GLOBALG.A.P. CERTIFICATION GUIDELINE

Integrated Farm Assurance (IFA): Scope: Crops Base

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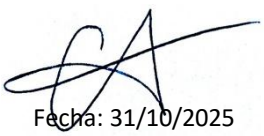
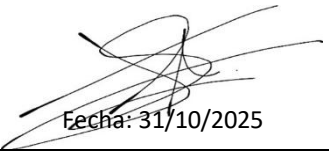
Technical Department  Fecha: 31/10/2025	Operations Manager Agro  Fecha: 31/10/2025	Quality Manager  Fecha: 31/10/2025	26
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1. GLOBALG.A.P. CERTIFICATION SYSTEM BY ACERTA

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

The scope plants of IFA standard covers:

- The certification of the whole production process of the product from before the plant is in the ground to the unprocessed product. No processing or manufacturing is covered.
- 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 under more than one option (as individual producer and member of a producer group)
- May register different products with different Certification Bodies and/or different certification options.
- May not register Production Sites or group members in different countries (The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat may grant exceptions on a case-by-case basis).
- May register the same or different product under different standards (version 6 Smart and version 6 GFS).

a) New Applicant

When a new applicant contacts ACERTA in order to get information of the certification in accordance with the Integrated Farm Assurance (IFA)-GLOBALG.A.P. Programme, Scope: Plants, 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 ACERTA quotation signed by the applicant must include the duration of the audit performed (days) and its justification.
This should include the different parts of the audit performed by ACERTA to consider (e.g., QMS, produce handling unit of product 1, produce handling unit of product 2, producer 1, producer 2, site 1, site 2), daily subsistence costs and travelling time to and between members/sites. Also included application procedure, management of the information in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT Systems, issueing of the "report", uploading audit reports in GLOBALG.A.P. Audit Online Hub (AOH), technical review and decision making, 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 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 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. In addition, this document will include:
  - ***"GLOBALG.A.P. Sublicence Agreement".*** Contract between the Certification Body (CB) and the producer. Sets legal framework in order to be granted the GLOBALG.A.P. Certification.
  - ***"Certification Guideline",*** document where the activities included in the certification process are detailed.
  - "***GLOBALGAP User Guidelines of trademark":*** document where the rules for use of GLOBALG.A.P. trademark and logo are detailed.

In addition, if applicable:

- ***"Declaration for Options 1"*** *(in case of Cooperative societies - Options 1 individual producer)*
- ***"Declaration of harvest exclusion":*** document signed by the applicant (internal ACERTA format or applicant's own document will be accepted) where it is declared that the product ceases to belong to the producer prior to harvesting starts and specifies that the buyer/harvester will be responsible for all the following:
    - Take ownership of the product before harvesting
    - Take responsibility for ensuring that harvest takes place only after the preharvest interval has been expired
    - Handle the product after harvest (not just during harvest)
    - Buy all the product (harvest exclusion is not possible if the producer harvests some part of the product 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 harvester/buyer about the preharvest interval
    - A contract with the buyer, as soon as the harvester/buyer has been identified.

    If harvesting is excluded for a product, product handling shall also be excluded for that product.

If ACERTA receives a notification that a 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) Manteinance of certification: Subsequent audit (Renewal or Re-certification)

Producers with certified products who want to renew their certificate **must re-register annually before the expiry date**.

For this purpose, 4 months before the expiry date, the Technical Departement informs the holder of the certificate (or the relevant office) of the new activities of the certification maintenance to be carried out. For clients managed directly by Head Office, this is done by sending the following documents:

- ***Quotation***
- ***Certification Agreement***
- ***Certification Request Form***
    - ***GLOBALG.A.P. Sublicence Agreement***
    - ***Certification Guideline***
    - ***GLOBALGAP User Guidelines of trademark***

Additionally, if applicable:

- ***Declaration for Options I***
- ***Declaration of harvest exclusion***

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 Aplicant certification request:

- The Technical Department reviews the **"Certification Request Form"** sent by the client, including the entire scope.
- A folder is also opened in local server for each applicant, appropriately identified with its corresponding code in order to file and keep the records.

    - Once the ***"Certification Request Form***" is reviewed, ACERTA will register the producer/Producer Group (including all members) in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT Systems. Within a period not exceeding 28 calendar days, ACERTA will confirm receipt of the request form and inform the applicant of its assigned GLOBALG.A.P. identification number.
    - If a producer has GLN, this number shall be reported to ACERTA for the replacement of GGN by GLN in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems.

- ACERTA, assign a registration number for each producer/producer groups (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 members of a producer group (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 – 01

- 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.00344-24/001

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 with ACERTA and it shall be communicated to the Secretary of GLOBALG.A.P. for the application of the pertinent sanction.

GLOBALG.A.P. registration fees are generated once ACERTA issues the certificate in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems.

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 OWNERSHIP (PO)**
- **HARVESTING EXCLUDED**
- **HANDLING EXCLUDED**
- **HIGH RISK CROPS/HIGH RISK PROCCESS**

a) Certification Options

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.

The following options are available for the producers:

I. Option 1 – Individual Certification with only one site

An individual producer (individual legal entity) constituting **a juridical entity** who manages only one Production Site 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 of the fields, 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.
Once certification is obtained, the individual producer will be the certificate holder.

II. Option 1 – Producer with Multiple Production Sites (Multisite Producer) without implementation of a QMS

An individual producer (individual legal entity) constituting **a juridical 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 individual producer / organization will be the certificate holder once certified.

III. Option 1 – Producer with Multiple Production Sites (Multisite Producer) with implementation of a QMS

An individual producer (individual legal entity) constituting **a juridical entity** who owns several production sites (locations) that do not function as separate legal entities, and where a QMS has been implemented.

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

The applicant is responsible for ensuring that all production sites under the scope of certification always comply with the requirements of such certification.

The legal entity / producer will be the certificate holder once certified.

IV. Option 2 – Group Certification

Group of producers that that operate as separate legal entities, searching for group certification in accordance with GLOBALG.A.P. (Option 2). The group, as a legal entity, will be the certificate holder once certified

The group must have an implemented QMS and comply with the rules of "GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulations – Rules for Producer Groups and Multisite Producers with QMS".

The members of the group are legally responsible for their production sites (whether owned or rented) and for the production of their products, even if this takes place under the common QMS of the group. The producer can only sell his products as certified through the producer 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 requirements applicable to the QMS shall also be audited.

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

b) Crop System

The scope of the inspection of producers or producer groups who process more than one product (species) will be decided on the basis of the crop systems; in this respect the following production systems are differentiated for the plant scope:

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) Parallel Ownership Declaration:

Parallel Ownership is a situation where individual producers, producer members or producer groups are owners of the same product partly as certified and partly as non-certified under GLOBALG.A.P. This can occur if they produce or buy non-certified products of the same product they produce and have registered for certification.

If not all members of a producer group producing a product that is registered for certification are included in the scope of the certificate, Parallel Ownership also applies.

The following cases are not considered Parallel Ownership:

- An individual producer produces one product as certified and another product as non-certified (e.g.: apples certified and pears non-certified).
- An individual 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)

Any applicant owning certified and non-certified products (of the same product) at any time shall inform ACERTA for registration in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems for parallel ownership, and ACERTA shall inspect the corresponding traceability and segregation system. If the registration of parallel ownership is made during the validity of the certificate, an extraordinary audit must be carried out to check the applicable control points and update the information in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database. This extraordinary audit can not 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.

Producer groups shall also include a clear identification of their producer members who buy/produce non-certified products of the same products included in the scope of certification.

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

Certified and non-certified products may be handled within the same product handling facility.
It is not allowed to produce certified and non-certified products in the same production site.

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

The individual producer/producer group registered for PO shall identify all final ready-to-be-sold products (either from farm level or after product handling) with the individual producer's/producer group's GLOBALG.A.P. identification number if the product is certified. The GLOBALG.A.P. identification number shall not be used to label non-certified products.

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

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

In the plants scope, production of certified and noncertified products in the same production site is not allowed, unless there are distinctive visible differences detectable by the average consumer between the certified and noncertified products (e.g., cherry tomatoes vs. Roma tomatoes).

In the category flowers and ornamentals, the following provisions have to be taken into account for parallel ownership:

- Parallel Ownership is applicable if an individual producer, producer group, or producer group member produces the same species partly as certified and partly as non-certified. It is also applicable if not all the members of a producer group producing a species that is registered for certification are included in the scope of the certificate.
  Example: A producer grows roses, and only a part of the rose production is certified.

- If an individual producer, producer group, or producer group member produces one species as certified and another species as non-certified, this is not considered a case of parallel ownership.
  Example: A producer grows roses as certified and carnations as non-certified

- If an individual producer, producer group, or producer group member buys non-certified products of the same species they grow under certified production, this is considered a case of parallel ownership.
  Example: A producer grows certified roses and buys non-certified roses from one or more other producers.

d) Harvest exclusion

If the product is sold in the field before harvest and the buyer is responsible for harvesting, the harvest-related principles and criteria (P&Cs) can be excluded from the scope of certification.

In any cases where the harvesting process (whether carried out by the producer or subcontractor) takes place while the product belongs to the producer, all P&Cs relating to harvest shall be included in the audit by ACERTA and in the scope of certification.

"Harvest exclusion" applies where the product no longer belongs to the producer prior to harvest commencing and the producer has no control over the harvesting process. The exclusion does not apply if the harvest is simply carried out by a subcontractor commissioned by the producer.

During registration, the producer must submit a contract with the buyer/harvester in which he undertakes that the buyer/harvester:

- Take ownership of the product before harvesting
- Take responsibility for ensuring that harvest takes place only after the preharvest interval has been observed
- Handle the product after harvest (not just during harvest)
- Buy all the product (harvest exclusion is not possible if the producer harvests some part of the product 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 harvester/buyer about the preharvest interval
- A contract with the buyer, as soon as the harvester/buyer has been identified, that includes all issues mentioned before.

If harvesting is excluded for a product, product handling shall also be excluded for that product.

ACERTA may provide the applicant with a generic model contract with the above clauses (GG CROPS Declaration of harvesting excluded) or it may accept the applicant's own contract as long as it contains such clauses.

e) Postharvest Product Handling

Product handling includes any type of postharvest handling of products such as storage, chemical treatment, trimming, washing, or any other handling where harvested product may have physical contact with other materials or substances. Details of the specific processes for each product shall be included in the checklist notes.

Product handling shall always be included in cases where the product belongs to the producer during handling (by the producer or a subcontractor) unless there is written evidence (e.g., contract, agreement) that the producer has no control over the packing/handling/storage/labelling, the product is not returned to the producer, and the producer is no longer responsible for the product.

If a product stays in a collection point in the farm during the day, waiting to be picked up, this is not considered storage. If product is stored overnight or longer, this is considered storage and the relevant requirements apply.

I. Product Handling excluded

Produce Handling will be 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.

II. Product handling included

Produce Handling will be included in the scope, but ACERTA may not inspect handling facilities:

- If the product handling unit (PHU) already has a post-farm gate food safety certification recognized by GFSI for scope BII "Farming of grains and pulses" and/or BIII "Pre-processing handling of vegetable products, nuts and grains" (www.mygfsi.com), the GLOBALG.A.P. approved ACERTA auditor shall audit, as a minimum, segregation and traceability, as well as postharvest treatments, if applicable. In cases of doubt, ACERTA can reaudit all other applicable P&Cs.

- If the PHU is covered by a PHA certificate (e.g., subcontracted PHU), the IFA P&Cs related to product handling are considered covered. There is no need of auditing further traceability or postharvest treatment requirements, and the PHU can be included in the IFA certificate annex.
- If a producer performs product handling not on the farm, but at the PHU of another producer who does have GLOBALG.A.P. certification (including product handling for the same products), ACERTA can accept another CB's certificate, or can decide to perform its own audit of the PHU.

f) High Risk Crops/High Risk Processes

To classify a producer group member/multisite producer with QMS, site or PHU as high risk, ACERTA shall examine a combination of product and process risk factors. If a high-risk product is combined with a high- risk process, the member/site (farm or PHU) shall be classified as high-risk.

High-risk products include fresh herbs, leafy greens, berries and cantaloupe melons. This list may be updated and shall be checked (see marked products as high risk [identified by *HR] in the GLOBALG.A.P. product list)

High-risk processes include:
- Postharvest use of water/ice/steam
- Preharvest and/or harvest activities where water touches the edible part of the product
- Preharvest use of raw organic manure applied less than 60 days before harvest

Example: A producer group consists of 10 producer group members producing lettuce with 2 central PHUs. In the farms there is no use of raw organic manure and there are drip irrigation emitters below a plastic mulch. In the PHUs the lettuce is rinsed before packing. In this case, the producer group member farms are not considered high-risk, but the PHUs are. Therefore, both PHUs will have to be audited on-site every year while in operation.

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.
- The certificate holder is legally responsible for all registered production, including the distribution of the product in the market.

Product Handing Unit (PHU): facilities in which products are handled, and/or packaged, and/or stored.

Options 2 and Options 1 multisite with QMS:

- PHU may be considered central if handling, and/or packaging, and/or storing products from more than one member/site of the multisite producer group/producer group with QMS.
- PHU may be owned by the producer group, or by one or more members of the producer group, or it may be subcontracted.

Field (cultivation homogeneus unit), plot, orchard or greenhouse: separate units of land within a production site that together make up the production unit.

1.2.5. Request Form evaluation and Working Order

The Operation Manager, GLOBALG.A.P. Scheme Manager or an approved auditor / auditor of the farm designed by ACERTA will draw up a working programme by using the SIG from the review made to the ***Certification Request Form***. 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 ***Job Order***.

1.3. Previous visit

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

Initially, the audit team chosen to carry out the work agrees the date of the visit by telephone with the interested party. Likewise, the ***audit plan*** is sent to the applicant confirming the date on which the audit is to be carried out and providing information on the activities to be carried out and the people who will participate. Simultaneously, the auditor sends a copy to the Technical Department, which is responsible for registering it 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 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 regarding 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 / auditor of the farm designated has received the ***Job order***, the audit date will be agreed with the applicant (by telephone, email…).

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 and for each standard covered by the general GLOBALG.A.P. regulation (IFA v6 Smart and IFA v6 GFS).

In those cases, ACERTA shall not inform the producer / producers group of the visit in advance for IFA v6 GFS audits. In the case of IFA v6 Smart audits, ACERTA's notification of the unannounced audit shall not exceed 48 hours (two working days).

In the exceptional case where it is impossible for the producer to accept the proposed date (for medical or other justifiable reasons), the producer will receive one more chance to be informed of an unannounced audit. There shall be objective evidence of the justification available (e.g., medical document).

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

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

The applicant is aware that only the auditors identified in the Audit Plan 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. For unannounced IFA v6 GFS audits, the auditor will send an email to ACERTA's Technical Department after the completion of the initial meeting, and the Technical Department will send an email to the auditee informing that the personnel identified in the email can perform the audit.

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

If the day of the audit, the auditor / auditor of the farm 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 by phone or email and under the criteria specified in *Chapter 2 Inspection methodology of Control Programme*.

Once the scope of the inspection and duration of the audit have been definitely set (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 performance of the audit including travel cost, registration fees established by GLOBALG.A.P., review of the report and issuance of the certificate, if applicable, will be charged to the customer.

1.4.1. Audit development

The certification/recertification 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.

In the case of a multi-site producer Option 1 without QMS, before the certificate can be issued, all production sites where the products registered for certification are produced must be audited, the result must be combined in a single checklist including all registered sites and summarising the result for the whole legal entity (producer).

In the case of an Option 1 multisite producer with QMS or in the case of a producer group, one checklist shall be filled in for the QMS and per sampled member/site/PHU. In this case, the result is not summarized but reported separately for each member/site, PHU, and the QMS. The result (including date and duration or start time – end time) for each member/site needs to be confirmed by the member/site/PHU responsible (by signing the checklist or the list of findings, including date and duration or start time – end time).

In either case, at the end of the full audit process conducted by ACERTA, ACERTA shall produce a full written report summarising the audit activity carried out, providing objective evidence and information on how the producer complies with the requirements of the standard and, where appropriate, listing the non-compliances and/or non-conformities identified.

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

Compliance is indicated with a "Yes" (for compliant), "No" (for not compliant), and "N/A" (for not applicable). P&Cs that are indicated as "No N/A" shall not be answered as "not applicable." In exceptions in which the P&Cs are not applicable, the answer shall be given as "Yes" with a clear justification.

Comments shall be recorded according to the guideline for audit methodology, when available, to enable the audit trail to be reviewed after the event. The comments shall include details of evidence checked during the ACERTA audit. If there is no guideline for audit methodology published for a given scope or standard, it is obligatory to provide comments for all the complied, non-compliant, and not applicable Major Musts and QMS P&Cs, as well as for all non-compliant and not applicable Minor Must P&Cs audited in all ACERTA audits. This is applicable for ACERTA audits and internal audits. In case of self-assessments (Option 1 without QMS) it is obligatory to provide comments for all the non-compliant, and not applicable Major Musts and Minor Musts only. Comments and evidence, such as which document(s) were sampled, which workers were interviewed, etc., shall be site- and product-specific and included in the checklist to ensure that all the P&Cs have been properly audited for all applicable sites and products.

The ACERTA audit report shall contain the following:

- All data fields marked as required in the Audit Online Hub (previous inspection notes).
- Scope of the ACERTA's audit: company, site, PHU, and product information according to the GLOBALG.A.P. registration data requirements.
- Calculation of the total applicable Major Must, Minor Must, and Recommendation P&Cs and the % of compliance achieved for each level
- List of non-compliances, non-conformances, and follow-up actions agreed with the producer (includes the relevant P&Cs, the finding details based on objective evidence, the deadline for corrective action, a description of the corrective action agreed with the producer, reference to objective evidence of implementation of the corrective action, the evaluation results of the corrective action (open/closed), and the relevant dates of these actions).
- Conclusion of whether the producer is compliant.
- Reviewer(s) name / person who takes certification decision registered in the GG PLANTS Technical Review and Certification Decision document.
- Stage of the ACERTA audit report, i.e., preliminary or final

Where available, ACERTA shall use the audit report template issued by the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems.

Copies of the ACERTA's audit report, the objective evidence of implementation of the corrective actions, and/or the fully completed audit checklist shall be provided to the regulatory authorities when requested, as per applicable national legislation. They shall also be provided by default to the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat and on request to the accreditation body. Any additional release shall only be provided if the producer allows access by written authorization.

The ACERTA's reports (e.g., ACERTA audit report, corrective action report), the audit checklist (completed and distributed externally) and all documentation related to the audit shall be write-protected against editing on ACERTA's server to which only authorized personnel have access.

The fully completed audit checklist shall include all applicable P&Cs, requested comments, findings, and the objective evidence of implementation of the corrections and/or corrective action.

Where the country of destination (as registered in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems) includes the USA and/or Canada, ACERTA shall provide the final ACERTA audit report including the completed audit checklist to the producer, at the latest by the time of the certification decision.

Additionally, if any producer requests it, ACERTA shall provide the full audit report including the completed audit checklist, within five working days after certification decision. It is not obligatory for ACERTA to send out a report before it went through internal technical review. If the automatically generated ACERTA audit report (including the checklist) is available from the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems, this report shall be used.

When the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat requires it, ACERTA's audit report and the completed audit checklist shall be uploaded/transferred into the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems.

ACERTA have a process in place to address situations where translations of the reports are requested (See QMS Report Translation Procedure)

The **initial inspection** shall cover the full scope, 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 to verify as many P&Cs as possible.
The applicant shall have records from the registration date onward or for at least three months before the initial ACERTA audit takes place, whichever is longer.

If the ACERTA Audit takes place before harvest, it will not be possible to audit certain P&Cs. As a result, a follow-up ACERTA audit shall be required. No certificate shall be issued until all applicable P&Cs have been audited and all non-conformances have been closed.

If ACERTA's audit takes place after harvest, the producer shall retain evidence of compliance with P&Cs related to that harvest; otherwise, it may be impossible to audit those P&Cs, and certification shall not be possible until the following harvest. Records that relate to harvest or product handling before the producer has registered with GLOBALG.A.P. are not valid, so products harvested before registration with GLOBALG.A.P. cannot be certified.

If harvest is excluded, the CB audit shall be conducted at a time when relevant agronomic activities are being carried out.

The producer may seek certification for more than one product, and the products may not all have the same seasonal timing (that is, the harvest of one product does not necessarily coincide with the harvest of other products). The requirements above apply to product groupings based on similarities in production and harvest processes and their risks. ACERTA shall audit all applicable P&Cs for each product in these groupings before the product(s) can be added to the certificate. An on-site ACERTA audit of the harvest and product handling processes is obligatory for at least one product in each product grouping (see point 1.4.3.).

The subsequent inspection (renewal or recertification) 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 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. The entire scope of certification shall be audited annually by ACERTA prior to issuing the certificate. This also applies if a producer changes CBs.
Subsequent ACERTA audits can be carried out at any time during an audit window that extends over a period of eight months: from four months before the original expiry date of the certificate, and (only if ACERTA extends the certificate validity in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems) up to four months after the original expiry date of the certificate. There shall be a minimum period of six months between two recertification audits. No ACERTA audit can take place until the producer has been re-registered in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems. Re-registration shall be finalized before the date of the subsequent ACERTA audit.

- 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**. This exception is only applicable for Option 1 producers without QMS.

- If produce handling is excluded from the certification scope, inspection must 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 must be inspected. Crop groupings are based on similarities in production and harvest processes and their risks. (See section 1.4.3.)

a) THREE-YEAR CYCLE

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

- First ACERTA audit (for version 6): all requirements included in the applicable checklists (for QMS and farm audits)
- Subsequent ACERTA audit (year 2): operational items as identified in the applicable checklists (for QMS and farm audits)
- Subsequent ACERTA audit (year 3): operational items as identified in the applicable checklists (for QMS and farm audits)
- Recertification audit: all requirements included in the applicable checklists (for QMS and farm audits), same as initial ACERTA audit.

b) OFF SITE / ON SITE STAGE

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

- Off-site stage: The off-site stage shall be conducted no more than four weeks (28 days) before the on- site stage. It shall consist of a desk review of documentation sent by the producer to ACERTA before the on-site stage. ACERTA shall schedule a date as deadline for the producer to submit the documents to be evaluated off-site. That date shall also trigger the period of four weeks to conduct the on-site stage.
  Documentation that ACERTA's auditor can audit off-site includes e.g. self-assessment, risk assessments, procedures required in various P&C, testing programmes (frequency, parameters, locations), test reports, licenses, list of plant protection products used, evidence of laboratory accreditation, certificates or reports of subcontracted activity evaluations, plant protection product/fertiliser application records. The documentation can be supported by interviews and a remote audit of the facilities by ACERTA.
  The off-site stage should be recorded in the audit checklist, with sufficient comments for the specific P&Cs. Comments should be provided for all P&C of Major Obligations and for all P&C of Minor Obligations not fulfilled or not applicable, unless otherwise stated in the audit methodology guide (if available).

- On-site stage: the on-site stage shall be conducted after the off-site stage and consists of an on-site ACERTA audit of the remaining content of the checklist, the production process, the registered sites/PHUs, and the verification of the information already reviewed off-site. The on-site stage shall include, at least, the inspection of good agricultural practices and food safety- related requirements to determine compliance.

Date, time, and duration of the off-site and on-site stages of each ACERTA audit shall be confirmed by email by the producer and ACERTA.

If non-conformances are found during the entire audit process (off-site and on-site stages together), the countdown to the deadline for closing them begins with the on-site final closing meeting, when the audit result is signed or specifically confirmed by email by the producer.

This system does not reduce the overall audit duration but allows more efficient use of time on-site. The duration of the on-site stage shall never be shorter than two hours.

In accordance with information security and data protection measures and regulations, the Producer and ACERTA must mutually agree on the use of the platform for the performance of the audit by ACERTA prior to the start of the audit.
Explain to the producer which documents, activities, facilities are expected to be audited via video streaming (real time) and which will be evaluated based on records/recorded information. If applicable, ACERTA shall additionally inform the producer which people need to be interviewed. Test the TIC platform compatibility between ACERTA and the producer conducting a trial meeting. Encourage and consider the use of webcams, cameras, etc. if physical evaluation of an event is desired or necessary. Video and/or audio recording, screenshots, and storage of evidence shall also be mutually agreed upon. ACERTA shall keep records of the agreement. If no evidence of agreement is available, TIC shall not be used for the off-site stage.

If the use of TIC is impossible due to technical restraints (e.g., no phone or internet connection on the farm), the off-site stage is limited to document or record review.

The feasibility of ACERTA audit shall be determined to provide confidence that audit objectives can be achieved. Examples of criteria that can make producers eligible for an audit using TIC:

- An acceptable period for performing the off-site stage.
- The producer's ability to designate one or more representatives who can communicate in the same language as the ACERTA auditor and of using the agreed platform.
- The ACERTA's capability and aptitude to conduct the off-site stage in the chosen medium/forum.
- The availability of a list of activities, areas, information, and personnel to be involved in the off-site stage.

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

The off-site stage shall be conducted in the same way as the on-site stage as per the GLOBALG.AP. GR (e.g., opening meeting, clarification of findings, non-conformances).

The start time, the end time, and the participants of the off-site stage 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".

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

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

The ACERTA audit may be continued later only if ACERTA and the producer both agree to this. The continuation of the off-site stage shall follow the planning as described above. This shall be confirmed during the opening meeting.

The following means (tools) of verification may be used:

- Interview with the individual producer or producer group representative. Worker interviews may be conducted by phone or video call.
- Video call in which the individual producer or producer group representative shows records.
- Video call in which the individual producer or producer group representative streams video of the site/facility to the ACERTA auditor. However, all the observed evidence shall be recorded in the checklist. Video streaming of the site/facility may be done by the individual producer or producer group representative or by an assigned person ACERTA chooses, who need not necessarily be an 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 ACERTA audit report shall contain details about the different means (tools) used during the audit in order to demonstrate the proper implementation of this procedure.
- ACERTA shall inform the producer when, how, why, and of what to make recordings or take pictures or video footage. ACERTA shall also indicate which of these will be saved as evidence, why, and for how long they will be stored. The producer shall agree and, if applicable, give consent and send/submit/transmit the evidence to ACERTA within the agreed timeframe.

1.4.2. **Documents**

The auditor / farm auditor shall use the audit reports provided on GLOBALG.A.P.'s Audit Online Hub, which shall include all applicable P&Cs, audit findings and corrective action plan.

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

In addition, a copy of non-compliance detected 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 registered production process for products and accepted for certification for the first time must be **completely assessed** (all applicable control points must be verified) **prior to issuing the certificate**.

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

A new product (initial audit or new product in a subsequent audit) can only be included in the certificate after all applicable items have been evaluated, including harvesting and handling, if applicable.

It is possible to add a new product to an already existing certificate during a Scope extension audit provided all applicable control points for this product are verified.

Based on the similarity of the agronomic processes of the multiple registered crops, ACERTA shall verify all control points of these crop groupings before the product(s) are added to the certificate. Crop groupings are based on similarity in crop system, harvesting processes and associated risks.

In each file, before issuing the corresponding job order, the harvesting method of each crop will be verified, in order to know which crops can be grouped, according to the criteria set out below. The job order will be issued considering crop groupings.

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 products that are not classified as high risk according to the GLOBALG.A.P product list.

3. Manual harvest of products that are classified as high risk according to the GLOBALG.A.P product list.

4. Harvest that involves water or ice.

5. Packing in field (packed in the field in the final consumer packaging).

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).

Ejemplos:

1. ***A farmer has oranges and clementines*** *Both oranges and clementines are collected manually at high risk (group 3) and only for clementines, subsequently water is used during their collection (group 3 and 4).*
   When the harvest of clementines is observed, the activities of the manual harvesting group of high risk products (group 3), and also of the harvesting group where water or ice is used (group 4) will be considered as observed

   This means that, once the clementine harvesting process has been observed, if the oranges have not been observed during the harvest (due to harvest has not started on the day of the audit), they can be included in the certificate verifying (in office or on site) the field notebook with all the treatments and the results / s of the residue analysis before being favorable decision.
   However, if only oranges harvest activity is observed during the visit (group 3), the clementine harvest activity where water is used (group 4) has not been audited and will require a Scope extension inspection during harvesting before being able to include this crop in the certificate.

2. ***A farmer has blackberries and blueberries.*** *Both crops are harvested manually at high risk. Blueberries are not harvested in the consumer's final container (group 3). Blackberries are harvested directly in the consumer packaging (group 3 and 5).*

   When the harvest of blackberries is observed, it will be considered that the activities of the manual harvest group of high risk products (group 3), and also of the field packaging harvest group (group 5), have been observed.
   This means that, once the process of blackberry harvesting has been observed, if the blueberries have not been observed during the harvest (due to harvest has not started on the day of the audit), they can be included in the certificate verifying (in office or on-site) the field notebook with all the treatments and the results / s of the residue analysis before being favourable decision.
   However, if only blueberry harvest activity is observed during the visit (group 3), the blackberry harvest activity directly in the final consumer container (group 5) has not been audited and will require a Scope extension inspection during the harvest of this before being able to include this crop in the certificate.

This crop grouping above can be applied to certify multiple crops always that these crops are in the same crop system:

a) Open field crops (fruits, vegetables and herb products)
b) Protected / covered crops (in a greenhouse).
c) Perennial crops (tree crops)

If some crop or group of crops can not be evaluated in harvesting during the main audit, a **Scope extension audit** will be undertaken once harvest period has started.

b) Renewal crops

In the subsequent years, the certificate issued after the favorable decision of the renewal audit, will include all the renewal crops although all these crops were not inspected during harvest.

Multiple consecutive crops: During the inspection, the production process of all crops included in the certification scope shall be assessed on farm via site visits, interviews with the producer and workers, review of documents, records etc. The producer shall keep evidence of compliance with the applicable control points for all registered crops.
In the years during which there is no requirement to carry out the inspection during harvest season and where crops do not have the same seasonal timing, ACERTA shall select a date where relevant agronomic activities can be seen on farm for at least one of the products in one site.

1.4.4. Audit results

a) 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

For multisite producers without a QMS, the compliance level is calculated for the entire legal entity in one checklist. Any applicable P&Cs common to all sites needs to be considered for all sites.

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** (in case of Option 2 / Option 1 without QMS)**.**

Minor Must Non-Conformances:

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

Recommendations: no minimum percentage of compliance is required.

Estructural 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 ACERTA and the producer related to GLOBALG.A.P. issues.

The producer shall comply with the agreements signed (GLOBALG.A.P. sublicense and certification agreement and ACERTA service agreement in their current version).

The producer shall comply with the requirements defined in the applicable GLOBALG.A.P. GR in their current version.

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 CA plan will be:

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

The audited company shall send a proposal for corrective actions including a description of the measures to be taken to remedy the non-conformity, the expected timeframe for implementation and the person responsible, as well as evidence of implementation. To this end, the company has a period to close the CA Plan:

(i) For initial audits and scope extension of new crops:

☛ 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.

☛ If the cause of the non-conformity is not resolved within three (3) months, a full re-audit must be carried out before the certificate can be issued (the product does not need to be in harvest).

(ii) For Subsequent (Renewal) Inspections:

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

☛ If **28 calendar days have passed after the initial audit** before corrective evidence is not provided, a suspension of the certificate shall be imposed by ACERTA within 24 hours.

If the non-conformity relates to a **Major, contractual or General Requirements Obligation**, the period allowed for closure - before suspension is applied - will be decided between the visiting audit team and the Operations Manager or Scheme Manager. The period granted to the producer to remedy non-conformities shall not exceed 28 days and depending on the seriousness in terms of food

safety, worker, environmental and consumer safety may be less, with no period being granted where there is a serious threat to food safety, worker, environmental and consumer safety (in which case an immediate suspension shall be applied). This decision shall be communicated by means of an official 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-compliances result in a non-conformity, once all the non-conformities have been closed, the auditor must send all the documentation to the Technical Department in electronic format the Audit Report, which will contain the CA Plan, evidence of implementation provided by the company and the auditor's final assessment.

When assessing the corrective actions, the adequacy of the measures taken to solve the non-conformances, its implementation stage and its effectiveness will be taken into account. 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 / farm auditor within **7 calendar days after inspection date**.

From the conclusions obtained from the assessment of the corrective action proposals provided by the applicant, the auditor / farm auditor makes the corrective action assessment report where each corrective action has been reviewed by the auditor / farm auditor, the final result of compliance level and the advice about the certification (or not certification) is stated.

The auditor in charge of the file is the responsible for giving the Technical Department all the appropriate documentation, in electronic format Audit Report, which will contain the CA Plan including the corresponding evidence if the producer decides to propose corrective actions, and the auditor's final assessment.

The maximum date for the technical review and final decision, if there are no non-compliances or these do not represent a non-conformity, is 28 calendar days from the end of the audit.

1.5. Certification decision

All reports made will be filed in the corresponding file folder in electronic format, being the responsibility of the Technical Department..

In order the certification decision to be taken, the responsible person, in accordance with the decision-making structure detailed in the document "QMS Performance Evaluation Procedure", will take into account the levels of compliance described by GLOBALG.A.P.

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

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

The certification decision shall not be delayed more than **28 calendar days** after the CA Plan has been closed or 28 calendar days in the event that the non-compliances detected do not involve a Non-conformance.

1.5.1. Level of compliance

In order the **decision to be favourable** to **the certification awarding/ maintenance**, the following requirements shall be met:

- **100% of "MAJOR Musts" control points** is met.
- At least **95%** of **"MINOR Musts" control points** is met
- **100% of QMS control points (Option 2 / Option 1 with QMS) is met.**
- **Recommendations:** No minimum percentage of compliance required

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

1.6. Notification of certification decision and Certificate

1.6.1. Favorable decision

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

The Technical Department, through GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems, will issue the ***Certificate of Conformity and the Technical Annex*** to the holder, once the payment of the corresponding invoice 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.
Subsequent certifications: The initial date of validity 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 the certificate has been expired for longer than 12 months, ACERTA shall apply the rules for initial audit.

The following certificate validity shall be calculated by extracting the duration of the extension period from the normal 12 months validity.

a) Other considerations

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

1.6.2. Unfavorable decision

The certification decision will be unfavourable when any of the conditions are not met. In each case, the corresponding sanction will be applied.

The producer may choose to communicate his disagreement **within 1 month** after receiving the notification.

If the applicant did not agree with the decision, ACERTA makes a complaints and appeals form available to its customers on its website. Once this is received at ACERTA, duly completed, it starts the appeals procedure described in the quality document QMS Complaints, Claims and Appeals Procedure.

1.6.3. Sanctions

Three types of sanctions exist: **Warning**, **Suspension** and **Cancellation**.

- If non-conformance is detected, to a producer, at the QMS level or at the member/site level, ACERTA shall apply a sanction (warning, suspension or cancellation).
- Producers / producer group cannot change CB until the non-conformance that led to the respective sanction is satisfactorily closed.

- Only ACERTA 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 (non-conformance with the P&C, the GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations or contractual requirements).

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

The period for solving the non-conformances is stablished in the point "1.4.5.- Timing".

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 non conformity.

If the cause of warning is not solved in the stablished period, the producer will be sanctioned with a suspension withing a 24-hour period.

b) Suspension

ACERTA 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 (species) must be suspended.

Suspension can issue for certain products (species) or for all product (species)s of the certified product scope.

Only ACERTA can lift the suspensions it has imposed.

An immediate suspension should be issued when a serious threat to food safety, the safety of workers, the environment, consumers and/or product integrity (e.g., sale of non-certified products as if they were certified) is established.

If a reputable government regulatory authority has established a clear link between a member/site and a foodborne outbreak, suspension of the certificate shall be imposed by ACERTA while a review of the producer's/producer group's certification is conducted.
If a certificate holder has been found by a court of law to have infringed a national or international law and these actions can endanger the reputation and credibility of FoodPLUS GmbH and/or the GLOBALG.A.P. standard, ACERTA shall suspend the certificate with immediate effect. If ACERTA fails to do so, the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat has the right to inform the accreditation body and to change the status of the certificate in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems to not display it as valid. In this case, ACERTA shall accept liability for this issue.

After the suspension has been applied, the period for resolution will be set. This period will normally be one month, but ACERTA reserves the right to reduce or extend this period depending on the seriousness of the cause of the suspension but will never exceed 12 months.

During the **period of suspension**, the certificate holder is prohibited from using the GLOBALG.A.P. logos/trademarks, license/certificate, or any other type of claim that is in any way linked to GLOBALG.A.P. in relation to the suspended product.

ACERTA **shall lift the suspension**, 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.

The suspension remains if ACERTA does not lift it or impose a cancellation.

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.

c) Self-declared product suspensión:

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 can occur if the certificate holder has trouble complying with the relevant GLOBALG.A.P. standard and needs time to close any non-conformances.

This suspension will not delay the renewal date, and neither will it allow the certificate holder to avoid paying the 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.

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

d) Cancellation

A cancellation of the contract shall be issued if one or more of the following apply:

a) ACERTA finds evidence of fraud and/or lack of trust to comply with GLOBALG.A.P. requirements.
b) ACERTA finds objective evidence that indicates that the certificate holder has been misusing the GLOBALG.A.P. claim. Any case of misuse may be communicated to the GLOBALG.A.P. Community Members.
c) A certificate holder cannot show evidence of implementation of effective corrective actions before the suspension period set by ACERTA 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** (on all products and members/sites) of the use of the any logo/trademark, license/certificate, or any device or document that could relate to GLOBALG.A.P.

The certificate holders that 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., maximum residue limit exceedance, microbial contamination) about a GLOBALG.A.P. certificate holder that could have a potential impact on the certification status/claim being transmitted to the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat, it is the responsibility of the certificate holder and the corresponding CB to refute the claim by verifying and providing evidence of compliance with the relevant GLOBALG.A.P. standard.

ACERTA may conduct additional announced or unannounced CB audits or on-site visits to investigate complaints.

ACERTA shall report the findings and actions taken to the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat within the defined period of time.

If the certificate holder and ACERTA do not provide the requested evidence of compliance within the period defined by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat, they will be sanctioned according to the sanctioning procedures described in the GLOBALG.A.P. GR.

If the evidence includes laboratory analyses, accredited laboratories (ISO/IEC 17025) and independent sampling (according to the rules as set out in the relevant P&Cs) shall be used.

If the certificate holder or a producer group member is facing a complaint regarding food safety (i.e., potentially involved in a foodborne outbreak), workers' well-being, environmental protection, or animal welfare, or is involved in a court trial or has been found by a court of law to have infringed a national or international law, and these actions can endanger the reputation and credibility of FoodPLUS GmbH and/or the GLOBALG.A.P. standard, the certificate holder shall inform ACERTA within 24 hours.

1.7. Scope Extension Inspections

It is a type of audit that is performed with the objective of adding a crop that has not been inspected in any previous audit (initial inspection or new crop), according to section 1.4.3. a.

When a 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 1.8 Registration of additional producers/Production Sites, and it will be decided if a Scope extension audit is needed.

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

1.8. Registration of additional Members/Production Sites to the certificate

- **Options 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 an approved auditor for the scope.

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 2.2. 2.- Initial Inspection (Certification) / Subsequent Inspection (Renewal or re-certification) (announced audit)), **the location of the new farm, etc.**

- **Options 2 y Options 1 Multisite with QMS:**

New sites and members may be added to a valid certificate (provided internal approval procedures are met). It is the responsibility of the certificate holder to immediately update ACERTA on any addition or withdrawal of members/sites to/from the list of approved members/sites.

Up to 10% of new members/sites in one year can be added to the approved list by registering the members or sites without necessarily resorting to further verification by ACERTA.

If the number of approved members/sites increases by more than 10% in one-year, further ACERTA farm audits of the newly added members/sites and an audit of at least the relevant part of the QMS will be required before additional members/sites can be added to the certificate. The relevant part of the QMS is the internal approval procedure: internal farm audit, review of the internal farm audit report, inclusion of the new member/site in the QMS internal register with status “approved.”

Regardless of the percentage by which the number of approved members/sites increases in one year, should the newly registered farms increase the production area of previously registered products by more than 10% in one year, or a change in members/sites exceeds 10%, further ACERTA audits of the newly added members/sites and an ACERTA audit of at least the relevant part of the QMS is required before additional members/sites can be added to the certificate.

The minimum sample of members/sites to be audited by ACERTA is the square root of the number of new members/sites.

Regardless of the number of members/sites and the increase in quantity, if a new product is to be added to the certificate between surveillance ACERTA audits and certification audits, an audit shall be carried out to the square root of the members/sites growing the new product.

Individual producer group members of a producer group are not allowed to leave the group and register with another group (for the same products already registered) if there is any pending sanction on the producer group member issued by the producer group or are any issues relevant to the producer group member raised by ACERTA.

1.9. Certificate validity extension

The validity of the certificate may be extended beyond the usual 12 months for a maximum period of 4 months. If the certificate has expired, it cannot be extended any more.
ACERTA shall have the necessary registration documents for the next certification before an extension is granted (signed certification agreement and sublicense agreement and completed request form).
ACERTA shall have written confirmation by the producer for the extension and clearly communicate that this action means that the CB cannot be changed for the upcoming certificate.
If an extension is given, the full GLOBALG.A.P. system participation fee shall be paid for the next certificate.
The producer group/multisite producer shall be reaudited during that extension period. The producer group/multisite producer cannot change CBs for the certificate subsequent to the one for which the extension was granted.
The following certificate validity shall be calculated by extracting the duration of the extension period from the normal 12 months validity.

If the certificate has been expired for longer than 12 months, ACERTA shall apply the rules for initial audit.

The V6 GFS certificate validity may be extended beyond the usual 12 months for a maximum period of 4 months following the same rules as for a V6 Smart certificate, but only if there is a valid reason, which shall be recorded. The following are the only reasons that are considered valid:

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

1.10. Transfer between Certification Bodies

Transfer between Certification Bodies takes place when a producer registered in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database changes from Certification Body to ACERTA.

The transfer of producers between CBs can take place when a producer's certificate has expired and also if there is no binding service contract between the producer and the outgoing CB. The outgoing CB may shorten the validity of the issued certificate to facilitate transfer but always in agreement with the producer and in coordination with the accepting CB in order to avoid gaps in certification.

Only producers found in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems and that are not sanctioned will be accepted by ACERTA. Producers 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 and Certification Agreement.

If the signing of the GLOBALG.A.P. sublicense and certification agreement and the CB audit date are after the outgoing CB's certificate expiry date, there will be a period when the producer does not have a valid certificate. In this case, the audit performed by ACERTA Will be considered as **initial** (see section 1.4.3 a) Initial inspections and Crops registered for the first time).

> If, however, the signing of the GLOBALG.A.P. sublicense and certification agreement and perhaps also the CB audit date are before the outgoing CB's certificate expiry date, the certification decision can only take effect as soon as the previous certificate expires. In this case, the Audit performed by ACERTA will be considered as **subsequent (Renewal or Recertification)** (see section 1.4.3 b) renewal crops.

The outgoing CB remains responsible until its certificate expires. The producer may sign a GLOBALG.A.P. sublicense and certification agreement with ACERTA while under contract with the outgoing CB. The GLOBALG.A.P. sublicense and certification agreement is binding for ACERTA only once the outgoing CB has released the producer's unique GLOBALG.A.P. identification number in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems

If, during the validity of the certificate issued by the outgoing CB, the accepting CB detects non-conformances that are not closed after 28 days, the outgoing CB shall be informed about the non-conformances detected so that it can take appropriate follow- up actions.

In the case of a transfer from a producer with a certificate in forced, the registration of products in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems may not be finalized before the audit performed by ACERTA, and the certification decision may not be taken within 28 days following the ACERTA audit/closure of non-conformances. This will occur with the expiration date of the certificate with the outgoing CB.

ACERTA will keep the existing GGN of the transferred producer.

During registration of each new producer, the CB shall request information regarding previous GLOBALG.A.P. identification numbers (as required in the GLOBALG.A.P. registration data requirements). In addition, the Technical Department will perform a search in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems to verify the current status of the producer. ACERTA shall keep the existing GLOBALG.A.P. identification number of the transferred producer This information shall be detailed in the ***Certification Request Form***. Failure to do this will result in a surcharge of the registration of 200 € to individual producer and 700 € of producers group concerned.

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 or as individual producer for the same products already registered. ACERTA will not accept applications from members of groups with pending sanctions or sanctions imposed by the producer group.

1.11. Complaints, Appeals and Litigations

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

1.12. SUMMARY TABLE Information on inspection level

OPTIONS	INTERNAL ASSESSMENT	EXTERNAL EVALUATION: CERT. BODY INITIAL AUDITS (CERTIFICATION) / SUBSEQUENT AUDITS (RENEWAL)
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 and try to see at least 1 (main) crop harvested. ACERTA will a mínimum of 10% of the anual renewals for each standard (10% for v6 Smart with notification which shall not exceed 48 hours/2 working days and 10% v6 GFS without previous notification). ***RESPONSIBLE:*** Farm auditor or QMS auditor ***DOCUMENT TO USE:*** LV complete fulfilling the 3-year cycle (see section 1.4.1. a)
OP 1 MULTISITES (SEVERAL SITES GLOBALG.A.P.) WITHOUT QMS.	NI: all sites and PHUs F: 1/year R: PRODUCER D: COMPLETE	***LEVEL OF INSPECTION:*** All production sites and PHUs and within each production site *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. 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 and try to see at least 1 (main) crop harvested. ACERTA will a mínimum of 10% of the anual renewals for each standard (10% for v6 Smart with notification which shall not exceed 48 hours/2 working days and 10% v6 GFS without previous notification). ***RESPONSIBLE:*** Farm auditor or QMS auditor ***DOCUMENT TO USE:*** LV complete fulfilling the 3-year cycle (see section 1.4.1. a)

OPTIONS		INTERNAL ASSESSMENT	EXTERNAL EVALUATION: CERT. BODY INITIAL AUDITS (CERTIFICATION) / SUBSEQUENT AUDITS (RENEWAL)	EXTERNAL EVALUATION: CERT. BODY FOLLOW-UP PRODUCERS INSPECTIONS
OP 2 - OP 1 MULTISITES (SEVERAL GLOBALG.A.P. P. SITES) WITH QMS Multisite producers and producer groups V6 Smart y/o V6 GFS 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 From 4 months from the expiry of the certificate. ACERTA will audit unannouncely a least 10% of anual renewals for all MS with QMS producers / certificated groups for each standard 10% for v6 Smart with notification which shall not exceed 48 hours/2 working days and 10% v6 GFS without previous notification). ***RESPONSIBLE:*** QMS auditor ***DOCUMENT TO USE:*** VL: QMS (+ PHU)	***NA***
	PRODUCERS / SITES	NI: todos los Productores / sitios F: 1/año R: AUDITOR INTERNO D: LV Completa	***LEVEL OF INSPECTION:*** 1st year √Producers / Production sites (including all crops) Following years: √Producers / Sites minus the number of producers / sites inspected during the previous surveillance inspection, (as long as the reduction requisites are met: NC are not detected during the previous surveillance inspection and structural NC in QMS are not detected). Within each producer, at least the farm with the highest risk. Communication of the selection of members/sites should not exceed 48 hours (2 working days). For v6 GFS, at least 20% of the members/sites selected will be unannounced (without notice) and at least 25% of the members/sites will be selected randomly. For v6 GFS, selection should aim to cover all members/sites over a 10-year period. ***FRECUENCY:*** 1/year (all crops during harvesting in the first year taking into account multiple crops rules). ***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. Following years – from 4 months from the expiry of the certificate. ***RESPONSIBLE:*** Farm auditor or QMS auditor ***DOCUMENT TO USE:*** VL complete fulfilling the 3-year cycle (see section 1.4.1. a) for each member/site	***LEVEL OF INSPECTION:*** 50% √n Sites/producers Within each producer, at least the farm with the highest risk ***FRECUENCY:*** 1/year ***MOMENT:*** During the validity of the certificate. Communication of the selection of members/sites should not exceed 48 hours (2 working days). For v6 GFS, at least 20% of the members/sites selected will be unannounced (without notice). Any time within 30 days between two visits ***RESPONSIBLE:*** Farm auditor or QMS auditor ***DOCUMENT TO USE:*** VL complete fulfilling the 3-year cycle (see section 1.4.1. a) for each member/site
	PHUs	LI: all PHUs F: 1/year R: INTERNAL AUDITOR D: QMS VL + PHU (VL individual if member's own PHU)	***LEVEL OF INSPECTION:*** First year: √ central PHUs while in operation. If the manipulation is carried out in the member's own PHU, this factor must be taken into account in determining the sample of members to be audited. Following years: √central PHUs (The inspection of PHU may be carried out in first or second visit, while in operation) ***FRECUENCY:*** 1/year ***MOMENT:*** After QMS Audit and before of farm audits, while In operation. ***RESPONSIBLE:*** QMS auditor ***DOCUMENT TO USE:*** QMS VL + PHU when is a central PHU. VL individual when is a member's own PHU.	During the initial certification audit, the QMS audit conducted by ACERTA must include the central product handling facilities, if applicable. During subsequent audits performed by ACERTA, ACERTA may decide to look at one or more central product handling centers during the follow-up audit performed by ACERTA, based on risk.

For options 2/ MS with QMS v6 GFS with high-risk crops (see 1.2.3. f) sampling of members/sites and PHU is not allowed, all registered members/sites classified as high risk must be audited before issuing the certificate. In this case, no follow-up audit is required as 100% of the members/sites must be audited during the certification/renewal audit. If there is no sampling (members/sites classified as high risk), ACERTA may decide to conduct all farm audits in one or two visits.