERTIFICATION/RENEWAL AUDIT - First visit	MANDATORY SURVEILLANCE AUDIT - Second visit
OP 2 - OP 1 MULTISITES (SEVERAL GLOBALG.A.P. SITES) WITH QMS. Applicants without HIGH RISK CROPS	***QMS***	LI: QMS F: 1/year R: INTERNAL AUDITOR D: QMS VL + PHU	***LEVEL OF INSPECTION:*** QMS ***FRECUENCY:*** 1/year ***MOMENT:*** 1st year: After registration in GLOBALG.A.P. and records of 3 months before the audit are necessary Subsequent years: from 4 months from the expiry of the certificate. ACERTA will audit unannounced a least 10% of all certified Option 2 / Option 1 MS with QMS producers. ***RESPONSIBLE:*** Auditor ***DOCUMENT TO USE:*** VL: QMS	***QMS*** -
	PRODUCERS/SITES	LI: all Producers/Sites F: 1/year ALL Producers/sites R: INTERNAL INSPECTOR D: COMPLETE VL each Site	***LEVEL OF INSPECTION:*** 1st year: Vn Sites/producers (including all crops and production types) Following years: the Vn minus the number of Sites/producers inspected during the previous surveillance inspections as long as the mentioned prerequisites are met. (Including all crops and production types) The most risked farm of each Vn SITEs selected is inspected. All member/sites shall be covered in a 10-year period. ***FRECUENCY:*** 1/year (all crops during harvesting in the first year considering multiple crops rules). If it is not possible -> Plan Surveillance audit or exceptions. ***MOMENT:*** After QMS audit. 1st year - to check all crops during harvesting in the first year. After registration in GLOBALG.A.P. and records of 3 months before the audit are necessary. In the following years – from 4 months from the expiry of the certificate ***RESPONSIBLE:*** Inspector or Auditor ***DOCUMENT TO USE:*** Verification List complete for each Site/Producer (*Checklist*)	***LEVEL OF INSPECTION:*** 50% Vn Sites/producers (including all crops) The most risked farm of each Vn SITEs selected is inspected. Sampling is not applicable for producers and/or sites with high-risks products* ***FRECUENCY:*** 1/year ***MOMENT:*** In any moment during the validity of the certificate but considering 30 days between 2 visits ***RESPONSIBLE:*** Inspector or Auditor ***DOCUMENT TO USE:*** Verification List complete for each Site/Producer (*Checklist*)
	PHUs	LI: all PHUs F: 1/year ALL PHUs R: INTERNAL INSPECTOR D: QMS VL + PHU (VL if 1 PHU/producer)	***LEVEL OF INSPECTION:*** First year: Vn PHU while in operation Subsequent years, Vn PHU. The inspection of PHU may be carried out in first or second visit, while in operation. ***FRECUENCY:*** 1/year ***MOMENT:*** After QMS audit. While in operation in first or second visit, ***RESPONSIBLE:*** Inspector or Auditor ***DOCUMENT TO USE:*** QMS +PH Verification List (FV 5 as major) when produce handling facility is used for more than one producer. Verification List complete for each Site/Producer (*Checklist*) Where the product handling does not take place centrally, but on the farms of the producer members.	***LEVEL OF INSPECTION:*** First year: ACERTA's criteria: PHU not visited while visited in operation in first visit Subsequent years, Vn PHU. The inspection of PHUs may be carried out in first or second visit, while in operation. ***FRECUENCY:*** 1/year ***MOMENT:*** While in operation in first or second visit, ***RESPONSIBLE:*** Inspector or Auditor ***DOCUMENT TO USE:*** QMS + PH Verification List (FV 5 as major) when produce handling facility is used for more than one producer. Verification List complete for each Site/Producer (*Checklist*) Where the product handling does not take place centrally, but on the farms of the producer members.

OPTIONS		INTERNAL ASSESSMENT	CERTIFICATION/RENEWAL AUDIT - First visit	MANDATORY SURVEILLANCE AUDIT - Second visit
OP 2 - OP 1 MULTISITES (SEVERAL GLOBALG.A.P. SITES) WITH QMS. Applicants with HIGH-RISK CROPS	***QMS***	LI: QMS F: 1/year R: INTERNAL AUDITOR D: QMS VL + PHU	***LEVEL OF INSPECTION:*** QMS ***FRECUENCY:*** 1/year ***MOMENT:*** 1st year: After registration in GLOBALG.A.P. and records of 3 months before the audit are necessary Subsequent years: from 4 months from the expiry of the certificate. ACERTA will audit unannounced a least 10% of all certified Option 2 / Option 1 MS with QMS producers. ***RESPONSIBLE:*** Auditor ***DOCUMENT TO USE:*** VL: QMS	***QMS*** -
	PRODUCERS/SITES	LI: all Producers/Sites F: 1/year ALL Producers/sites R: INTERNAL INSPECTOR D: COMPLETE VL each Site	***LEVEL OF INSPECTION:*** All members with HR crops in first or second visit. ***FRECUENCY:*** 1st year: All members with HR before the certificate can be issued. Subsequent years: may be divided into 2 separate visits. ***MOMENT:*** After QMS audit. 1st year - to check all crops during harvesting in the first year. After registration in GLOBALG.A.P. and records of 3 months before the audit are necessary. In the following years – 1st visit from 4 months from the expiry of the certificate. 2nd visit at any moment during the validity of the certificate but considering 30 days between 2 visits. At least 20% of members / sites shall be inspected unannouncedly. ***RESPONSIBLE:*** Inspector or Auditor ***DOCUMENT TO USE:*** Verification List complete for each Site/Producer (*Checklist*)	
	PHUs	LI: all PHUs F: 1/year ALL PHUs R: INTERNAL INSPECTOR D: QMS VL + PHU (VL if 1 PHU/producer)	***LEVEL OF INSPECTION:*** All PHU while in operation in first or second visit ***FRECUENCY:*** 1/year each PHU. ***MOMENT:*** After QMS audit. While in operation in first or second visit. ***RESPONSIBLE:*** Inspector or Auditor ***DOCUMENT TO USE:*** QMS +PH Verification List (FV 5 as major) when produce handling facility is used for more than one producer. Verification List complete for each Site/Producer (*Checklist*) Where the product handling does not take place centrally, but on the farms of the producer members.	

APPENDIX V. ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY OFF-SITE/ON-SITE

1. INTRODUCTION

The applicant may decide to be audited in the announced audit under the "offsite / on site" module. It applies in the announced inspections (initial and subsequent).

This type of audit is based on dividing the announced audit into 2 modules:

Off-site module: consists of a desk review of documentation sent by the producer to ACERTA-MAR before the inspection. This shall be the first module inspected.
(*) Documents required are defined at point 2.4.
When this implies a remote inspection, the relevant clauses of APPENDIX VI. USING INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY are applicable.
Through this methodology, the module off site will be limited to the review of documents and records.

On-site module: consists of an on-site inspections of the remaining content of the checklist, the production process on-site, and verification of the information assessed off-site. On-site inspection activities shall include, as a minimum, the inspection of Good Agricultural Practices and food safety related control points to determine compliance, interviews with required personnel, and cross check of data and information, data verification and confirmation of the records accuracy.

Before an audit is conducted by this methodology, an agreement shall be signed between ACERTA and the applicant and ACERTA will guarantee that the applicant is eligible, and the audit is viable according to this procedure.

The applicant will be eligible always that he complies with the inspection window, and he is not selected to be unannouncedly audited.

The audit will be considered viable if ACERTA has enough resources to guarantee the audit conduction through this methodology, and document has been provided by the applicant in a timely manner. In that case, it will be confirmed accordingly by the issuance of the Job order.

2. METHODOLOGY

a) Inspection duration

Individual producers- option 1 / option 1 multisite without QMS:

The duration of the on-site module shall never be shorter than two hours each production site.

Producer group– option 2 / option 1 multisite with QMS:

The duration of the on-site module shall never be shorter than three hours.

The aim of this module is to reduce the time spent on-site, although the overall duration of the audit will not be reduced.

Date, time, and duration of the off-site and on-site modules of each inspection shall be recorded by the inspector and signed by the auditee.

b) Management by the Technical Department:

ACERTA provides to the applicant the option of choosing the module "off-site/on-site" on the certification request form.

In order to be audited under the offsite / on site module, applicants shall provide the necessary documentation corresponding for every type of inspection (option 1, option 1 with/without QMS, option 2) to ACERTA.

- ☛ **Necessary documentation for offsite audit shall be sent in timely manner as requested by ACERTA.**
- ☛ **If the applicant does not provide to the Technical Department the necessary documentation within the established period, applicant will not be able to be audited under the offsite module,** and the audit will be conducted entirely on site.

c) Deadlines:

Firstly, off-site module shall be audited, once this module is completed, the on-site module will be carried out.

ACERTA will establish with the applicant a deadline to submit the documents to be evaluated off-site.

Once all necessary documentation has been received, the auditor will receive an audit job order and the applicant's documentation to conduct the off-site module.

- ☛ **Since the date the auditor receives the documents, a period of 4 weeks is given to conduct the on-site assessment.**
- ☛ The inspection of the off-site module shall be conducted no more than 4 weeks before the on-site module. ACERTA will establish a deadline for the delivery of the documents and records by the applicant. In specific cases where the on-site assessment cannot be conducted within 4 weeks, ACERTA will have a clear dispensation process based on a risk assessment and without compromising the integrity of the inspection. However, the period between the off and on-site assessments shall not be extended beyond 90 days.

d) Scope

Both modules (off-site/on-site) have to be performed by the same auditor/inspector.

This type of assessment is applicable under the following conditions:

- ✓ **Audit type:**
  - ○ Only announced audits.
- ✓ **Time of the audit**:
  - ○ Initial evaluations
  - ○ Subsequent evaluations
- ✓ **Certification option**:
  - ○ Announced inspections single sites and multisite without QMS.
  - ○ Announced inspections producer group and multisite with QMS, in these cases only the quality management system will opt to the off-site module.

Inspection of the on-site module is conducted after this technical review of the producer's documentation, to verify the information and the way the management system works on-site and to audit the remaining content of the checklist that was not evaluated off-site.

In case non-conformances are found during the whole assessment process (off-site and on-site modules together), the countdown to the deadline for closing them begins with the on-site closing meeting.

Evaluation of control points off-site shall be recorded in the audit checklist through sufficient comments for the specific control points. Comments shall be supplied for all Major Musts and Minor Must control points (compliant, non-compliant and not applicable).

Documentation that can be assessed off-site by the CB includes the following:

For Option 1 without QMS:
Self-assessment, 'Food Safety Policy Declaration', risk assessments, procedures required in several CPCC, analysis programs (frequency, parameters, locations), analysis reports, licenses, list of plant protection products used, proof of lab accreditation, certificates or inspection reports of subcontracted activities, and plant protection product/fertilizer application records.

For Option 2 and Option 1 with QMS:
Internal audit, internal register of approved producer members/production sites, 'Food Safety Policy Declaration', risk assessments, procedures required in General Regulations Part II, residue monitoring system (frequency, parameters, sampling program), residue analysis reports, licenses, list of medicines used, list of plant protection products used, proof of lab accreditation and certificates or inspection reports of subcontracted activities.

Self-assessment, 'Food Safety Policy Declaration', risk assessments, procedures required in several CPCC, analysis programs (frequency, parameters, locations), analysis reports, licenses, list of plant protection products used, proof of lab accreditation, certificates or inspection reports of subcontracted activities, and plant protection product/fertilizer application records.

In case that interviews, or inspection of the facilities are needed to assess the documents completely, this will be conducted during the onsite inspection.

Control points that ACERTA may assess off-site includes the following*, considering that the auditor will assess later the implementation of those points onsite:

- ✓ **Individual producers - option 1 / multi-site option 1 without QMS:**

AF 1.2.1	AF 6.1.1	AF 17.2	CB 4.2.6	CB 7.3.1	CB 7.6.7	FV 5.1.1
AF 1.2.2	AF 6.2.1	AF 17.3	CB 4.4.2	CB 7.3.2	CB 7.8.2	FV 5.1.2
AF 2.2	AF 7.1.1	AF 17.4	CB 5.2.1	CB 7.3.3	CB 8.1	FV 5.4.10
AF 2.3	AF 8.1	CB 2.2.2	CB 5.2.2	CB 7.3.4	CB 8.2	FV 5.6.3
AF 3.1	AF 9.1	CB 3.1	CB 5.2.3	CB 7.3.5	CB 8.3	FV 5.8.10
AF 3.2	AF 10.1	CB 3.7	CB 5.3.2	CB 7.3.6	FV 1.1.1.	FV 5.8.3
AF 4.1.1	AF 14.2	CB 4.1.1	CB 5.3.3	CB 7.6.1	FV 1.1.2.	FV 5.8.7
AF 4.1.2	AF 14.3	CB 4.2.1	CB 5.3.4	CB 7.6.2	FV 4.1.1	FV 5.8.8
AF 4.2.1	AF 15.1	CB 4.2.2	CB 5.3.5	CB 7.6.3	FV 4.1.2 (a)	FV 5.8.9
AF 4.2.2	AF 16.1	CB 4.2.3	CB 5.4.1	CB 7.6.4	FV 4.1.2 (b)	
AF 4.2.3	AF 16.2	CB 4.2.4	CB 5.4.2	CB 7.6.5	FV 4.1.3	
AF 5.1	AF 17.1	CB 4.2.5	CB 7.11.1	CB 7.6.6	FV 4.1.4	

- ✓ **Producer group – option 2 / option 1 multisite with QMS:** Quality management system documents**:**

QM 1.3 (i)	QM 1.3.1 (i) 2	QM 1.3.1 (i) 5	QM 1.3.1 (i) 8
QM 1.3 (ii)	QM 1.3.1 (i) 3	QM 1.3.1 (i) 6	QM 1.3.1 (i) 9
QM 1.3.1 (i) 1	QM 1.3.1 (i) 4	QM 1.3.1 (i) 7	QM 1.3.1 (i) 10

QM 1.3.1 (i) 11	QM 3 a) 2	QM 3.1 a)	QM 7 a)
QM 1.3.1 (ii)	QM 3 a) 3	QM 3.2 a)	QM 8 a)
QM 1.3.2 (i) 1	QM 3 a) 4	QM 4 b)	
QM 1.3.2 (i) 2	QM 3 b)	QM 5 a)	
QM 3 a) 1	QM 3 e)	QM 6 a)	

(*) Clarification for the applicant according to the requested documentation: The producer has the right to not send some of the documents required to ACERTA if the producer considers that are confidential. On that case, the information shall be present during the on-site inspection.

APPENDIX VI. USING INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (Based on IAF MD4:2018)

1. Introduction

Information and communication technology (ICT): refers to the use of technology for gathering, storing, retrieving, processing, analysing, and transmitting information. It includes software and hardware such as smartphones, handheld devices, laptop computers, desktop computers, drones, video cameras, wearable technology, artificial intelligence, e-mails, and others.

This Appendix is applicable when an inspection is being done remotely, always that this is allowed by GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulations (Follow up inspection, witness inspection…)

For Initial (Certification) / Subsequent (Renewal or Re-certification) audits, the Off-site methodology described in the Appendix ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY OFF-SITE/ON-SITE may be applied. This methodology will be limited to an off-site desk review of the documents provided by the applicant (see Appendix).

Remote inspection / audits that require the use of communication technologies beyond the desk review (interviews, inspection of facilities…) will not be used for Initial (Certification) / subsequent (Renewal) or Re-certification) audits. For other additional evaluations in which it is decided to use these technologies (follow up audits, verification of the implementation of corrective actions, other additional assessments...) the following procedure will be applied.

1.1.1. Security and Confidentiality:

The use of ICT for inspection /auditing purposes shall be mutually agreed upon by the producer or group and aceta-mar0 performing the inspection/audit in accordance with information security and data protection measures and regulations beforehand. Video and/or audio recording, screenshots, and storage of evidence shall also be mutually agreed. The CB shall keep records of the agreement.
In case of no agreement or non-fulfilment of this information, security and data protection measures, ICT cannot be used for the off-site module.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1.1. Planning and Scheduling

The feasibility of the inspection shall be determined to provide confidence that the inspection objectives can be achieved. This shall take into consideration factors such as:

- Sufficient and appropriate information for planning and conducting the inspection.
- Adequate cooperation from the producer
- Adequate time and resources for conducting the inspection.

2.1.2. Eligible producers

Only producers complying with the following requirements will be accepted for using ICTs:

- The period for performing the off-site inspection/audit is acceptable
- The producer is able to designate one or more representatives or contact persons who are capable of communicating in the same language as the inspector/auditor and using the agreed platform.
- ACERTA-MAR is capable and has aptitude to conduct the off-site inspection/audit in the chosen medium/forum.
- The producer provides of a list of activities, areas, information, and personnel to be involved in the off-site inspection/audit.

2.1.3. Planning of Technology and Equipment

Before the off-site inspection takes place, ACERTA-MAR shall:

- Determine the platform (e.g., virtual meeting app, wearable technology, telephone/video call, messaging app, drones, or other platforms, etc.) for hosting the inspection. This platform needs to be agreed upon between ACERTA-MAR and the producer.
- Explain to the producer or group which documents, activities, facilities are expected to be inspected via video streaming (real time) and which will be evaluated based on records/recorded information, and additionally, if applicable, which people need to be interviewed.
- Test the ICT platform compatibility between the CB and the producer or group prior to inspection/audit. A trial meeting using the same media platforms agreed upon shall be conducted to ensure the scheduled inspection/audit can be performed as planned.
- Encourage and consider the use of webcams, cameras, etc. when physical evaluation of an event is desired or necessary.
- If the use of ICT is impossible due to technical restraints, (e.g., no phone or internet connection on the farm, etc.), the off-site module is limited to document or record review.

2.1.4. Performing the Off-Site Inspection/Audit with ICT

- The off-site inspection/audit shall be facilitated in quiet environments whenever possible to avoid interference and background noise (e.g., through speakerphones).

- Both parties shall make their best effort to confirm what was heard, stated, and read throughout the inspection/audit.

- All off-site inspections/audits shall be concluded in the same way as the on-site inspections/audits according to the general regulations (e.g., opening meeting, clarification of findings, non-conformances, etc.).

- The start time, the end time, and the participants of the off-site inspection/audit shall be recorded. Evidence of opening and closing meetings shall be kept even if there were multiple sessions. Electronic acknowledgement of receipt is equivalent to “signature”, as indicated in the general regulations Part III, 6.1 e).

- The fact that the inspection/audit was conducted off-site, as well as the software and any technical problems during the inspection/audit, shall be noted in the inspection/audit report.

- If it is not possible to maintain satisfactory connections or conditions during the scheduled time of the off-site inspection/audit, ACERTA-MAR inspector/auditor may terminate the inspection/audit before the scheduled time. This shall be recorded in the inspection/audit report.

- The inspection/audit may continue later only if ACERTA-MAR and the producer both agree on this. The continuation of the off-site inspection/audit shall follow the planning as described above. This shall be confirmed during the opening meeting.

- The inspector/auditor shall be aware of the ICT's risks and opportunities and the impacts that they may have on the credibility and objectivity of the information gathered. It is the responsibility of the CB to train the inspector/auditor accordingly, but no additional sign-off is necessary.

- The means (tools) of verifications that may be used:
    - Interview with the producer or group. Worker interviews may be conducted by phone or video call interviews.
    - Video call in which the producer or group shows records.
    - Video call in which the producer or group streams video of the site/facility to the inspector/auditor. However, all the observed evidence shall be recorded in the checklist. Video streaming of the site/facility may be done by the producer or group or by an assigned person the CB chooses, who need not necessarily be an inspector/auditor.
    - Sending pictures/videos instantly during the interviews. The files shall include information on the time and geo-reference for the location, or this information shall be available by other means.

- The inspection/audit report shall contain details about the different means (tools) used during the inspection/audit to demonstrate the proper implementation of this procedure.

- The CB shall inform the producer or group when, how, why, and of what to make recordings, pictures, or video footage and which will be saved as evidence, why, and for how long will they be stored. The producer or group shall agree and, if applicable, give consent and send/submit/transmit the evidence to the CB within the agreed timeframe.