
Sustainable agriculture — Procedures for assessment and certification



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Foreword

The African Regional Organisation for Standardization (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

Out of the 2.5 billion people in poor countries living directly from the food and agriculture sector, 1.5 billion people live in smallholder households. Smallholders provide up to 80 percent of the food supply in Asian and sub-Saharan Africa (Scialabba *et al.*, 2014). They contribute to diversified landscape and through their everyday activities, generate income and rural livelihoods through food and non-food production. They manage land, water and biodiversity resources and through their practices, affect ecosystem services, such as water flows and purification, pollination, pest and disease regulation and carbon and other materials flow.

From the subsistence, market-marginalized Pacific farmers, to the half million successful commercial organic exporters in Africa, smallholders' viability rely on farming with nature. Rather than working against Nature by fighting individual problems after they have occurred, smallholders tend to prevent problems by implementing practices referred to as agroecological, organic or regenerative. Their systems are based on diversification and associations of plants and animals, including agroforestry, crop-livestock and rice-fish systems. Smallholder' practices are not based on agronomic and technological fixes, but rather on promoting ecological processes that boost food production. They observe and act upon inter-dependency between what is being produced, the soil that nurtures all beings and associated biodiversity. The approach taken integrates approaches and knowledge pertaining to the social and natural spheres, as the agro-ecosystem is viewed as a socio-ecological unit, or an organism.

Traditional farming, pastoralism, artisanal fishing and community forestry have empirically demonstrated their potential to reach sustainability. This is because smallness has an inherent adaptive capacity to economic, environmental and societal changes. If supported, or at least not hindered in their constant efforts, smallholders hold the promise to achieve the dual goal of food security and the conservation of the global good that underlies our existence. Small is not always beautiful but smallness can become rewarding with self-reliance for sustenance and generational responsibility. Smallholders' ecology pursue this path. Smallholders' organizations were active in raising their voices at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio in June 2012.

Agroecology to and by smallholders

- Is site-specific and its performance is due to not the techniques per se, but rather the ecological processes that underlie sustainability. It avoids dependence on external inputs, emphasizing use of agro-diversity and beneficial synergies;
- Is a culturally acceptable approach, as it builds upon traditional and indigenous knowledge in improving agro-biodiversity and local natural resources while increasing food availability and improving nutrition;
- Is socially beneficial, as its diffusion requires constant farmers participation and community building;
- Is a promoter of processes of governance as it is built on higher and better participation and decision-making mechanism, social empowerment, inclusiveness and locally adequate measures and approaches;
- Is ecologically sound, as it does not attempt to modify the flows of energy and nutrients of existing systems, but rather tries to optimize their performance through adaptation;
- Is economically beneficial, as it increases the real value of capital input, while constituting a big source of income and jobs for farmers and families, thus reducing poverty.

Sustainable agriculture — Procedures for assessment and certification

1 Scope

This conformity assessment document applies to the procedures which Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) shall follow in conducting certification assessment and carrying out the certification on sustainable agriculture entities in accordance with ARS/AES 1:2014.

2 Normative references

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.

AEM PR 03:2013, *Procedures for conflict resolution*

EMA PR 05:2013, *Procedures for conformity assessment*

EMA PR 06:2013, *Procedures for accreditation of certification bodies*

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

ISO/PAS 17001, *Conformity assessment — Impartiality — Principles and requirements*

ISO/PAS 17002, *Conformity assessment — Confidentiality — Principles and requirements*

ISO/PAS 17003, *Conformity assessment — Complaints and appeals — Principles and requirements*

ISO/PAS 17004, *Conformity assessment — Disclosure of information — Principles and requirements*

ISO/PAS 17005, *Conformity assessment — Use of management systems — Principles and requirements*

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

ISO/IEC 17011, *Conformity assessment — General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies*

ISO 9000, *Quality management systems — Fundamentals and vocabulary*

ISO 9001, *Quality management systems — Requirements*

ISO 10002, *Quality management — Customer satisfaction — Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations*

ISO/IEC 17020, *Conformity assessment — Requirements for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspection*

ISO/IEC 17021, *Conformity assessment — Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems*

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*

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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*

ISO 19011, *Guidelines for auditing management systems*

3 Definitions and abbreviations

For the purpose of this document the following definitions apply.

audit

a systematic and functionally independent examination to determine whether activities and related results comply with planned objectives

certification

procedure by which official certification bodies, or officially recognized certification bodies, provide written or equivalent assurance that wellness facilities, goods and services or related quality assurance systems conform to requirements. Certification of products and services may be, as appropriate, based on a range of inspection activities which may include auditing of quality assurance systems.

certification body

a body which is responsible for verifying that a product is produced, prepared or handled; and that a service is provided in accordance with the requirements set out in the relevant standard

claim

any representation which states, suggests or implies that a product or service has particular qualities relating to its origin, therapeutic properties, nature, composition or any other quality

competent authority

any person or organization that has the legally delegated authority, or power to perform a designated function

4 Sustainable agriculture

4.1 Introducing the African Standard for Sustainable Agriculture

The African Standard for sustainable agriculture ARS AES 1:2014, *Agriculture — Sustainability and eco-labelling — Requirements* was harmonized to provide requirements for the sustainable production, processing and trading of agricultural products including food, beverages and non-food products; livestock and livestock products, bee products; wild harvested products; and agricultural fibre products. The standard applies to all production, processing and trading within the operator's sphere of influence.

The purpose of the African Standard for Sustainable Agriculture is to encourage agricultural production and handling practices that are ecologically responsible, equitable, and economically viable; that meet current global demand for a full range of agricultural products; and that ensure that future generations are able to meet their own needs.

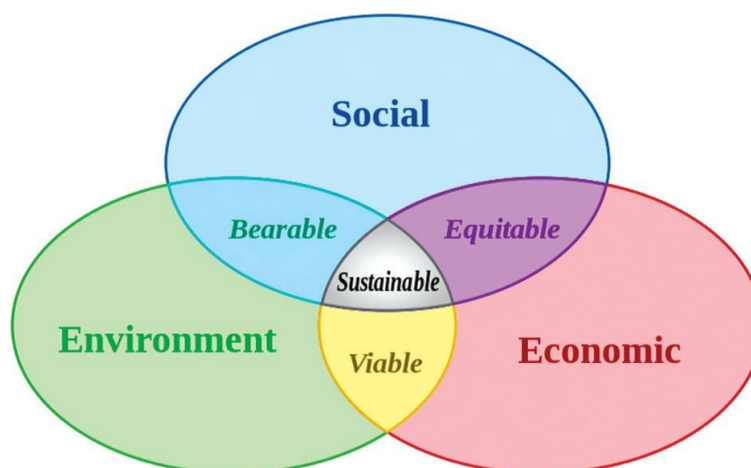


Figure 4.1: The Sustainability Framework of ARS AES 1:2014

The African Standard for Sustainable Agriculture:

- (1) Delineates outcome-oriented environmental, social, and economic criteria and indicators for assessing the sustainability of an agricultural enterprise.
- (2) Provides a framework for fulfilling sustainability goals appropriate to the specific enterprise.
- (3) Identifies a maturity framework model that producers can use to assess progress internally and to communicate progress to business customers and stakeholders.

4.2 The Principles of African Sustainable Agriculture Standard

The African Standard for Sustainable Agriculture addresses the core concepts of environmental, social and economic sustainability through the following principles:

Principle 1: Legal compliance

Principle 2: Economic Sustainability

Principle 3: Social and Environmental Management

Principle 4: Human Rights Protection

Principle 5: Labour Rights Protection

Principle 6: Maintenance of Biodiversity

Principle 7: Soil Management

Principle 8: Water Management

Principle 9: Climate Change, Mitigation and Adaptation

Principle 10: Crop Husbandry and Farm Management

Principle 11: Pesticide Use and Management

Principle 12: Energy Efficiency

Principle 13: Waste and Pollution Management

Principle 14: Handling and Segregation of Certified Products

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Principle 15: Animal Husbandry

Principle 16: Managing acquisitions, productivity and trading of the animal and animal products

The African Standard for Sustainable Agriculture addresses the activities related to an agricultural enterprise producing food, floral, or fibre crops regardless of type of crop produced, scale of operation, marketing considerations, or legal form (e.g., corporation, sole proprietorship, educational or charitable institution).

4.3 Format of the African Sustainable Agriculture Standard

The principles of sustainability are elaborated by use of indicators and verifiers which objectively assess the claims of sustainability as shown in Figure 4.2.

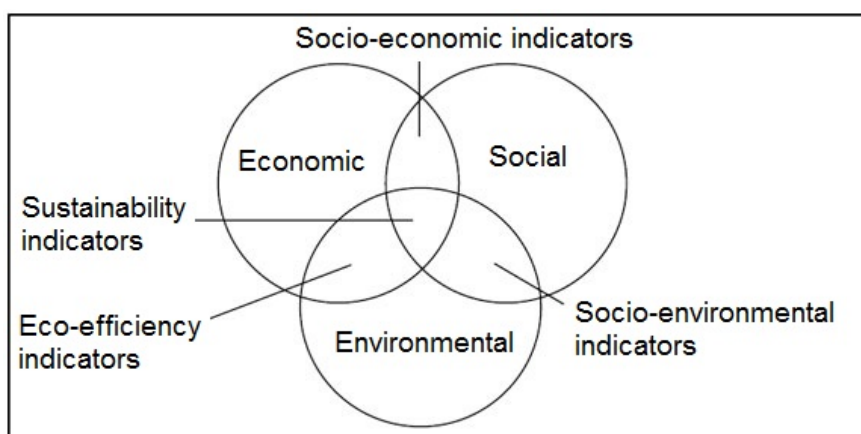


Figure 4.2: Elaboration of Sustainability Indicators

4.3.1 Principles

The principles are statements describing the fundamental environmental, social, and economic aspects of a sustainable agriculture.

4.3.2 Objectives

The objectives are the broad goals arising in relationship to one or more of the principles, toward which sustainable agricultural producers strive when they choose and implement appropriate strategies to achieve the desired environmental, economic, and social outcomes.

4.3.3 Criteria

A criterion is a characteristic of a system that provides a basis for assessing performance. The Standard's criteria identify key factors for assessing compliance with the principles of sustainable agriculture.

4.3.4 Indicators

The indicators identify measurable attributes of the criteria and provide qualitative or quantitative information on the current state of the attribute.

4.3.5 Performance Tiers

Performance tiers represent levels of overall performance. The Standard provides four increasingly stringent performance tiers that producers can reach: bronze, silver, gold, and platinum. These performance tiers are the basis for designating SMEs without imposing undue burden in their operations.

4.4 The Maturity Model of African Sustainable Agriculture Standard

The Performance Tiers provide a framework for producers to improve their compliance levels in line with the continual improvement principles. These tiers provide opportunities for producers to invest gradually as well as for small-scale producers to engage in the certification process at affordable rates.

There are four levels of performance which are elaborated hereafter.

(1) Bronze Tier

Entry Level. The Producer commits to engage in the process and develops a Producer Sustainability Plan that identifies sustainability goals and strategies for achieving them. In addition to meeting all Required indicators and at least 80% of General Indicators required for the Bronze tier, the Producer meets at least 20% of the optional indicators. This certification is valid for a period of up to three years, subject to re-verification through annual surveillance.

(2) Silver Tier

The Producer demonstrates considerable progress in sustainability performance. In addition to meeting all Required indicators and at least 80% of General Indicators required for the Silver tier, the Producer must meet at least 20% of the optional indicators. Silver Tier achievement can be claimed indefinitely as long as performance is re-verified through annual surveillance, and recertified every three years.

(3) Gold Tier

The Producer demonstrates very substantial sustainability performance. In addition to meeting all Required indicators and at least 80% of General Indicators required for the Gold tier, the Producer must meet at least 20% of the optional indicators. Gold tier achievement can be claimed indefinitely as long as performance is re-verified through annual surveillance, and recertified every three years.

(4) Platinum Tier

The Producer demonstrates an outstanding level of sustainability performance. In addition to meeting all Required indicators and at least 80% of General Indicators required for the Platinum tier, the Producer must meet at least 20% of the optional indicators. Platinum tier achievement can be claimed indefinitely as long as performance is re-verified through annual surveillance, and recertified every three years.

Table 1: Required, General, and Optional Indicators for Each Performance Tier Conformity Levels: 100% for Required (R); 80% for General (G); 20% for Optional (O)

Aspect	Bronze			Silver			Gold			Platinum		
	R	G	O	R	G	O	R	G	O	R	G	O
1. General	5	0	0	5	0	0	5	0	0	5	0	0
2. Environmental	15	6	83	20	27	57	33	39	38	36	49	19
3. Social	24	10	147	43	33	105	63	54	67	66	68	47
4. Economic	0	2	37	1	6	32	s	10	24	5	14	20
Total # of Indicators Available Per Tier	44	18	267	69	66	194	106	103	129	112	131	86
Total # of Indicators Needed for conformity at each tier*	44 100%	14 80%	53 20%	69 100%	53 80%	39 20%	106 100%	80 80%	25 20%	112 100%	105 80%	17 20%

4.5 Management Plan

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The Management Plan, in this respect called the Producer Sustainability Plan (PSP) is an organizational tool for determining baseline performance levels, identifying a roadmap for continual improvement, and for achieving and documenting improvements in the environmental, social, and economic performance of the operation. The contents of the management plan:

- (i) Organized according to environmental, social, and economic factors.
- (ii) Describes the operation's land, resources, and current practices, including baseline information on the status of relevant Indicators.
- (iii) Identifies critical criteria and indicators the producer must monitor to maintain or improve performance.
- (iv) Records goals for meeting criteria and improving performance.
- (v) Documents strategies implemented, results observed, and outcomes achieved.
- (vi) Identifies any unexpected outcomes or problems, as well as plans for mitigating or improving outcomes for the next cycle.

5 Conditions for certification

5.1 General conditions

- (a) Audits are based on an evaluation of conformity with ARS/AES 1:2014.
- (b) For the purpose of these rules, two organization types are recognized: single farms and group administrators.
- (c) The same organization may not hold two valid certificates from accredited certification bodies (CBs) simultaneously.
- (d) Organizations that cultivate products considered illegal by applicable law in the country where they are grown or by international agreements and conventions shall not be subject to certification.
- (e) Organizations that cultivate annual, bi-annual or perennial species may be audited and certified. These species include but are not limited to trees of perennial crops such as fruits, nuts, coffee, cocoa, and tea, as well as ornamental plants, vegetables, grains, spices and grasses.
- (f) Cattle operations may be certified, provided that the cattle is not completely raised in stables or under nomadic production systems. The certification of cattle production systems with feedlots as part of the farm or group administrator scope is only permitted if animals have the opportunity for movement and exposure to sunlight in outdoor ranging areas, and if feedlots are used only during the final fattening stage of the animals.

5.2 Rules for group administrators

- (a) The minimum number of member farms of a group administrator is two member farms.
- (b) All member farms of a group administrator shall be located within the same country.
- (c) A member farm shall not belong to two certified groups simultaneously.
- (d) The group administrator is responsible for trading and commercializing the products covered in the scope of the certificate, unless it decides to delegate the responsibility to third parties.

- (e) If a member farm wishes to sell certified product individually, it shall have a written agreement with the group administrator who shall keep register of each individual transaction, indicating the volume of certified product sold individually by members.
- (f) The group administrator is responsible for ensuring that all member farms comply with the respective requirements of ARS/AES 1:2014.

6 Rights

The audited or certified organizations may apply the following rights:

- (a) Obtain clarification relating to the interpretation of ARS/AES 1:2014.
- (b) Get the updated versions of relevant African standards and policy documents from their CB.
- (c) Receive an audit report within the timeframe agreed with the CB.
- (d) Submit a complaint related to the service provided by a CB.
- (e) Appeal a certification decision made by a CB.
- (f) Start being a client of a different CB if they are not satisfied with the service the current CB provides, under the condition that the organization does not have open nonconformities on critical criteria.
- (g) Request for rescheduling an unannounced surveillance or investigation audit once. Valid reasons for requesting the rescheduling include force majeure conditions and when the organization's representatives responsible for assuring compliance can proof previously acquired commitments with supporting evidence.
- (h) Request the cancellation of its certificate at any moment.

7 Obligations

The audited or certified organization shall:

- (a) Submit a complete application, with truthful, accurate, updated information to a CB that is accredited to operate in the region where the organization is located. The certified organization should contact the CB to program a certification audit, at least 120 days before the anniversary date of the certificate in order to successfully complete the respective audit process on time.
- (b) Inform the CB of any significant change in its management system, its production activities, productivity or its infrastructure, and update its information accordingly. The certified organization shall notify the CB when it adds new area or member farms to its scope.
- (c) Sign a service agreement with the CB.
- (d) Not sell more product volume than the harvested product volume while holding a valid certificate.
- (e) Pay the required costs associated with any type of audit.
- (f) In the case of group administrators submit an electronic list with truthful, accurate, updated information about all member farms within the certificate scope.
- (g) Ensure that the audit team has access to all relevant documentation and to the whole area within the audit scope, including leased lands and infrastructure, and that it has the right to interview workers and people living on the farm, as well as members of neighbouring communities without the presence of field supervisors, the farm management or group administrator or their representatives.

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- (h) Allow and cooperate with unannounced surveillance audits and investigation audits.
- (i) Request and receive authorization prior to using any trademarks.

8 Audit scope

- (a) Applicable criteria of ARS/AES 1:2014 will be evaluated at individual farms as well as on each of the group administrator's member farms that form part of the audit sample, in the case of group administrators.
- (b) Organizations leasing land and seeking certification shall be able to implement long-term changes that allow them to comply with ARS/AES 1:2014 when they are located inside a non-certified farm.

8.1 Single farms

In this model, one certificate is granted to one single farm.

- (a) The whole area and activities within the farm's limits are covered by the audit scope. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - (i) Areas destined for agricultural and cattle production, with focus on products intended to be sold with certification claims.
 - (ii) HCV areas, forests and other natural ecosystems, as well as fallow land.
 - (iii) Areas involving human activity and other infrastructure within its limits that include but are not restricted to administrative infrastructure, collection points, processing and packing units and storage facilities.
 - (iv) Leased areas inside the farm.
 - (v) Farm personnel, including all contracted and subcontracted workers, supervisory and administrative staff, and management and owner representatives.
 - (vi) People who live temporarily or permanently on the farm.
 - (vii) All documentation relating to social, agronomic and environmental management and considered relevant to determining compliance with the Standard.
 - (viii) Documentation related to trading of the certified and non-certified product handled by the farm.
- (b) Infrastructure owned or leased outside the farm limits but which is directly related to activities included in the audit scope. This may include, but is not limited to administrative infrastructure, collection points, processing and packing units and storage facilities.
- (c) Residents of surrounding communities who are or may be directly affected by the farm's activities.

8.2 Group administrator

In this model, one certificate is granted to an organization, called the 'Group Administrator', who acts on behalf of a group of farms and is responsible for their compliance with ARS/AES 1:2014. The Group Administrator is responsible for implementing an Internal Management System (IMS), including but not limited to coordinating the commercialization of product, training and technical assistance for staff and group members, as well as internal inspections and the corresponding follow-up actions.

Group administrators fit three basic models: i) multi-site, where a single legal entity owns or holds more than one discrete farm or site with separate production management system, but under one IMS of the group administrator; ii) groups that have a democratic structure, such as cooperatives, associations and

federations; and iii) private entities, such as plantations with associated product suppliers, exporters or a consultant's office. The audit scope of a group administrator includes the following:

- (a) Infrastructure owned or administered by the group administrator, related to the production activity in the scope. This includes but is not limited to roads, housing, administration, collection, storage, processing and packing infrastructure, as well as their surroundings.
- (b) Member farms are subject to the farm audit scope.
- (c) All personnel hired or subcontracted by the group administrator.
- (d) All documentation relating to the IMS.
- (e) Documentation related to trading of the certified and non-certified product handled by the group administrator.

9 Performance system

9.1 Critical criteria

Critical criteria cover the highest-priority and highest-risk environmental, social and labour issues. Farms and group administrators are required to comply with all applicable critical criteria at all time as a condition to grant or maintain the certificate.

9.1.1 Zero-tolerance critical criteria

Failing to comply with any of the following zero-tolerance criteria results in the denial or the immediate cancellation of the certificate:

- (i) No destruction of High Conservation Value areas
- (ii) No forced labour
- (iii) No mistreatment of workers; no sexual harassment
- (iv) No discrimination
- (v) No worst forms of child labour

9.2 Continuous improvement criteria

- (a) ARS/AES 1:2014 contains a continuous improvement system that requires farms to gradually increase their compliance over four performance levels.
- (b) The specific binding level requirements will not change under any condition, including suspension or cancellation of a certificate, modification of scope or the change of a CB.

10 Audits

Before the final audit report is issued and only in the case of nonconformities that can be closed through documents, an audited organization may demonstrate compliance with open nonconformities up to 30 days after the closing meeting of any audit. The CB may charge for additional costs of this process.

10.1 Certification audit

- (a) A certification audit is carried out when the organization applies for certification for the first time, and then every three years, to establish the level of conformity of the organization with all applicable criteria.

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- (b) It shall always take place on site, during a period of activity when workers, crop plants and/or cattle are present.
- (c) On the application, the organization may voluntarily request to be audited against the criteria of a higher performance level.

10.2 Verification audit

- (a) If the organization does not comply for the respective year, it may demonstrate compliance through a verification audit within 120 days after the previous certification decision.
- (b) The objectives of a verification audit are:
 - (i) To control whether open nonconformities that prevented a positive certification decision were addressed, can be closed, and the certificate may be issued or maintained; and
 - (ii) To determine whether the organization has reached the minimum performance level and the certificate may be issued or maintained.
- (c) If during a verification audit, an audited organization does not comply, the certificate is not issued or is cancelled. This audited organization may not be subject to additional verification audits hereafter.
- (d) Organizations with nonconformities on any of the zero-tolerance criteria are not eligible for a verification audit.
- (e) A verification audit may take place remotely, when it is possible to evaluate the improvement actions through documents or remote interviews with farm management or group administrator representatives.

10.3 Surveillance audit

- (a) The objectives of the surveillance audits are:
 - (i) To ensure the certified organization complies with all applicable critical criteria;
 - (ii) To determine whether the organization has implemented the improvement actions for continuous improvement criteria in this standard.
- (b) In the case of farms or group administrators cultivating seasonal crops, at least one surveillance audit shall take place during the harvest season.
- (c) Farms and group administrators are subject to unannounced or short-noticed surveillance audits at any time. The CB may inform the certified organization about unannounced or short-noticed surveillance audits with no more than two working days in advance, with the exception of group administrators of smallholder members, for which up to five working days in advance apply.
- (d) During surveillance audits to group administrators, at least 30% of the sample of member farms will be selected during the opening meeting.
- (e) Organizations considered as 'high performers' will be allowed to undertake maximum one desk surveillance audit, instead of one on-site surveillance audit.

10.4 Investigation audit

- (a) Investigation audits are carried out in response to a complaint, reported incident, or substantial information regarding the performance of a certified organization relating to one or more critical criteria of ARS/AES 1:2014.

- (b) An investigation audit may be carried out at any time, when the CB determines there is sufficient evidence of a potential nonconformity.
- (c) Investigation audits are unannounced. However, the certified organization may be given advanced warning (no more than two working days), when doing so can avoid significant logistical obstacles and the issue at hand cannot be influenced by an advanced warning.
- (d) The certified organization may be subject to a desk investigation audit only if it is possible to demonstrate conformity through documents.
- (e) The CB bears the cost of investigation audits. However, should the complaint, reported incident, or substantial information be confirmed, the cost of these audits may be charged to the certified organization.

10.5 Scope expansion audit

- (a) The objective of a scope expansion audit is to assess compliance with certification rules for new areas, activities or member farms that a certified organization wishes to add to its scope before a certification or surveillance audit.
- (b) All applicable criteria of ARS/AES 1:2014 are evaluated for the new areas or for a sample of new member farms (in the case of group administrators), as well as for new crops or cattle species.

11 Obtaining the certificate

- (a) Organizations wishing to achieve certification or certified organizations that are due a certification audit shall submit an application to an accredited CB.
- (b) At 'Year 0', and every three years from then, the organization shall be subject to a certification audit.
- (c) The CB will issue a certificate to the audited organization once the requirements of this standard are complied with.

11.1 Performance criteria and rules

- (a) In order to pass a certification audit, the organization, including all member farms, shall fully comply with all applicable critical criteria.
- (b) Nonconformities on continuous improvement criteria that were opened during certification audits shall be closed within the following timeframes:
 - (i) One third of these nonconformities shall be closed no more than 12 months after the preceding certification audit.
 - (ii) Two thirds of the original nonconformities shall be closed no more than 24 months after the preceding certification audit.
 - (iii) All remaining nonconformities shall be closed by the next certification audit the latest.

Possible new non conformities against new criteria detected during surveillance audits or verification audits will be added to the original balance of nonconformities detected during the preceding certification audit.

- (c) In the case of group administrators with smallholder members, a maximum of 20% of the audited sample of smallholders may fail on the improvement action rules under the condition that these remaining nonconformities are corrected no more than 12 months after the preceding audit.
- (d) The audited organization shall develop an improvement action plan within 90 calendar days after having received the final audit report, and this plan shall be available to the CB on demand.

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- (e) A nonconformity for the same criterion shall not be repeated in consecutive audits. Any nonconformity repeated for the same criterion shall be closed within four months through a verification audit, and cannot be repeated in the following audit, with the only exception of force majeure conditions.

11.2 Validity of the certificate

- (a) The certificate has a 36-month validity, starting with the date of issue.
- (b) The expiry date of the certificate is fixed, but the validity of the certificate may be extended in the following cases, without modification to the original certificate issue date:
 - (i) Up to a maximum of six months in the event of a force majeure condition.
 - (ii) Up to a maximum of three months, when the organization is going through an appeal process, when the certification decision was to cancel the certificate.

12 Maintaining the certificate

- (a) In order to maintain its certified status, the certified organization shall pass two surveillance audits after a certification audit.
 - (i) The first surveillance audit shall take place between 12 to 15 months after the date the certificate was issued;
 - (ii) The second surveillance audit shall take place before 30 months, from the date the certificate was issued.
- (b) In order to pass a surveillance audit, a certified organization shall comply with Section 11.1 of this document.
- (c) A certified organization may be subject to investigation audits at any time.

13 Modifying the scope of the certificate

- (a) The certified organization may request to change the certificate scope at any time in order to increase or reduce the productive area, or increase or reduce the number or composition of member farms.
- (b) Certified organizations requesting to include new crop activities or new cattle species within the scope of a certificate shall be subject to a scope expansion audit.
- (c) A certified organization may increase its production area or its number of member farms by up to 10%, or add up to 10% of new member farms, without being subject to a scope expansion audit, certification audit or surveillance audit. If the increase in area or number of member farms exceeds 10%, or if the group has more than 10% of new member farms, then the certified organization shall be subject to a scope expansion audit.
- (d) The certified organization may decide to increase its scope through a certification audit or surveillance audit. If this is the case, 7(b) of this document shall be complied with, but a scope expansion audit is not necessary.
- (e) The information of the previous certification audit shall be used as reference in establishing the percentage increases described in clause 13(c).
- (f) Modifications to the scope of the certificate will not change the expiration date of the certificate or the organization's baseline year.

- (g) The group administrator is responsible for ensuring that all new member farms comply with the same compliance level of ARS/AES 1:2014.

14 Sanctions

14.1 Suspension

14.1.1 Conditions

The CB will suspend the certificate of an organization when the certified organization:

- (a) Fails to comply with Clauses 11 and 12 of this document.
- (b) Does not fulfill one or more of its obligations, as described in Clause 7 of this document.
- (c) When the certification audit of a certified organization was not carried out while the certificate was valid or when the surveillance audits were not carried out within the timeframes established in these certification rules.

14.1.2 Consequences

- (a) The suspension will last up to a maximum of four months.
- (b) If the suspension is not lifted within four months, the CB will cancel the certificate.
- (c) From the moment the CB notifies the organization about the suspension, the organization shall not sell products with certification claims. Should the certificate be reinstated, the organization is allowed to sell as certified all the product in stock that was harvested during the suspension period.

14.2 Cancellation

14.2.1 Conditions

The CB will deny or cancel the certificate of an organization in the following cases:

- (a) When the organization does not comply with one or more zero-tolerance critical criteria.
- (b) When the organization did not comply with Clause 10.2 of this document.
- (c) When the organization rejects an unannounced audit for the second time.
- (d) When the certified organization fails to conform to the conditions determined in the Certification Agreement signed with the CB.
- (e) When the certified organization voluntarily requests the cancellation of its certificate.

14.2.2 Consequences

- (a) The cancellation of a certificate lasts one year and is valid starting with the date of the CB's communication to the organization.
- (b) From the moment the CB notifies the certified organization about a certificate cancellation, it is not authorized to sell product with certified claims. The only exceptions are organizations whose certificate was voluntarily cancelled, who will be allowed a sell-off period of six months of stored product, or as soon as all of the certified product is sold off, whichever happens sooner.

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- (c) Organizations whose certificate was cancelled and who wish to renew the certificate may only be audited one year after the date the certificate was cancelled. The only exception are those organizations that voluntarily requested the cancellation of their certificate.
- (d) Organizations whose certificate was cancelled and who wish to renew the certificate shall not comply for a certification audit before three years have passed under the following conditions:
 - (i) If the organization exerted coercion or made any form of implicit or explicit threats to the moral or physical integrity or the life of any members of the CB auditing team or staff, through the employees of the organization, or people under its influence or orders;
 - (ii) If the organization participated in illegal, fraudulent or unethical activities that could discredit the certification program.

15 Compensation for announced minor destruction of natural ecosystems

If destruction of natural ecosystems - but never for HCV areas - up to 1% of the total certified land area is planned by a certified farm manager or group administrator, it will not be a cause for certificate cancellation provided that the responsible CB was informed beforehand and authorized this minor destruction under the following conditions:

- (i) Destruction of natural ecosystems will take place only for the reason of installing new farm infrastructure or repairing previously existing farm infrastructure (roads, irrigation infrastructure, including pumping facilities, channels, ponds, reservoirs, dams, and impoundments), permanently installed machinery, and facilities for washing, processing, or packing) or for smallholder farms for the purpose of planting food crops;
- (ii) Applicable law is complied with.

16 Reinstatement of the certificate

- (a) In order to reinstate a certificate that was cancelled, the organization shall submit an application for a certification or surveillance audit and shall comply with the Clauses 11 and 12 of this document.
- (b) In addition to the requirements described in Clauses 11 and 12 of this document, organizations whose certificate was cancelled due to nonconformities relating to minor destruction of natural ecosystems shall comply with the following Clause 16.1 or child labour with the following Clause 16.2.

16.1 Compensation for unannounced minor destruction of natural ecosystems

Minor destruction of natural ecosystems - but never for HCV areas - that have inadvertently been conducted by a certified farm manager or member farm of a certified group administrator or certified group administrator is permitted only under the following conditions:

- (a) The destruction event is the first one during the organization's certification history;
- (b) The converted area is located outside of HCV areas, protected areas, or land that is illegal to convert;
- (c) A plan with objectives, quantitative targets and parameters, time-bound management actions, resources and responsible personnel for the required restoration is prepared by an ecological restoration specialist and submitted for approval within three months of the date of destruction, including the following requirements:
 - (i) The destruction is mitigated through restoration in the or close to the converted area or by setting-aside for conservation at least a 1:1 ratio of ecologically comparable areas;

- (ii) The converted natural ecosystem area is taken out of agricultural production and designated with the aim to restore the area to its former natural condition;
- (iii) On larger farms, destruction of natural ecosystems of up to 2% of the farm area or 50 hectares (whichever is less) is only permitted if such destruction is compensated by at least a 1:1 ratio of ecologically comparable areas, as specified in a time-bound plan prepared by a qualified professional;
- (iv) Destruction of up to 10% of the farm area or 1 hectare (whichever is less) is permitted without the need for compensation. In the case of smallholder groups, these thresholds apply at the level of each member farm.

16.2 Child labour remediation

Farms shall provide evidence of remedial actions for child labourers and his or her family following their removal from farm employment:

- (i) Timely access to medical services;
- (ii) Timely access to psychological and rehabilitative services, as indicated by the child's condition;
- (iii) Facilitation of the child's entrance and integration into local school until the legally permitted school-leaving age; and
- (iv) Hiring of the child's immediate or extended family member, if available. If no such family member is available for hiring, the farm management or group administrator pays the child's family a wage support no less than the removed child's wages until the child reaches the legal school-leaving age or age 15, whichever is higher.

Annex A
(informative)

Applicable international laws

Principles	International Standards	Key provisions	Summary of Protections
Just Land Acquisition	ILO Convention 169 (1989) on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples	Articles 13-19	Respect and safeguard rights to lands and natural resources traditionally occupied and used; respect for customs of inheritance; no forced removals; compensation for loss and injury.
	UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)	Articles 25, 26	Right to distinctive relationship with land; right to own, use, develop and control their lands, territories and other resources.
	UN Convention on Biological Diversity (1992)	Article 10(c)	Protect and encourage customary use of biological resources in accordance with traditional practices.
Fair Representation and Participation of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples	ILO Convention 169 (1989) on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples	Articles 6-9	Represent themselves through their own representative institutions; consultations with objective of achieving agreement or consent; rights to decide their own priorities, retain their own customs and resolve offences according to customary law (compatible with international human rights).
	UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)	Articles 10, 11(2), 19, 28(1), 29(2) and 32(2).	Right to free, prior and informed consent to any project affecting their lands as expressed through their own representative institutions.
	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, InterAmerican Human Rights System.	UN CERD Committee, UN Committee on Social Cultural and Economic Rights, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.	Free, Prior and Informed Consent for decisions that may affect indigenous peoples. (This standard has been widely accepted as a 'best practice' standard by bodies such as World Commission on Dams, Extractive Industries Review, Forest Stewardship Council, UNDP, CBD, IUCN and WWF).
No Forced Labour	ILO Convention 29 (1930) Forced Labour	Article 5	No concession to companies shall involve any form of forced or compulsory labour.
	ILO Convention 105 (1957) Abolition of Forced Labour	Article 1	Not make use of any form of forced or compulsory labour.
Protection of Children	ILO Convention 138 (1973) Minimum Age	Articles 1-3	Abolition of child labour and definition of national minimum age for labour not less than 15-18 years (depending on occupation).
	ILO Convention 182 (1999) Worst Forms of Child Labour	Articles 1-7	Abolition of child slavery, debt bondage, trafficking and procurement for prostitution; suitable methods to monitor and enforce compliance.
	UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)	Articles 17(2), 21, 22(2)	No exploitation or exposure to hazard or discrimination against indigenous women and children
Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining	ILO Convention 87 (1948) Freedom of Association and	Articles 2-11	Freedom to join organisations, federations and confederations of their own choosing; with freely chosen constitutions and rules; measures to protect the right to organise.

Principles	International Standards	Key provisions	Summary of Protections
	Protection of Right to Organise		
	ILO Convention 98 (1949) Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining	Articles 1-4	Protection against anti-union acts and measures to dominate unions; established means for voluntary negotiation of terms and conditions of employment through collective agreements.
	ILO Convention 141 (1975) Rural Workers' Organisations	Articles 2-3	Right of tenants, sharecroppers and smallholders to organise; freedom of association; free from interference and coercion.
	UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)	Article 3	Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination and to freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.
Non-Discrimination and Equal Remuneration	ILO Convention 100 (1951) Equal Remuneration	Articles 1-3	Equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value.
	ILO Convention 111 (1958) Discrimination (Employment and Occupation)	Articles 1-2	Equality of opportunity and treatment in respect to employment and occupation; no discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin.
	UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)	Articles 2, 8(2e), 9, 15(2), 16(1), 21(2), 22, 24(1), 29(1), 46(3)	No discrimination based on origin or identity; free to express identity based on custom; special attention to and full protection of rights of indigenous women.
Just Employment of Migrants	ILO Convention 97 (1949) Migration for Employment	Articles 1-9	Provision of information; no obstacles to travel; provision of health care; non-discrimination in employment, accommodation, social security and remuneration; no forced repatriation of legal migrant workers; repatriation of savings.
	ILO Convention 143 (1975) Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions)	Articles 1-12	Respect basic human rights; protection of illegal migrants from abusive employment; no trafficking in illegal migrants; fair treatment of migrant labour.
Protection of Plantation Workers ²	ILO Convention 110 (1958) Plantations	Articles 5-91	Protection of members of families of recruited workers; protection of workers' rights during recruitment and transport; fair employment contracts; abolition of penal sanctions; fair wages and conditions of work; no coercion or obligation to use company stores; adequate accommodation and conditions; maternity protection; compensation for injuries and accidents; freedom of association; right to organise and collective bargaining; proper labour inspection; decent housing and medical care.
Protection of Tenants and Sharecroppers	ILO Recommendation 132 (1968) Tenants and Sharecroppers	Articles 4-8	Fair rents; adequate payment for crops; provisions for well-being; voluntary organisation; fair contracts; procedures for the settlement of disputes.
Protection of Smallholders	ILO Convention 117 (1962) Social Policy (Basic Aims and Standards)	Article 4	Alienation with due regard to customary rights; assistance to form cooperatives; tenancy arrangements to secure highest possible living standards.
Health and Safety	ILO Convention 184 (2001) Safety and Health in Agriculture	Articles 7-21	Carry out risk assessments and adopt preventive and protective measures to ensure health and safety wrt workplaces, machinery, equipment, chemicals, tools and processes; ensure dissemination of information, appropriate training, supervision and compliance; special protections for youth and women workers; coverage against occupational injuries and disease.

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Principles	International Standards	Key provisions	Summary of Protections
Control or Eliminate Use of Dangerous Chemicals and Pesticides	Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (2001)	Articles 1-5	Prohibit and/or eliminate production and use of chemicals listed in Annex A (e.g. Aldrin, Chlordane, PCB); restrict production and use of chemicals in Annex B (eg DDT); reduce or eliminate releases of chemicals listed in Annex C (e.g. Hexachlorobenzene).
	FAO International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides (1985, Revised 2002)	Article 5	Curtail use of dangerous pesticides where control is difficult; ensure use of protective equipment and techniques; provide guidance for workers on safety measures; provide extension service to smallholders and farmers; protect workers and bystanders; make available full information on risks and protections; protect biodiversity and minimize impacts on environment; ensure safe disposal of waste and equipment; make provisions for emergency treatment for poisoning.
	Rotterdam Conventions on Prior and Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade (1998)	Articles 1, 5 and 6	Curb trade in banned and hazardous chemicals and pesticides; develop national procedures for control of their use and trade; list banned and hazardous chemicals and pesticides.
	UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)	Articles 21(1), 23, 24, 29(3)	Improvement of livelihood in sanitation, health and housing; participate in health delivery; maintain traditional health systems; effective monitoring of health.

Bibliography

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