
Regulations — Part 1: General requirements for the certification systems



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Foreword

The African Regional Organisation for Standardisation (ARSO) is an African Intergovernmental organization made of Member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the African Union (AU). One of the fundamental mandates of ARSO is the establishment of a conformity assessment system to promote the quality of African goods and services as a means of facilitating intra-African trade as well as accessing global markets.

The ARSO Conformity Assessment Programme (ACAP) is supported by a coherent set of documents which are developed under the auspices of the ARSO Conformity Assessment Committee (ARSO CACO) which comprises experts from Member States. Member States participate in the committee on a voluntary basis and the documents developed follow the principles and procedures for the development of African Standards outlined in the African Standards Harmonization Model (ASHAM) with the exception of the stages and voting thresholds. Being conformity assessment instruments, ACAP documents are subject to dynamic adaptations which must timeously respond to changes in the conformity assessment fields.

ACAP documents will be revised on a flexible basis to fit in with changes in global conformity assessment systems.

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Introduction

ARSO has developed the African Conformity Assessment Programme (ACAP), to provide confidence to all interested third parties that a product or process fulfils certain specified requirements; to improve the quality and/or safety of goods produced within the ARSO member states by means of dedicated certification schemes and implementing certification of specific recognised Standards, to facilitate trade between African countries and export out of Africa.

The value of certification is the degree of confidence and trust that is established by an impartial and competent demonstration of fulfilment of specified requirements by a third party. Certification of products, processes or services is a means of providing assurance that they comply with specified requirements in standards and other normative documents.

With the term “Quality” is intended a combination of characteristics that will concur to bring added value to the products identified with the ARSO Mark and African Eco-Labeling Mark — ECOMARK Africa (EMA Label), compared to other similar products that are already available on the Market.

Throughout the ACAP documentation the terms "Shall" is used to indicate those provisions which, according to the ACAP, are mandatory.

The following additional verbal forms are used: “should” indicates recommendation; “may” indicates permission; “can” indicates possibility or capability.

Regulations — Part 1: General Requirements for the certification systems

1 Scope

This document describes the general structure of the African Conformity Assessment Programme (ACAP), its governance, functions and organization. It also describes the general rules to be followed by any party seeking to enter in the ACAP.

Details on ACAP, common provisions applicable for all certification schemes included in the ACAP and rules for implementation, verification, certification and maintenance of the ACAP are included. More specific rules for certification schemes implementation, design of African Standards and management of ACAP are specified in the normative documents available for ACAP.

2 Normative documents

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

2.1 Standards

ASHAM P01:2011, *African Standards Harmonization Procedures Manual*

ISO/IEC 17000, *Conformity assessment — Vocabulary and general principles*

ISO/IEC 17007, *Conformity assessment — Guidance for drafting normative documents suitable for use for conformity assessment*

ISO /IEC 17021-1, *Conformity assessment — Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems — Part 1: Requirement*

ISO/IEC 17025, *General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories*

ISO/IEC 17030, *Conformity assessment — General requirements for third-party marks of conformity*

ISO/IEC 17065, *Conformity assessment — Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services*

ISO/IEC 17067, *Conformity assessment — Fundamentals of product certification and guidelines for product certification schemes*

2.2 ACAP Normative Documents

ACAP 1-1:2017, *Regulations — Part 1: General requirements for the certification systems*

ACAP 1-2:2017, *Regulations — Part 2: Special requirements for the certification systems*

ACAP 1-3:2017, *Regulations — Part 3: Requirements for approval of certification bodies*

ACAP 1-4:2017, *Regulations — Part 4: Requirements for approval of testing and calibration laboratories*

ACAP 2:2017, *Sustainable agriculture — Assessment and certification*

ACAP 3:2017, *Sustainable capture fisheries — Assessment and certification*

ACAP 1-1:2017

ACAP 4:2017, *Cosmetology and wellness certification framework*

ACAP 5-1:2017, *Certification scheme for medicinal plant produce — Part 1: General requirements*

ACAP 5-2:2017, *Certification scheme for medicinal plant produce — Part 2: Good collection practices (GCP) for medicinal plant produce*

ACAP 5-3:2017, *Certification scheme for medicinal plant produce — Part 3: Good agricultural practices (GAP) for medicinal plant produce*

ACAP 5-4:2017, *Certification scheme for medicinal plant produce — Part 4: Good manufacturing practices (GMP) for herbal medicines*

ACAP 5-5:2017, *Certification scheme for medicinal plant produce — Part 5: Minimum requirements for registration of traditional medicines*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purpose of this document the terms and definitions in ASHAM P01, ISO 9000 and ISO/IEC 17000 apply.

4 Objectives of the ARSO Conformity Assessment Program

4.1 The objectives for the ACAP

- (a) To provide for an African Certification System for goods and services produced in accordance with African Standards (ARS) issued by ARSO
- (b) To improve the quality, safety and legality of goods and services in Africa
- (c) To facilitate trade amongst African countries and with the outside world;
- (d) To establish a third party assessment program to increase transparency and credibility of the stakeholders on ARSO Certified products
- (e) To provide a forum for collaboration in certification activities in the African region with a view to affording mutual benefits to the participating members of ARSO

4.2 Actions taken by ARSO to achieve the objectives

- (a) Development of a documented system that includes principles, rules, guides and directives for the operation of the African Conformity Assessment Programme;
- (b) Definition of common criteria for the design of African Standards and for the implementation and management of the related certification schemes
- (c) Assurance of application of uniform working methods and procedures in certification, and techniques used in certification by implementation of verification processes;
- (d) Support in establishing and strengthening national capabilities for certification in African countries by providing training and technical support, including promotional and other support services.

5 Document control

- (a) The latest versions of all normative documents can be downloaded free of charge from the website.
- (b) Original documents are in English and French. Once published, the ARSO documents become mandatory for the implementation of the ACAP.

- (c) Changes to documents: Normative documents are identified with a unique document code and a version number and date.
- (d) Updates can be made independently in the different documents, but a version change affects all normative documents.
- (e) Communication on updates is sent to all ARSO approved assessment Bodies. It is the responsibility of the Certification Bodies to keep their clients informed on relevant updates.
- (f) A summary of changes is indicated in the documents in case of changes done within the same version of the ARSO documentation.

6 Structure of African Conformity Assessment Programme

The general structure of the ACAP is summarized in Figure 1

6.1 Advisory Board

This will be the advisory body of the ACAP, which provides strategic advice on the development and operations of ACAP within the context of the African Standards Harmonization Model (ASHAM).

6.2 ARSO Central Secretariat

Among the broad responsibilities of the ARSO Central Secretariat in relation to the ACAP, the following is included:

- (a) Provide governance for the design, implementation and maintenance of ACAP, including the Programme's Database
- (b) Provide input into the deliberations of the TMC in establishing priority areas for standardization programs
- (c) Maintain THC procedures and assist THCs in their standards development programs
- (d) Provide support to the THCs in the management of standards harmonization projects;
- (e) Receive from the responsible THC, Subcommittees (SC) and Working Groups (WG) the results of systematic reviews of already approved African Standards, and notifying the TMC of the results
- (f) Arrange for public review of African Standards prior to the approval by the TMC and ARSO Council
- (g) Facilitate the liaison of regional standardization, metrology and conformity assessment activities
- (h) Publicize and promote the African Conformity Assessment Programme
- (i) Manage appeals and complaints within the ACAP.

6.3 Technical Management Committee (TMC)

The Committee is established by the ARSO Council for the purpose of approving harmonized African Standards and standards-related documents.

The TMC is responsible for the overall management of the technical work and in particular for:

- (a) Establishment of technical sub-committees;
- (b) Appointment of chairs of technical sub-committees;

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- (c) Allocation of priorities, approval of titles, scopes and programmes of work of technical sub-committees
- (d) Ratification of the establishment and dissolution of subcommittees;
- (e) Coordination of the technical work, monitoring the progress of the technical work, review the need for, and planning of, work in new fields of technology"

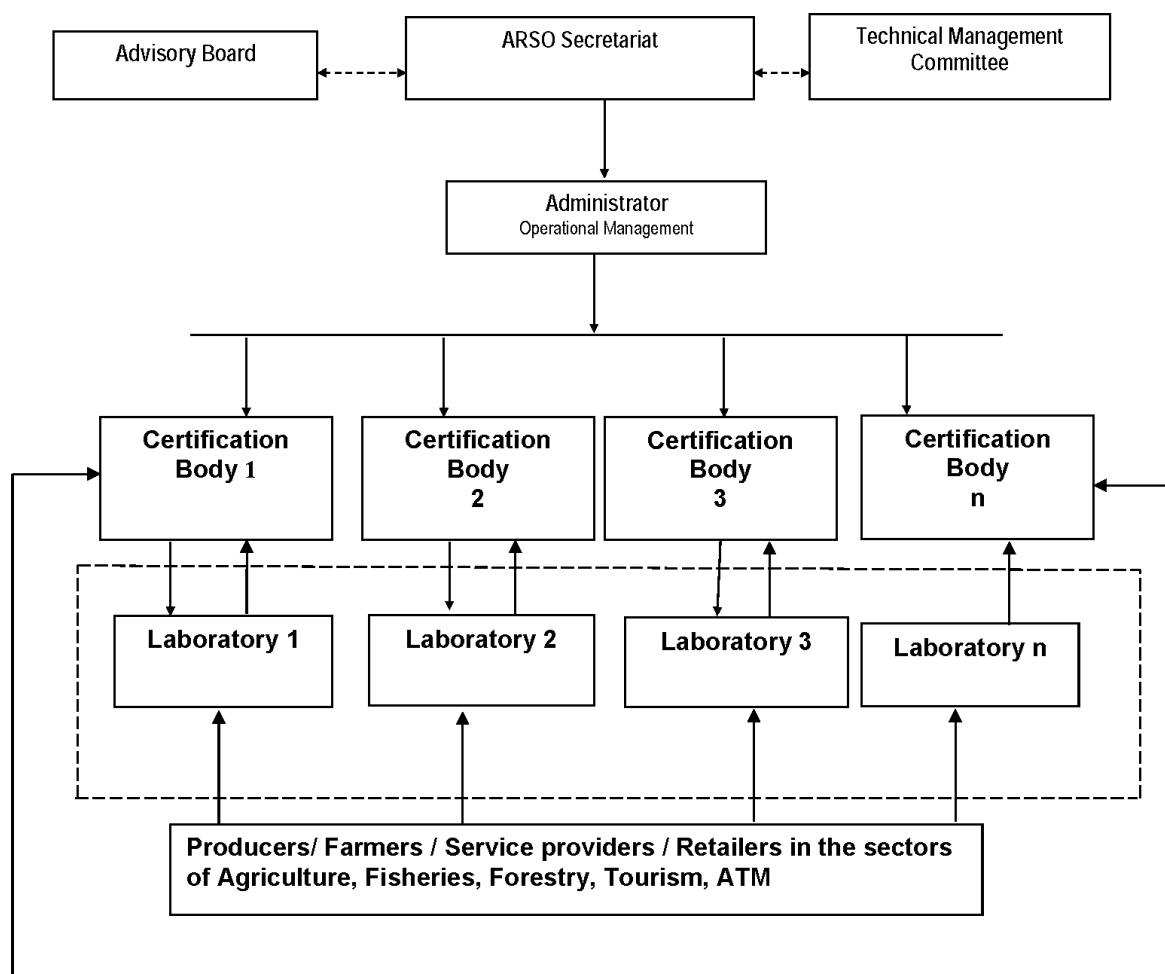


Figure 1 — The African Conformity Assessment Programme Structure

6.4 Operational management

The ACAP implementation and maintenance is under the direct responsibility of the ARSO Central Secretariat.

The ARSO Secretariat may decide to sub-contract some operational activities to qualified service providers, working under the direct governance and control of the ARSO Secretariat team.

6.5 Certification bodies and laboratories committees

Certification bodies and testing laboratories are responsible for performing the conformity assessment services. The two committees have an advisory function.

In case of design or review of one certification standard, the outputs from the THC's are sent to the advisory committees, where the standards are reviewed with regard to compliance to African Standard design and applicability of the related certification scheme. The Laboratory representatives will provide comments about the aspects related to testing of products and analytical methods required by the Standards.

Comments are considered by ARSO Technical Harmonization Committees for possible amendments and reviews.

7 Approval of certification standards

7.1 General

To harmonize the level of transparency and assurance linked to the products certified within the ACAP, standards used for certification must fulfil specified requirements and must achieve, within the same category and certification scheme, the same level of recognition by the interested stakeholders.

7.2 The African Standards approval process

African Standards shall be harmonized through the process outlined in the African Standards Harmonization Model and the relevant procedural manual.

7.3 Basic principles applicable for the design of a certification scheme

Conformity assessment is a series of functions that satisfy a need or demand for demonstration that specified requirements are fulfilled. Such demonstration can add substance or credibility to claims that specified requirements are fulfilled, giving to user greater confidence in such claims.

ACAP Certification Schemes, including the African Standards are used as the specified requirements, since they represent a broad consensus of what is wanted in a given situation (see Clause 7.1). As a result, conformity assessment is often viewed as a standards related activity.

For the purposes of harmonization of content and structure within the African Standards, basic principles to be followed as guidance for the design of a certification scheme are applied (modified for specific scope from source ISO/IEC 17007:2009):

7.3.1 Principle 1: separation of specified requirements for the object of conformity assessment from specified requirements related to conformity assessment activities

- (a) A normative document, that contain specified requirements for a product conformity assessment (ex: Product certification Standard including detail on quality, safety, legality of products), should not contain provisions related to conformity assessment activities (ex: rules for certification, certification process, etc.), with exception to sampling and testing methods related to the specified characteristics.

In respect of this principle, specific requirements for conformity assessment activities have been established and separately described in the present document, with categorization in

- (i) General Certification Schemes Requirements: all requirements related to conformity assessment activities and common to all ACAP Schemes are described in a common section of the present document
 - (ii) Certification Schemes requirements: all requirements related to conformity assessment activities and specific to single ACAP Schemes are described in Scheme specific section of the present document.
- (b) Conformity assessment provisions to be included and common for any certification scheme are:
- (i) Conformity assessment systems or schemes to be applied for certification
 - (ii) Registration for certification in the ACAP
 - (iii) Assessment bodies qualification (Certification Body and Laboratory)

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- (iv) Assessment process
 - (v) Certification process
 - (vi) Notification and appeal
 - (vii) Sanctioning
 - (viii) Complaint management
 - (ix) Attestation of conformity: certificate, ARSO Mark.
- (c) All of specified requirements for the object of conformity assessment (compliance criteria for certification) are described in the specific African Standards, approved to be certified within the ACAP.

7.3.2 Principle 2: Neutrality towards parties performing conformity assessment activities

Normative documents for objects of conformity assessment should be written so that conformity of the objects to the specifications can be assessed by any interested party. Interested parties can be:

- (a) a manufacturer or supplier of the object (first party);
- (b) a user or purchaser of the object (second party);
- (c) an independent body (third party).

7.3.3 Principle 3: Functional approach to conformity assessment

In accordance with principle 3, for the conformity assessment activities, the “functional approach to conformity assessment”, is considered with the following functions:

- (a) **Selection:** It involves identification of all the information and input needed to allow planning and execution of the subsequent “determination” function. For the ARSO Certification Schemes, selection activities may vary widely in number and complexity.

Special attention is required for the “object of conformity assessment”. When the object presents a large number of identical items or involves numerous locations, some sampling criteria, or selection of specimens to be used for determination activities can be defined in the certification scheme.

Selection can also include choice of the most appropriate procedures (for example, testing methods or inspection methods) to be used for determination activities. Also additional information may be needed in order to perform determination activities properly so that the demonstration that specified requirements are fulfilled will be effective.

- (b) **Determination:** Determination activities are undertaken to develop complete information regarding fulfilment of the specified requirements by the object of conformity assessment or its sample. In the ACAP Schemes, according to different schemes and standards, the following types of determination activities are defined:

- (i) Inspection
- (ii) Audit
- (iii) Sampling
- (iv) Testing

- (c) **Review and attestation:** Review constitutes the final stage of checking before taking the important decision as to whether or not the object of conformity assessment has been reliably demonstrated to fulfil the specified requirements. Checking and certification decision is done by a qualified person with defined responsibility.

For the ACAP, the attestation that fulfilment of specified requirements has been demonstrated is represented by a certificate of compliance against the specific ARSO certification scheme and Standard and by the possibility use the ARSO Mark on the certified products.

- (d) **Surveillance:** The activities undertaken in surveillance are planned in order to satisfy the need to maintain the validity of the existing certificates. The activities during surveillance may change from one certification scheme to another. A complete repeat of the initial assessment is not necessary for every surveillance. Thus, the activities during surveillance may be reduced, or different from, the activities undertaken in the initial assessment. All ARSO certification schemes include as a minimum, annual surveillance activities.

7.3.4 Principle 4: comparability of conformity assessment results

The requirements for the objects of conformity assessment and the requirements for the conformity assessment activities should be specified in a clear and unambiguous manner, with sufficient detail to ensure that conformity assessment results will be comparable and reproducible.

An important outcome of standardization and of conformity assessment activities is confidence in the fulfilment of the objectives for specified requirements and the realization of the intended benefits (e.g. reduction of food safety risks).

If different parties (i.e. people, bodies and/or organizations) are applying the specified requirements to produce the product object of conformity assessment, the results obtained should all be comparable, with respect to fulfilment of the requirements specified. If conformity with the specified requirements is assessed by different parties, the results of the conformity assessment shall be comparable.

7.3.5 Principle 5: Good practice in conformity assessment

Developers of normative documents for conformity assessment activities should consider International Standards and Guides as a source of good practice in conformity assessment.

ISO and IEC have developed a series of International Standards and Guides to promote the international comparability and credibility of conformity assessment activities, known as the conformity assessment toolbox.

The criteria contained in these documents are extracted from international guidelines on what constitutes good practice in conformity assessment and modified for the specific scopes of ACAP.

The purpose of this document is to harmonize the contents of the ARSO certification schemes and ARSO Standards in order to introduce the same level of trust and the same implementation of good practices for the all ACAP.

8 ACAP certification schemes

8.1 Product certification schemes, product certification systems and standards

In order to meet the objective of ACAP, the transparency, robustness and consistency of the Certification Process and the related schemes of certification is a critical factor to be taken into consideration.

A product certification scheme is composed by a set of rules, procedures and management for carrying out certification, related to specified products, to which the same specified requirements, specific rules and procedures apply.

A product certification scheme may use defined rules, procedures and management, which could be unique to the scheme or could be defined in a product certification system applicable to a number of schemes. It is always necessary to have a product certification scheme, but only necessary to separately define a product certification system if the same rules, procedures and management are to be used for more than one scheme. This is the case of the African Conformity Assessment Programme, where more certification schemes are included and more African Standards are linked to the same certification scheme.

Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between product certification system, product certification schemes and African Standards.

ACAP 1-1:2017

African Conformity Assessment Programme (ACAP): Certification Schemes			
Scheme name	Subject area	Scheme scope/Sub-scheme	Sample standards applicable
ACAP Certification Scheme A: Primary production (crops, livestock, aquaculture, apiculture)	Agricultural Crops	ACAP Certification Scheme A1: Single Farmers	ARS 461:2013 ARS 886:2018 ARS 1100:2018 ARS 1101:2018 ARS 1102:2018 ARS 1103:2018 ARS 1104:2018 ARS 1105:2018 ARS 1106:2018 ARS 1107:2018 ARS 1108:2018 ARS 1109:2018 ARS 1401:2018 ARS 1403:2018 ARS 1419:2018
	Livestock and dairy		
	Aquaculture		
	Apiculture		
	Agricultural crops	ACAP Certification Scheme A2: Groups of Farmers	
	Livestock and dairy		
	Aquaculture		
	Apiculture		
ACAP Certification Scheme B: Food processing	Processing and handling/ packing of food and fresh produce		ARSO approved certification standards for food handling and processing
ACAP Certification Scheme C: Chain of custody	Traceability of ARSO certified products in the food supply chain		ARSO approved certification standard for chain of custody
ACAP Certification Scheme D: Sustainability and eco-labelling	ACAP Certification Scheme D1: Single legal entity		ARS/AES 1:2014 ARS/AES 3:2014 ARS/AES 5:2018 ARS/AES 6:2018
	ACAP Certification Scheme D2: Groups or multisite operation		
ACAP Certification Scheme E: African Traditional Medicine	Scheme E1: Good agricultural practices for medicinal plants		ARS 952:2016, <i>Guidelines on good agricultural and collection practices (GACP) for medicinal plants</i> ARS 951, <i>GMP for herbal medicines</i>
	Scheme E2: Sustainable wild harvesting of medicinal plants		
	Scheme E3: Good manufacturing practices for herbal medicines		
ACAP Scheme F: Sustainable capture fisheries	Sustainable wild catch of fish and other sea water/ fresh water species	ARS/AES 2:2014, <i>Fisheries — Sustainability and eco-labelling — Requirements</i>	
ACAP Certification Scheme G: Good financial grant practice	Four-tier certification system for grantees of various capabilities		ARS 1651:2018, <i>Good financial grant practice — Requirements</i>
ACAP Certification Scheme H: Cosmetology and wellness	(1) Scheme H1: Barbering; (2) Scheme H2: Haircare; (3) Scheme H3: Skin care; (4) Scheme H4: Nail care; (5) Scheme H5: Massage therapy; (6) Scheme H6: Reflexology; (7) Scheme H7: Aromatherapy; (8) Scheme H8: Spa therapies; (9) Scheme H9: Hair removal techniques; (10) Scheme H10: Body art and body piercing		ACAP 4:2017, <i>Cosmetology and wellness certification framework</i>
ACAP Certification Scheme J: Sustainable mining	Sustainable mining certification is based on a set of African standards which specify objectives and leading performance requirements for economically, environmentally and socially responsible practices		<i>Mining — Sustainability and Ecolabelling — Requirements</i> ARS 1340, <i>Natural stone for building — Sustainability assessment and certification</i> ARS 1343, <i>Sustainable sand mining — Requirements</i>

Figure 2 — African Conformity Assessment Programme (ACAP) Certification Schemes

8.2 Scheme A: Primary production (crops, livestock, aquaculture)

The scope of this certification scheme is to provide criteria for the design of Product Certification Standards to be used for verification of compliance and certification in the primary production sector. The Standards included in this certification scheme have a strong focus on the product characteristics and the good agricultural practices involved for production. The standards can include

- (a) Crops production including medicinal plants — example: fruit and vegetables for fresh or industrial use; industrial crops such grains, pulses, coffee, tea, cocoa, *Aloe vera*, *Artemisia*, etc. Where applicable, also on-farm postharvest activities are included.
- (b) Livestock farming — example: cattle, pigs, poultry, milk production, eggs production, etc. Where applicable, slaughtering and on-farm product handling activities are included
- (c) Fish farming — example: finfish, crustaceans, molluscs from aquaculture sources. Where applicable, slaughtering and on-farm product handling activities are included
- (d) Bee farming: good practices in apiculture

8.2.1 Scheme A1: Primary production for single farmers

This certification scheme is applicable to Single Farmers willing to certify their products according to the African standards included in Scheme A.

The main certification criteria are related to quality, safety and legality of the products to be verified by:

- (i) Verification of production processes
- (ii) Verification of implementation of good agricultural and hygiene practices.
- (iii) Testing of products,

The present certification scheme is applicable to the African Standards included in Scheme A.

ACAP 1-2:2017 provides detailed criteria to be applied for design and general rules for assessment and certification.

8.2.2 Scheme A2: Primary production for group of farmers

This certification scheme is applicable to groups of small farmers willing to certify their products according to the African standards included in Scheme A and managed by a centralized QMS, where the QMS owner is also the owner of the certificate.

The main certification criteria are related to quality, safety and legality of the products to be verified by:

- (i) Verification of QMS implementation
- (ii) Verification of production process
- (iii) Verification of implementation of good agricultural and hygiene practices
- (iv) Testing of products

The implementation of a QMS at group level allows sampling while giving confidence on the general level of compliance of the all group.

The present certification scheme is applicable to the African Standards included in Scheme A and integrates the general rules for Scheme A1 with regard to the management of certification for groups of farmers and implementation of the QMS.

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ACAP 1-2:2017 provides detailed criteria to be applied for design and general rules for assessment and certification.

8.3 Scheme B: Processing of food

This certification scheme is applicable to food processing companies and fresh primary products handling units (ex. Fruit and vegetables pack houses, milk collection plants, fresh meat preparation and storage, etc.), willing to certify their products according to criteria related to established criteria of quality safety and legality.

The standards included in this scheme of certification have a strong focus on the quality, safety and legality of the products by mean of implementation of a Food Safety Management System (FSMS).

Where appropriate, sampling and testing activities to check measurable parameters are used for compliance.

The main certification criteria are related to quality, safety and legality of the products to be verified by:

- (i) verification of FSMS implementation
- (ii) verification of production process,
- (iii) verification of implementation of HACCP plan,
- (iv) Verification of pre-requisite programs.
- (v) Testing of products

ACAP 1-2:2017 provides detailed criteria to be applied for design and general rules for assessment and certification.

8.4 Scheme C: Chain of custody

This certification scheme applies for any party seeking certification for ARSO chain of custody standard.

The ARSO chain of custody standard is designed to assure the identity and quality of the ARSO certified products along the supply chain, by implementing segregation and traceability.

It is linked to the African Standard applied for certification of the traced product.

It is applicable to all companies in the supply chain (ex: processing, packaging, logistics, brokers, etc.) willing to identify their products with the ARSO Mark.

In order to be able to transfer the ARSO certification claim along the supply chain, all steps where the certified product is processed, packed, labelled, stored and distributed need to be ARSO certified.

The verification of compliance for this scheme involves the assessment of the traceability and segregation system implemented by the company. Periodical sampling and testing of the product (on-site or from the point of sales) to check that the products fulfil the specified requirements specified by the original ARSO standard of certification may be applied according to the product and step of the chain.

The main certification criteria are related to traceability and identity confirmation of the products to be verified by:

- (i) traceability
- (ii) segregation

- (iii) labelling
- (iv) Testing of products (when appropriate)

ACAP 1-2:2017 provides detailed criteria to be applied for design and general rules for assessment and certification.

8.5 Scheme D: Sustainability and eco-labelling

This certification Scheme applies for any party seeking certification of the requirements for the sustainable production, processing and trading of agricultural products, including wild harvesting and wild catch, food, beverages and non-food products. The standard applies to all production, processing and trading within the ACAP field of application.

The standard is based on the main principles of sustainability and can be certified alone or, when available, in combination with the ARSO product certification standard applicable for the production in the scope. The principles included in the Sustainability Standards are listed below.

According to the kind of production activity carried out by the Company, some principles may not be applicable.

African Standards suitable for sustainability and eco-labelling include:

- (1) ARS/AES 1:2014, *Agriculture — Sustainability and eco-labelling — Requirements*
- (2) ARS/AES 2:2014, *Fisheries — Sustainability and eco-labelling — Requirements*
- (3) ARS/AES 3:2014, *Forestry — Sustainability and eco-labelling — Requirements*
- (4) ARS/AES 5:2018, *Aquaculture — African Catfish — Sustainability and eco-labelling — Requirements*
- (5) ARS/AES 6:2018, *Aquaculture — Tilapia — Sustainability and eco-labelling — Requirements*
- (6) ARS 952:2016, *African Traditional Medicine — Guidelines on good agricultural and collection practices (GACP) for medicinal plants*
- (7) ARS 1100:2018, *Production and handling of food crops — Good agricultural practices*
- (8) ARS 1101:2018, *Production and handling of maize (corn) grains — Good agricultural practices*
- (9) ARS 1102:2018, *Production and handling of rice — Good agricultural practices*
- (10) ARS 1103:2018, *Production and handling of cassava — Good agricultural practices*
- (11) ARS 1104:2018, *Dairy production farms — Good agricultural practices*
- (12) ARS 1105:2018, *Poultry production farms — Good agricultural practices*
- (13) ARS 1106:2018, *Tilapia production aquaculture farms — Good aquaculture practices*
- (14) ARS 1107:2018, *Freshwater aquatic animal production farms — Good aquaculture practices*
- (15) ARS 1108:2018, *Beef cattle production farms — Good agricultural practices*
- (16) ARS 1109:2018, *Production and handling of fruits and vegetables — Good agricultural practices*

8.5.1 Scheme D1: Single site farms/companies

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This certification scheme is applicable to Single site Farms/Companies, willing to certify their products according to the ARSO standards included in Scheme D.

The main certification criteria are related to compliance with the sustainability criteria applied to the production process of products to be verified by assessment of implementation of sustainable practices.

The present certification scheme is applicable to the African Standards included in Scheme D.

ACAP 1-2:2017 provides detailed criteria to be applied for design and general rules for assessment and certification.

8.5.2 Scheme D2: Group of farmers or multisite production operations

This certification scheme is applicable to group of Farmers or multisite production operations willing to certify their products according to the African standards included in Scheme D and managed by a centralized QMS, where the QMS owner is also the owner of the certificate.

The main certification criteria are related to compliance with the sustainability criteria applied to the production process of products to be verified by:

- (i) Verification of implementation of sustainable practices.
- (ii) Verification of QMS implementation

The implementation of a QMS at group or multisite level, allows sampling while giving confidence on the general level of compliance of the all group.

The present certification scheme is applicable to the African Standards included in Scheme D and integrates the general rules for scheme D1 with regard to the management of certification for groups of farmers or multisite and implementation of the QMS.

ACAP 1-2:2017 provides detailed criteria to be applied for design and general rules for assessment and certification.

8.6 Scheme E: African traditional medicine

The scope of this certification scheme is to provide criteria for the design of Product Certification Standards to be used for verification of compliance and certification in the sector of the African traditional medicine. The Standards included in this certification scheme have a strong focus on the product characteristics, the sustainable good practices involved for harvest of wild botanical species to be used for traditional medicine and the sustainable wild plant harvesting.

The standards includes the requirements for sustainable harvest of wild botanical species used in African traditional medicine

The cultivation of crops to be used for African traditional medicine, is included in certification schemes A1 and A2, for crops. The special rules applicable for Schemes A1 and A2 are applicable.

Where applicable, also on-farm postharvest activities are included.

8.7 Scheme F: Sustainable capture fisheries

This certification scheme is applicable to wild catch of fish and other sea water/ fresh water species. It can be operate by single fishery units of by a fishery fleet willing to certify their products according to the African Standards included in African Conformity Assessment Programme.

The main certification criteria are related to compliance with the sustainability criteria applied to the production process of products to be verified by:

- Verification of implementation of sustainable fishery practices.

The present certification scheme is applicable to the African Standards included in Scheme F.

8.8 Scheme G: Good financial grant practice certification

The objective of this standard for Good Financial Grant Practice (GFGP) is to standardize, simplify and strengthen the financial governance of grant funding. For grantors, they can use the standard as a minimum requirement to their grantees. For grantees, they can claim compliance with this standard to support applications for grants from grantors. This standard is to establish a consistent approach to the management of grants throughout the grant life cycle, for the benefit of grantors and grantees.

Operating in compliance to the standard should:

- (a) reduce the cost and administration time for both grantors and grantees;
- (b) reduce the multitude of audits and financial assessments that grantees have from different grantors;
- (c) increase the confidence of grantors to fund directly to grantees;
- (d) reduce the risk of corruption, bribery and fraud; and
- (e) enable targeted financial capacity building by grantors

This standard is designed to codify and provide requirements on established good practice. It is a quality standard and not an accounting standard. The GFGP standard provides a common framework for how grantees shall financially manage grants. It provides details of the requirements, specifications and criteria to be applied, to implement good financial grant practice.

Grantors and grantees are very diverse in nature, and range from:

- (a) very large to very small;
- (b) straightforward to very complex;
- (c) short to longer term in nature;
- (d) operating in safe to risky environments;
- (e) having different levels of risk they are willing to accept;
- (f) government to private foundations and individual entities;
- (g) national to regional to international in nature; and
- (h) mature to new and emerging.

The standard is designed to be inclusive of all the above by having four tiers from bronze to platinum. Table 1 is illustrative only and gives some indication of the types of organizations that might fit into each tier.

The tiers are cumulative from bronze through to platinum. Therefore, for an organization to achieve silver compliance, it will be required to comply with all of the requirements within the bronze and silver tiers. For an organization to achieve gold compliance, the organization will be required to comply with all of the requirements within the bronze, silver and gold tiers. To achieve platinum compliance, the organization will be required to comply with all of the requirements in this standard.

The four tiers have been designed to encourage grantees to progressively strengthen their financial grant practices as their organization develops.

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The four tiers also enable grantors to manage their exposure to risk as some grantors may choose to specify grantees comply with a certain tier, or parts of a tier, depending on the size or nature of the grants that they manage and are responsible for. Grantors may, after an assessment, decide to award the grant, even if the grantee does not meet their requirements and may mitigate their risk by putting in place additional financial controls, or provide capacity strengthening funding to bring the grantee up to the required level.

This standard addresses the principles of good financial grant practice, which are:

- (i) accountability;
- (ii) stewardship;
- (iii) compliance to standards;
- (iv) transparency;
- (v) viability;
- (vi) integrity;
- (vii) consistency and
- (viii) efficiency and effectiveness

Table 1 — Organization activity indicative of GFGP tiers

Tier	Description – the organization is likely to:
Bronze	— only operates within a region in a Country be a sub-grantee of a gold level organization carrying out part of their grant activity; and/or — have few programmes and grantors.
Silver	— operate either regionally or over a number of regions within a country; — have more than a few programmes and/or complex programmes; — be a sub-grantee of a gold level organization carrying out part of their grant activity; and/or — be a local Non-Governmental Organization (NGO).
Gold	— be large with multiple complex programmes or with more complex programmes in which they are both grantees and grantors (i.e., manage sub-grants); — manage activities across international boundaries, receive funding from a variety of grantors and often sell services to raise more funding; and/or — be an International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO), national NGO, research institution or university.
Platinum	— have a mission that requires longer term financial sustainability; and/or — be an INGO, NGO, established research institution, university, charity with the expectation of long term income (i.e., funding that covers a significant portion of its operational costs) that is regularly renewed by the same grantor or has its own income or investments.

In turn, these principles are supported by four key pillars of good financial management, which, if correctly applied, will provide the evidence to support compliance with good financial grant practice. These are:

- (i) Internal controls
- (ii) Record keeping
- (iii) Planning
- (iv) Monitoring

Further detail on both the principles of good financial grant practice and four key pillars of good financial management can be found in ARS 1651:2018, *Good financial grant practice — Requirements*.

8.9 Scheme H: Cosmetology and wellness

Certification Scheme H on cosmetology and wellness is detailed in ACAP 4:2017, *Cosmetology and Wellness — Certification Framework*. This framework document provides guidance for the certification

of facilities which provide cosmetology and wellness services and products including the following sub-schemes:

- (a) Scheme H1: Barbering
- (b) Scheme H2: Haircare
- (c) Scheme H3: Skin care
- (d) Scheme H4: Nail care
- (e) Scheme H5: Massage therapies
- (f) Scheme H6: Reflexology
- (g) Scheme H7: Aromatherapy
- (h) Scheme H8: Spa therapies
- (i) Scheme H9: Hair removal techniques
- (j) Scheme H10: Body art and body piercing

The framework document provides the essential requirements which should be considered in certifying facilities for cosmetology and wellness services and products as listed.

8.10 Scheme J: Sustainable mining certification

Sustainable mining certification is based on a set of African standards which specify objectives and leading performance requirements for economically, environmentally and socially responsible practices. Scheme J serves as the basis of a voluntary system offering independent third-party assessment and certification of economic, environmental and social performance measures at industrial-scale mine sites.

The expected impacts are:

- (1) Promote a common vision of sustainability in the mining industry in Africa.
- (2) Facilitate the implementation of a voluntary sustainable mining management scheme.
- (3) Facilitate the integration of mining sustainability concepts in existing and future legislation in African countries.
- (4) Improve trust relationship among all the stakeholders
- (5) Improve the social acceptance of mining activities.
- (6) Contribute to economic and social development of local communities.
- (7) Improve the efficient use of natural resources.
- (8) Improve restoration and rehabilitation of natural areas affected by mining activities.
- (9) Promote the use of best available techniques.
- (10) Contribute to the streamlining of permitting procedures.
- (11) Help to formalize the set of data to be provided to the authorities for statistical or other regulatory purposes

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The sustainable mining certification is based on the sustainability principles and criteria with the following broad objectives:

8.10.1 Institutional and positive legacy framework

- (a) Policy and legal framework for large scale mining (LSM)
- (b) Policy and legal framework for artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM)
- (c) Guidance on governance aspects
- (d) Guidance on legal compliance
- (e) Environmental and social impact, assessment and management
- (f) Environment and social impact monitoring
- (g) Protect, respect and remedy framework
- (h) Complaints and grievance mechanisms, and access to remedy
- (i) Planning and financing reclamation and closure

8.10.2 Economic guidelines

- (a) Econometric assessment of mining developments
- (b) Revenue, royalty and rent payments transparency
- (c) Transparent marketing and fair pricing practices for ASM minerals
- (d) Linkage framework for market access by ASM
- (e) Local mineral beneficiation and mineral separation requirements
- (f) Transparent mineral valuation framework

8.10.3 Social guidelines

- (a) Community and stakeholder engagement
- (b) Engagement with indigenous people
- (c) Fair labour and working conditions
- (d) Occupational health and safety
- (e) Community health and safety
- (f) Emergency preparedness and response
- (g) Human rights due diligence and compliance
- (h) Mining and conflict-affected or high-risk areas
- (i) Security and human rights
- (j) Artisanal and small-scale mining
- (k) HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis (TB) and malaria
- (l) Obtaining community support and delivering benefits
- (m) Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC)
- (n) Cultural Heritage
- (o) Resettlement

8.10.4 Environmental guidelines

- (a) Water management
- (b) Waste and materials management
- (c) Air quality
- (d) Noise and vibration
- (e) Greenhouse gas emissions
- (f) Protected areas
- (g) Conservation and protection of biodiversity and ecosystem services
- (h) Cyanide management
- (i) Mercury management
- (j) Environmental impacts of different mining processes
- (k) End of life mine reclamation/closure requirements

Sub-Schemes in this category include those under development based on the following African standards:

- (i) ARS 1340, *Production of natural stone for building — Sustainability assessment and certification*
- (ii) ARS 1343, *Sustainable sand mining — Requirements and assessment guidelines*

9 Registration for certification in the ACAP

9.1 Preliminary entry requirements

In order to be allowed to start a certification process for one of the certification standards, some basic requirements must be complied with:

- (a) The applicant Producer must be a Legal Entity registered for an activity related to the scope certification (where applicable).
- (b) The applicant Producer must be legally responsible for the certified product during the production process and for all the time the product is covered by the scope of certification.
- (c) The applicant is responsible to choose an ARSO approved Certification Body (CB). The list of approved Certification Bodies is available on the ACAP website.
- (d) The chosen CB is responsible for the registration of the producer in the ARSO Database, data updates, and collection of fees.
- (e) The applicant Producer must sign, with the selected CB, the Certification agreement and commit to respect the rules for the ARSO Assessment Program. The contract between the producer/ producer group manager and the CB, shall have 3 years validity. Because the certification program is based on continual improvement, the producer is committed to complete the entire certification cycle with the same CB, in order to assure continuity in the gradual growth of the certified system.

The producer that is willing to change CB during the 3 years cycle, will need to pay a penalty fee or provide the evidence of a valid justification for the change (ex: delivery, professionally or integrity problems of the CB).

All Company and Production data, required for registration in the ARSO Database must be duly provided to the selected ARSO approved Certification Body

9.2 Registration data

The application shall cover at least the information detailed in this chapter. By registering, the applicant commits to comply with the certification requirements at all times, the communication of data updates to the CB and the payment of the applicable fees established by ARSO Secretariat and by the CB.

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

During registration applicants give written permission to ARSO Secretariat and the certification bodies to use the registration data for internal processes and sanctioning procedures.

The following information regarding the company (producer group, producer as individual certificate holder or producer member in a producer group) is necessary to include each producer in the ARSO Certification System.

9.2.1 Single Producer data

- (a) Company/Producer name

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- (b) Address: street address or information available to describe producer location. This includes Northern/Southern latitude and Eastern/Western longitude or other form of geospatial coordinate information with an accuracy level of +/-10 m.
- (c) Postal address
- (d) Postal code or zip code
- (e) City
- (f) State or province
- (g) Country
- (h) Name of Contact person
- (i) Phone number (if available)
- (j) E-mail address (if available)
- (k) Legal registration by country if requested by National Interpretation Guidelines. This number is only used for internal verification to avoid double registration (e.g., tax number, VAT number, producer number etc.)

9.2.2 Producers Group data (where certification scheme is applicable to group certification)

- (a) Detailed on the group manager (ref to # 9.2.1 – a to k - producer data)
- (b) Detail on each producer associated to group (ref to # 9.2.1 – a to h – producer data)
- (c) Detail on group of producers: this information is better detailed in the document: ACAP 1-2:2017

9.2.3 Production and production site

- (a) Detail on production sites: this information is better detailed in the document: ACAP 1-2:2017
- (b) Product information: this information is better detailed in the document: ACAP 1-2:2017

10 Conformity assessment bodies qualification

The procedures to be applied for the approval of national and international third party conformity assessment bodies — certification bodies and laboratories, for the delivery of the auditing, testing and certification service, in order to guarantee the highest level of transparency and impartiality of the ACAP certification process, are described in ACAP 1-3:2017 and ACAP 1-4:2017.

11 Assessment process

In order to achieve certification, a Producer registered in the ACAP shall perform either a self-assessment (certification schemes A1, D1, C, E, F) or internal audit and verification (Certification schemes A2, B, C and D2) and receive verification (inspections/audits) by the chosen third party certification body.

All ARSO Certification Schemes are based on a 3 years cycle.



All verifications are announced and dates are previously agreed between the CB and the Producer, within the timeframe allowed by the different certification schemes.

11.1 Verification activities

11.1.1 Self-assessment and internal audit and verification

- (a) **Self-assessment:** It is required for ARSO certification schemes A1 and D1, C, E and F. It can be carried out by the same farmer and does not have specific requirements related to qualification and independence of the Assessor.

The self-assessment must be completed and documented before the initial external verification and repeated at least once per year.

- (b) **Internal audit and verification:** It is required for ARSO certification schemes A2, B and D2. It includes the internal audit of the QMS (for schemes A2 and D2) and the verification of the requirements of the specific standard.

It requires specific qualification and independence of the internal Auditors and Inspectors, as specified in the different certification scheme special rules.

The internal audit and verification must be completed before the initial external audit and repeated at least once per year. No sampling is allowed.

11.1.2 Initial Certification

The initial certification is carried out once, at the first ARSO Certification for the specific Scheme of certification. The change of certification Body does not require a new initial certification. The initial Certification is composed by 2 phases:

11.1.2.1 Documental review

This phase can be carried out as a desk review in office or as on-site documental review/ initial visit. Timing can be different according to different ARSO certification schemes. Specific rules and timing are described in ACAP 1-2:2017.

11.1.2.2 Initial Verification

It represents the verification carried out by the CB for final certification. It is always carried out on-site. Specific rules and timing are described in ACAP 1-2:2017.

11.1.3 Periodical Surveillance Verification

To confirm the validity of the certificate, in the subsequent 2 years, within maximum 14 months from the date of the initial Verification, a new verification must be carried out.

Usually, the due date for the planning of the surveillance audit is corresponding to the date of the initial certification audit +1 year, but, according to the cycle of the different products included in the certification and to the seasons, the surveillance verification can be carried out in a timeframe of 5 months (3 months before and 2 months after surveillance due date).

11.1.4 Re-certification Verification

At the end of the certification cycle, a new re-certification audit is carried out. In this audit, the documentation review is carried out together with the re-certification audit.

The re-certification due date shall be set in a timeframe from 4 to 2 months before the expiring date of the certificate. In case of different need, related to technical or seasonality variations, the re-certification audit can be moved up to 2 months after expiring of the certificate.

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In this case an extension of the validity shall be communicated to ARSO for approval and a new contract between the CB and the producer/producer group manager shall be signed before extension.

When extension is completed, no change of CB is possible for the new certification cycle.

	Activity	Description	Apply for schemes	Frequency
1	Internal verification	Self-assessment	Schemes A1 and D1	Minimum annual
		Internal Audit and Verification	Schemes A2, B, C, D2	Minimum annual
2	External Initial verification	Document Review /Initial Visit	Schemes A2, B, C, D2	Once at initial certification
		Initial on-site Verification	All Schemes	Once at initial certification
3	External Periodical Maintenance	On-site verification	All schemes	1 st and 2 ⁿ year of certification cycle. Annual
4	External Re-certification	On-site verification	All schemes	Once every 3 years

11.1.5 Extraordinary unannounced verifications

Extraordinary unannounced verifications can be planned in case of documented evidence, from the CB or other external parties, on possible situations of the certified Producer that may have an impact on the certified status of the product. The Extraordinary audits are authorized by the ARSO secretariat on case-by-case bases.

11.1.6 Verification timing

The time for planning the verification can have a critical impact effective for the effectiveness of the all certification activity. It is related to the kind of product and industry in the scope of certification.

Verification timing rules are specific for each certification scheme and are described in ACAP 1-2:2017.

12 Qualification of the Verification Teams and Laboratory:

12.1 Verification team:

The verification team shall be qualified for the specific certification scheme and product scope. General rules for the qualification of the audit team are specified in ACAP 1-3:2017.

Specific criteria for the evaluation of the competence of the auditor are established according to principles set by the specific Certification Schemes and Standards.

12.2 Laboratory

The laboratory used for testing of the certified products shall be qualified by ARSO for the specific range of tests and methods required.

Rules for the qualification of the Laboratory are specified in ACAP 1-4:2017.

Additional criteria may be established by the specific Certification Schemes and Standards.

13 Sampling and testing of products (where applicable)

13.1 Sampling and testing

Sampling is carried out by one of the CB's qualified resources and analysed by an ARSO approved laboratory or can be carried out by a qualified person from the laboratory, as an agreement between laboratory and CB.

The methodology to be applied for sampling and testing is specified among the requirements of the different Certification Schemes and Standard. As a minimum the following criteria shall be included:

- (a) quantity of sample
- (b) moment and location of sampling
- (c) criteria to be applied for sampling
- (d) traceability of samples
- (e) transportation, storage of samples
- (f) sampling report contents
- (g) parameters to be tested by the laboratory
- (h) methods to be used for testing
- (i) reporting criteria for testing

13.2 Testing

The laboratory can be selected by both the CB and the Producer, among the ARSO qualified laboratory list, according to criteria such as kind of testing required, location, etc.

13.2.1 Laboratory selected by the CB

- (a) A preliminary quote for the number and cost of testing is prepared by the CB and included in the documentation for the contract between the CB and the applicant Producer and accepted by the Producer.
- (b) The Laboratory service will be invoiced to the Producer directly by the CB who will collect the testing fees on behalf of the laboratory.
- (c) The CB will sign an agreement with the selected Laboratory for service and financial details. The contract will refer to the respect of the conditions accepted in the ARSO License agreement, signed between the Laboratory and ARSO.

13.2.2 Laboratory selected by the Producer

- (a) The producer can directly select the laboratory, among the ARSO qualified laboratories list.
- (b) This option must be discussed and agreed with the CB and specified in the certification agreement.
- (c) The producer will directly pay the laboratory, without any involvement for the CB.
- (d) The CB will be responsible to assure that sampling and testing are planned and carried out according to the specific ARSO certification scheme and standard's requirements.

14 Certification process

The ARSO Certification process starts when the ARSO approved CB is contacted by a Producer willing to apply for ARSO Mark certification. The process can be summarized in the following principal steps:

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14.1 Application for ACAP certification

The application shall be made on a special form prepared by the CB and shall cover products from one production unit (ex: farm, factory) only.

This is a formal document that includes, as a minimum, the following information:

- (a) Identification of the applicant: legal entity, address, contacts.
- (b) Specification of the products scope of certification and the production processes
- (c) Information on the production site and activities: site address, surface, number of full time and seasonal employees.

More detail is already provided in # 9 of the present document with regard to Registration.

14.2 Preliminary evaluation of application and approval by the certification body

A questionnaire shall be completed by the applicant, and returned with the Application Form. This provides preliminary information on the producer and his capability to control the quality and continuing conformance of his products to the requirements of the relevant standards.

- (a) It requests information concerning the Producer's organization.
- (b) It asks for specific details of the procedures/documentation that is used to control the quality system.
- (c) It requires information on the organization of the Company. The questionnaire is specifically developed by the CB according to specific certification schemes requirements, as described in ACAP 1-2:2017.

14.3 Contract between Producer and CB

- (a) **Certification Agreement:** The certification body shall have a legally enforceable agreement for the provision of certification activities to its clients. Certification agreements shall take into account the responsibilities of the certification body and its clients. The contents of the agreement must comply with all applicable requirements included in ISO/ IEC 17065 #4.1.2.2.

The certification agreement will specify the cost of certification for the 3 years cycle and the cost of the laboratory testing mandatory for the specific ARSO Certification Standard.

- (b) **ACAP sub-licence Agreement:** This is a standard ARSO document, to be used between the CB and the Producer and including specific commitment to ARSO rules. It shall be signed at the same time as the Certification Body agreement

14.4 Document review and on-site verification

On receipt of the completed, Application Form and Questionnaire, signature of the agreements and payment of the appropriate fee, the Certification Body will confirm to the applicant the date of the document review and on-site audit, according to the rules set by the ARSO Certification scheme of reference.

14.4.1 Documental review

All the documentation required by the Certification Scheme and the specific Standard must be available the day of the audit.

According to the Certification scheme's requirement, this activity can be carried out before, in a separate day, or as part of the certification audit.

14.4.2 On-site announced verification

During these verifications, the implementation of the requirements of the standard and internal procedures is verified for compliance. Production activities and Records are verified as evidence of implementation. The possibility for sampling of sites, products and processes is specified in the general rules of the specific Certification Scheme and Standard

The on-site announced verifications include:

- (a) Initial (First certification) verification,
- (b) Surveillance verifications
- (c) Re-certification verification
- (d) Follow Up verification (where applicable, this verification can also be based on documentation review)

14.5 Verification results and evaluation of compliance

As an output from the verification activity, some deviations can be identified on compliance to specific requirements of the ARSO certification scheme and standard to be classified as “non-conformances”. Other types of non-compliances or deviations can be highlighted for continual improvement but without having an immediate impact on the final evaluation for certification

The level of non-conformity assigned by an auditor against a requirement of the Standard is an objective judgement with respect to severity and risk and is based on evidence collected and observations made during the audit. This is verified by the certification body management.

14.5.1 Major non-conformance

There is a substantial failure to meet the requirements of any clause of the ARSO Standard or with the Producer’s own internal procedures. The situation is identified which would, on the basis of available objective evidence, raise significant doubt as to the conformity of the certified product.

This kind of deviation results with the stop of the certification process and require for the Producer to analyse the causes of the non-conformity, prepare a corrective actions action plan and implement corrective actions. Corrective actions need to be completed and verified and approved by the CB within the following timeframe:

14.5.1.1 Initial (First certification) verification

Document Review (where applicable): before initial on-site verification
On-site verification: within 90 days from the last day of the verification.

The exceeding of the 90 days without closing all Major NC raised during the initial verification (both documental and on-site) will lead to the full repetition of the verification.

14.5.1.2 Surveillance and re-certification verifications

On-site annual verification: 28 days from the last day of verification. Depending on the severity of the non-conformity, with respect to safety and legality of the product, the time can be reduced down to 0 days and lead to immediate suspension of the certificate.

The exceeding of the given time without closing all Major NC raised during the surveillance verification will lead to the full repetition of the verification.

14.5.2 Minor non-conformance

Where a clause has not been fully met but, on the basis of objective evidence, the conformity of the product is not in doubt.

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A Minor non-conformance is allocated for an individual failure to meet the requirements of any clause of the African Standard or with the Producer's own internal procedures, or if a series of minor but related discrepancies are observed, which together are judged to be acceptable, without constituting an overall failure in the area concerned.

This kind of deviation results with the stop of the certification process and require for the Producer prepare a corrective actions action plan and implement corrective actions. Corrective actions need to be completed and verified and approved by the CB within the following timeframe:

(a) **Initial (First certification) verification.**

Document Review (where applicable): before initial on-site verification.

On-site verification: within 90 days from the last day of the verification.

The exceeding of the 90 days without closing all Minor NC raised during the initial verification (both documental and on-site) will lead to the full repetition of the verification. Some tolerance about the closing of Minor NCs can be found for the different ARSO Certification Schemes and is specified in ACAP 1-2:2017.

(b) **Surveillance and re-certification verifications**

On-site annual verification: 28 days from the last day of verification.

The exceeding of the 28 days without closing all Minor NC raised during the initial verification (both documental and on-site) will lead to the full repetition of the verification. Some tolerance about the closing of Minor NCs can be found for the different ARSO Certification Schemes and is specified in ACAP 1-2:2017.

14.5.3 Observation

One or more partial deviations to fulfil requirements of the following types:

- (a) Formalities / documentary: In the interpretation of a requirement of the ARSO Standard and / or in the formalization of records
- (b) Operational: in the application of the requirements of the ARSO Standard and / or the documentation of the system;
- (c) these should not, however, raise doubts about the real effectiveness of the system (the ability of the system to provide a product in compliance with the Control Points and relate Compliance Criteria) and will not have any influence on the proceeding of the certification process.

14.6 Follow up verification

In case of non-conformities raised during the certification activities, the Producer will receive a given time for implementation of corrective actions. The time allowed for closure changes according to the Scheme of certification and is described in # 14.5 and further detail is in the different certification schemes rules.

The follow up verification is planned to verify the management of non-conformities raised during the previous verification and the corrective action implemented by the Producer.

Corrective actions can be evaluated on-site, by a physical assessment, or in remote by a desk assessment of documental evidences sent by the company to the Assessor for evaluation. The decision on how to carry out the follow up depends on the kind on NC raised, the number of Major NCs and also the possibility to effectively assess the corrective action in remote.

14.7 Release of a final report

After all the auditing activities have been completed and results from laboratory tests received, the auditor prepares a final report that shall include:

- (a) Date of the audit and start and end time
- (b) Audit team details
- (c) Scope of the audit (certification scheme, standard, products, company and production site description)
- (d) Short summary of activities carried out during the audit and products/processes audited
- (e) List of findings, description and timeframe for corrective actions and final approval of the auditor.
- (f) Declaration of confidentiality
- (g) Other items specific for the certification scheme and specified in ACAP 1-2:2017

The evidence of acceptance of the report contents by the applicant producer shall be available.

14.8 Technical review by the CB's Certification Committee

All the documentation related to the application, including the complete final report and the certificate of analysis of the products is verified and approved by the approved ARSO CB certification committee, before final approval of the certificate.

The CB has 30 days, after audit or follow up is completed, to complete the approval and release of the certificate and of the license for the use of the ARSO Mark.

14.9 Maintenance of the ARSO Certificate and ARSO Mark License

14.9.1 Periodical Surveillance audit

Rules for maintenance of the license are established by the Scheme of certification selected.

- (a) Sampling of sites, products and processes
- (b) Sampling of requirements to be audited during surveillance verifications
- (c) Time interval between verifications
- (d) Duration of the verification

14.9.2 Sampling and testing of products

Rules for maintenance of the license are established by the Scheme of certification selected.

- (a) Number and frequency of samples
- (b) Sampling of laboratory data

14.10 Renewal of the ARSO Mark license

The ARSO Mark license has a validity of three years but it is reconfirmed according to results of the annual surveillance activities

15 Sanctioning

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A valid ACAP Certificate and ARSO Mark license can be sanctioned according to deviations detected by the CB during verification but, also, as a consequence of unsatisfactory result from testing or complaint coming from other parties.

According to the relevance of the deviation, a different level of sanctions may be applied

15.1 Warning

Major or Minor NC s detected during verification, to be closed within given time

15.2 Suspension

The causes of a Warning are not resolved within given time.

Suspension can be applied for maximum 6 months or since the start of the next production season, in case of seasonal production and NCs that cannot be closed without having the production process in place.

Suspension is recorded in the ARSO database and is visible on the ARSO website

No claim on ARSO certification or use of the ARSO Mark can be done during the period of suspension

15.3 Withdrawal and Cancellation

The ARSO Certificate and the ARSO Mark license can be withdrawn by the CB according in case:

- (a) The causes of a Suspension are not removed within given time
- (b) The Producer is not able to manage the ARSO Certification anymore
- (c) Serious infringement of integrity
- (d) Bankruptcy

Suspension is recorded in the ARSO database and is visible on the ARSO website. No claim on ARSO certification or use of the ARSO Mark can be done after withdrawal of the certification and cancellation of the ARSO Mark license from the ARSO database.

The producer cannot access the ARSO system again for the next 12 months after withdrawal is completed.

16 Complaints and appeal management

Complaints from the Producers are managed, in the first step, by the CB or the Laboratory who has a contract with Producer.

CBs and Laboratories shall have a Complaint Procedure specific for management of the ACAP certified producers complaint. This procedure is public and shall be available on request.

The Producer shall either resolve the non-conformances or other issues raised by the CB or appeal to the CB in writing, explaining the reasons for the appeal. The CB'S appeal procedure

If the appeal is not accepted and the non-conformances are not resolved within the permitted period, the sanction will be escalated.

If the complaints are connected to the organisation's un-satisfaction with the CB's administrative or technical performances and the organisation refuse to acceptance the decisions taken by the CB after appeal, the disputes can be addressed to the ARSO Secretariat using the ARSO Complaints Extranet, available on the ACSP. The ARSO Detailed procedure for conflict resolution can be found in Annex A of the present document.

17 Attestation of conformity: Certificate, ARSO Mark

The topic related to use of the ARSO ACAP and ECO certification marks is developed in detail in the Annex B.

18 Maintenance and improvement of a scheme

18.1 Review of ACAP Certification System

ARSO has planned a process for reviewing the operation of the ACAP certification system, on a periodic basis of 5 years, or when required, in order to confirm its validity and to identify aspects requiring improvement, taking into account:

- (a) Changes on applicable legislation
- (b) Changes of international accreditation rules
- (c) Feedback from stakeholders.
- (d) Continual improvement of the certification system
- (e) Changes, modification of the objective of the African Conformity Assessment Programme
- (f) Other different reasons

ARSO has implemented a process for making the necessary changes in the ACAP scheme, and for managing the implementation of the changes (transition period) by the certification bodies, clients and, where necessary, other stakeholders.

The review process will follow the same procedure as for approval of new certification schemes and ACAP standards, as indicated in Figure 3 of the present document.

18.2 Intermediate, minor review of ACAP Certification System

During the period of validity of the actual version of the ACAP certification system, smaller intermediate reviews may be required, to address unexpected needs.

In this case the edition of the ACAP system will not change but a review is considered (example ACAP 1-1:2017 Edition 1.0, after modification Edition 1.01).

Each document will have a specific section where the history of the reviews and the changes applied is recorded.

Annex A (informative)

Procedure for conflict resolution

A.1 Scope and purpose

A.1.1 This document has been prepared to establish a conflict resolution mechanism within the parties involved in the ACAP. The ARSO conflict resolution procedures espouse procedural fairness and incorporate the following guidelines:

- (a) A person or organisation, who is the subject of a complaint or a appeal, should be given adequate notice about the proceedings.
- (b) A person making a decision should declare any personal interest they may have in the proceedings.
- (c) A person who makes a decision should be unbiased and act in good faith. He/she therefore cannot be one of the parties in the case, or have an interest in the outcome.
- (d) Proceedings should be conducted so they are fair to all the parties.
- (e) Each party to a proceeding is entitled to ask questions and contradict the evidence of the opposing party.
- (f) A decision-maker should take into account relevant considerations and mitigating circumstances, and ignore irrelevant considerations.

NOTE The ARSO conflict resolution procedures are not intended to substitute or override the legal rights of any party to use the appropriate judicial system.

A.1.2 The procedures shall be applied by the Mediation Board to resolve conflicts where an amicable process and the administrative efforts of the ACAP approved CB not able to resolve the conflicts.

A.2 Terms and definitions

For the purpose of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

A.2.1

appellant

individual or organization filing an appeal

A.2.2

complainant

person or organization filing a complaint

A.2.3

dispute

any dispute falling within the meaning of dispute as set out in Section A.5 read together with section A.6.1 and constitutes the following aspects:

A.2.3.1

appeal

request by a party subject to a decision for reconsideration of any adverse decision made by the ACAP approved CB with regard to the ACAP Certification and/or ACAP Accreditation System (adapted from ISO/IEC 17011)

A.2.3.2

(informal) complaint

initial expression of dissatisfaction by any person or organization, to ARSO, relating to the activities of the ACAP Certification and/or ACAP Accreditation System (adapted from ISO/IEC 17011)

A.2.3.3

formal complaint

formal expression of dissatisfaction by any person or organization, to ARSO, relating to the activities of the ACAP Certification and/or ACAP Accreditation System (adapted from ISO/IEC 17011)

A.3 General

All ACAP parties are encouraged to seek amicable settlement in any dispute, in the spirit of mutual trust and continual improvement that underlies the participatory decision-making process of the ACAP. Failing such an amicable settlement, the ACAP Mediation Board will be the accepted authority to deal with disputes and grievances.

All members of the ACAP are requested to accept the authority of the Mediation Board. This acceptance will be a binding compromise for all members.

The mediation will result in a ruling, settlement of which will be either an obligation to undertake a specific commitment, an obligation to forego specific behaviour or an obligation to alter specific behaviour.

The mediation process shall be based on open access, transparency, and respect for sensitive information, credibility, efficiency and innovative solution-oriented thinking.

The ARSO Secretariat will be responsible for evaluating the performance of the Mediation Board.

A.4 Mediation Board

A.4.1 Establishment of Mediation Board

A Mediation Board is hereby established as an organ of ARSO to mediate conflicts which cannot be settled administratively by the ACAP parties, relating to any of the following:

- (a) the interpretation of the objectives of ACAP;
- (b) the interpretation of the ACAP's rules;
- (c) failure to abide with the objectives of ACAP;
- (d) breaches of ACAP's rules;

The Mediation Board will settle disputes arising from the interpretation of or failure to respect the ACAP objectives and rules. The Mediation Board will not mediate in any other dispute outside the scope of the ACAP RULE.

A.4.2 Composition of the Mediation Board

The Mediation Board shall constitute three members elected from within the members of the **ACAP Executive Board** for a term of two years.

A member of the Mediation Board shall serve for a maximum of two consecutive terms of two years each.

A.4.3 Mediation Board Chair

The Executive Board shall appoint the Chairperson of the Mediation Board from amongst the Mediation Board members for a term of two years.

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The Chairperson of Mediation Board receives all complaints that cannot be settled administratively by the ARSO Secretariat or the other organs of ACAP, through secretary of the Mediation Board.

A.4.4 Mediation Board Secretary

The Executive Manager shall be the secretary to the Mediation Board. Where the Executive Manager is a party to the dispute, the Executive Board will nominate a member of the Executive Board who is not a member of the Mediation Board to serve as the Secretary of the Mediation Board.

The Secretary will not have a voice or vote in the Mediation Board but will assist with factual information and perform all necessary formalities such as correspondence, depositing the ruling and informing parties concerned of all relevant circumstances.

Upon request by the Mediation Board, the Secretary may also seek advice from external experts such as lawyers and standards professionals to provide expertise on the dispute.

A.5 Mediation Rules

A.5.1 Types of disputes

A.5.1.1 Disputes shall be categorized as follows:

- (a) Technical non-compliance disputes.

These are disputes that relate to direct breaches of ACAP rules. These are instances where an ACAP party or is said to be in breach of clearly measurable obligations under ACAP rules.

- (b) Non-compliance with principles disputes

These are disputes that relate to the failure to comply with the spirit of the ACAP that is based on good governance and the principle of collective responsibility for the achievement of the ACAP objectives.

A.5.1.2 The Mediation Board is responsible for such

- (a) disputes among ACAP organ members
- (b) disputes between individual organ members and any of the ACAP organs
- (c) disputes among ACAP organs
- (d) disputes between the ARSO Secretariat and the other ACAP organs or its members.

A.5.2 Declaration of disputes

All disputes shall be referred to the Mediation Board and shall, for this purpose, be addressed to the secretary to the Mediation Board. Disputes may be referred to the Mediation Board by any of the following:

- (a) any member of an ACAP party;
- (b) any ACAP party;
- (c) the ARSO Secretariat

A.5.3 Mediation of disputes

In all incidences, the ARSO Secretariat is the first party to be informed of a complaint.

The ARSO Secretariat will have 30 calendar days from the date it is first notified of a dispute to try and reach an amicable settlement. A dispute shall only be formally lodged after all settlement efforts by the ARSO Secretariat have been exhausted. In its mediation efforts the ARSO Secretariat may consult as it deems necessary, however, without disclosing the names of the parties.

Once the Secretariat decides that amicable settlement is not possible or the 30 calendar days are elapsed without a formal settlement, the Secretariat will notify the Mediation Board that a dispute has arisen and will provide any written submissions plus all exchanges and other information generated as part of the Secretariat's settlement efforts.

The Secretary of the Mediation Board, upon consultation with the Chairperson, decides on the basis of the documentation provided on the admissibility of any dispute. In case of contestation or doubt, the Chairperson of the Mediation Board will be asked to make the final ruling on the admissibility of the dispute.

If the dispute is admissible, the Secretary shall within a period of 10 working days, forward the claim to the Chairperson of the Mediation Board.

In all incidences, the Chairperson of the Mediation Board will have 45 calendar days from the date of notification to a dispute to try and reach an amicable settlement.

If the Chairperson of the Mediation Board concludes that amicable settlement in a dispute is not achievable, s/he will call in the other members of the Mediation Board.

The three Mediation Board members will decide by majority vote on a ruling, taking into consideration the legal observations of a legal advisor commissioned by the Mediation Board and the factual advice of the Secretary of the Mediation Board.

The Ruling will result either in an obligation to undertake a specific performance, an obligation to forego specific behaviour, an obligation to alter specific behaviour, if such is appropriate according to the mediators, or any combination thereof.

A.5.4 Hearing of non-compliance disputes

The claimant in a dispute will apply for mediation by filing a complaint in writing to the Secretary of the Mediation Board. English and French will be the official languages to be used in the proceedings. Qualified, licensed translators shall translate all documents to other AUC languages on a need basis.

The complaint will contain a factual description of the dispute and a request for a possible solution to the dispute. The Secretary will forward this complaint to the other party, or in case the ARSO Secretariat is party to the dispute, to the Chairperson of the ARSO Executive Board, within 10 working days after having received the complaint.

The Secretary will then forward the complaint to the Chairperson of the Mediation Board, within a period of 10 working days. The Chairperson of the Mediation Board will approach parties for an amicable settlement.

If the Chairperson of the Mediation Board decides that an amicable settlement cannot be achieved, the defending party has 20 calendar days to formulate and submit a written reply and defence against the complaint. The defence will be forwarded to the Secretary, who will inform the claimant of the defence, no later than 5 working days from the date of receipt.

If the ARSO Secretariat itself is the defending party, such a reply will be the responsibility of the ARSO Executive Board.

The Secretary, after ensuring that all relevant documents and information are available will then set a date and time for the Mediation Board meeting. The Board will meet at the premises of the ARSO Secretariat. Parties may be present in person or can have themselves represented. In case one of the parties or both are not present nor represented at the actual session, the verdict may be given based on written information as presented by the parties.

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The Mediation Board may decide that there is need for a second session in case further information has to be provided either by one of the parties or the Secretary or by third persons.

Witnesses may be requested to testify. Stakeholders may report their views if assessed as appropriate by the Board.

The Mediation Board members will decide by consensus upon the Ruling, taking into consideration the legal observations of an assisting lawyer and the factual advice of the Secretary to the Mediation Board. Simple majority voting will only be done if consensus becomes elusive.

A.6 Findings

The Mediation Board may call for evidence as its members, or a legal advisor commissioned by the Mediation Board, consider necessary and the parties shall be obliged to provide it.

Refusal to provide the requested evidence shall lead to a ruling in favour of the other party to the dispute. All evidence will be shared with all the parties to a dispute.

If the Mediation Board considers any evidence inadequate or doubtful, or any of the parties to the dispute contests the truthfulness of any evidence, a legal counsel commissioned by the Mediation Board will provide a binding opinion on whether to accept or reject the evidence.

A.7 Decisions of the Mediation Board

The Mediation Board will give a Ruling within four weeks after completion of the hearing of the dispute. The Mediation Board's ruling shall be final and shall not be subject to any appeal.

Once the Mediation Board has completed its work, each case will eventually result in a final report to the ARSO Executive Board that has to balance transparency with confidentiality.

A.8 Non-compliance and exclusion

In case of non-compliance with an ACAP Rule within a period of 3 months, the ARSO Executive Board may exclude the party in default from further membership in the ACAP independently of other possible legal action.

If a member conflicts with the ACAP objectives or is ignoring its duties as a member of the ACAP, the Mediation Board may recommend exclusion from the ACAP.

A member of one of the ACAP parties who is facing exclusion shall receive a written warning by the Executive Board before being excluded from ACAP.

The exclusion takes effect if the member does not demonstrate compliance with all duties and responsibilities as listed in the Mediation Board's recommendation and the warning in a given time frame.

The Executive Board through the ARSO Secretariat will inform the member of its exclusion in a written document latest 10 working days after the decision. The exclusion takes effect with the submission of the written document.

The member may refuse the exclusion in a written manner 10 days after having received the document. If so, the Executive Board will decide on a case-by-case basis in its next meeting. At least two thirds of the Executive Board has to confirm the exclusion of the respective member.

Annex B (informative)

Use of ARSO Mark and EMA Label

B.1 Forewords

ARSO, is the owner of the African Conformity Assessment Programme which leads to the licensing for use of the ARSO Mark and African Eco-labelling Mark (ECO Mark Africa, EMA label) which are third-party marks of conformity, and is responsible for protecting the marks legally against unauthorized use.

ARSO is the owner of all the marks including the ARSO Mark and the ECO Mark Africa logos, prepared by ARSO in relation to the specific African Standards for certification.

B.2 General requirements

In order to guarantee the correct use and management of the ARSO Mark and EMA label, the ARSO Secretariat has established:

- (a) rules for governing the use of the third-party mark of conformity
- (b) measures to minimize misunderstandings and lack of clarity regarding the third-party mark of conformity that could lead to a reduction in its effectiveness,
- (c) rules to ensure that the third-party mark of conformity and any accompanying information are not misleading and take action against their use in a misleading way,
- (d) measures to protect and monitor the use of the third-party mark of conformity,
- (e) actions to resolve misuses of the third-party mark of conformity, including withdrawal of the mark or appropriate legal action
- (f) Action on and keep a record of all complaints relating to the use of the third-party mark of conformity.

B.3 ARSO Sublicense Binding Agreement

The ARSO ACAP Producer sub-licence Agreement, signed between the Producers willing to certify according to one ACAP standard and to use the ACAP or ECO Mark, includes rules on the use of the Marks and clear acceptance of the rules in the present Annex B of ACAP 1-1:2017.

This standard Contract is the first step to enter the ACAP program and it is mandatory to be signed with the Certification Body before starting the certification process. It includes commitment of the Producer to comply with the ACAP rules.

The sub-licence agreement contains provisions to assure that the licensee follows the rules for the use of the ACAP or ECO Mark, according to the present document.

A breach of the agreement may result into the withdrawal of the ACAP certificate and licence for the use of Mark.

B.4 Design of the third-party ACAP and ECO marks of conformity

The ARSO ACAP and ECO Marks are designed in order to identify the main issuer of the mark and the aspects covered by the mark.

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Because a third-party mark of conformity shall be traceable back to the specified requirements to which the object of conformity assessment conforms, they are graphically composed by merging the main original mark, with a specific indication/symbol identifying the scope of certified for the product:

- (a) Crops Certification
- (b) Livestock Certification
- (c) Fish from Aquaculture Certification
- (d) Food Processing Industry Product certification
- (e) Certified Product traceability along the supply chain
- (f) Fish from wild catch
- (g) Wild Medical plants from sustainable harvested.

The third-party ARSO marks of conformity have been designed as to minimize the risk of counterfeiting or confusing with other forms and to avoid incidental or volunteer misuse.

B.5 Information on the ARSO Marks

More detailed information about the meaning; the use and identification of the ARSO Marks are providing, on request. Specific responses to questions or concerns from interested parties regarding the third party mark of conformity shall be provided.

The updated list of ACAP and ECO standards and Scopes of Certification (objects of conformity assessment) included in the ARSO third-party mark of conformity are listed in the ACAP Approved Standards List, that is updated by ARSO and available on the ARSO website.

B.6 ARSO Marks Licence

Once the Producer has completed the certification process, he/she will receive a formal licence for the use of the ARSO Mark on the product, and any documentation and communication related to the certified product.

The licenced Producer shall:

- (a) Keep under control the use of the ARSO third-party mark of conformity,
- (b) Implement effective and timing corrective actions in case of non-conformity,
- (c) Keep records of complaints relating to the use of the ARSO mark of conformity and make these available to ARSO.
- (d) Monitor the use of The ARSO marks of conformity

B.7 Use of the mark

- (a) The ARSO third-party marks of conformity can be used only after completing a product conformity assessment and the release of the related ARSO certificate of conformity.

- (b) The ARSO mark shall be applied directly on each product, or, where not possible, applied on the package of each smallest Traceable or Consumer Unit.
- (c) Exception to rule in (b) is where the physical size of the product does not permit direct labelling or when the application is not appropriate for the type of product. In this case the ARSO mark can be used on the accompanying documentation clearly linked to the product.
- (d) If the ARSO mark of conformity only relates to certain parts of a product, the producer shall clearly specify on the label and on documentation related to the product, what part/ ingredient of the product is ARSO certified and use the Mark related to the certified part/ ingredient.
- (e) The ARSO Certification Mark shall be used on the product without distortion of the configuration of the mark and in a proportion that may be found visible and suitable for affixation on the product.
- (f) A reference to the ARSO marks of conformity may also be used on documents, promotional material, etc.
- (g) Only Producers that have been certified according to an ACAP certification scheme and Standard and received a form licence for the use of the ARSO mark related to the scope of certification can use the ARSO mark on the product, on the product documentation or on any other communication materials.
- (h) The use of the ARSO mark along the certified product supply chain till the final point of sales to the consumers is possible only if all the companies involved in the supply chain are ACAP certified.
- (i) Specific detail on documentation of the ARSO Marks management can be found in the special rules related to the certification schemes.

B.8 Sanctions applied to use of the Mark

- (a) The confirmed incorrect or misleading use of the ARSO mark or of the ARSO conformity claim will lead to immediate actions and will be managed by ARSO according to provisions explained on [Chapter 15](#) of the present document.
- (b) According to the severity of the misuse done, if the sanction applied is a Suspension or a Withdrawal of the licence, the sanction will be published on the ARSO website.
- (c) Legal actions can be considered in case of demonstrated serious damage affecting the all ARSO integrity and reputation. This clause also applies in situations of misuse by a party not under contract with ARSO or approved ACAP CB for the use of the ARSO mark of conformity.
- (d) The sanctioned Party has to establish a corrective action plan in respect of each misuse of the ARSO mark of conformity.

B.9 Surveillance

The ARSO Secretariat will, as he deems necessary, exercise surveillance on products in respect of which the use of the ARSO Certification Mark has been granted.

B.10 Fees

The fees to be charged for the use of the ARSO Certification Mark shall be as provided in the ARSO Fees specific document, in the most updated version.

