The content of this document was previously published in issue 5/2020 of the GLOBALG.A.P. technical news, and was continuously updated until issue 1/2023. This document overwrites any previous rules published in issues of the technical news dated before April 2023 and previous versions of this document.

1. Scope

This document defines the rules for uploading audit information to Audit Online Hub (AOH) and is applicable to all GLOBALG.A.P. approved certification bodies (CBs). AOH is a system launched by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat to collect audit information. It also allows certification decisions to be made for the standards and add-ons that are deployed in the Smart Process. These rules apply to all standards and add-ons that are included in the AOH Legacy Process: Produce Handling Assurance version 1.2 and those standards and add-ons whose checklists are uploaded to AOH but for which certification is recorded in the GLOBALG.A.P. database and the certificate is issued in the GLOBALG.A.P. database.

2. Available standards and add-ons

The following GLOBALG.A.P. standards are currently available in the AOH Legacy Process:

- Integrated Farm Assurance (IFA) version 5.2, all scopes and sub-scopes
- IFA v5.3-GFS, all scopes and sub-scopes
- IFA v5.4-GFS, all scopes and sub-scopes
- IFA v5.4-1-GFS, all scopes and sub-scopes
- Harmonized Produce Safety Standard (HPSS) version 1.2, all sub-scopes
- Produce Handling Assurance (PHA) version 1.2
- Chain of Custody (CoC) version 6.0, all scopes and sub-scopes (no longer valid).
- CoC v6.1, all scopes and sub-scopes.

The following add-ons are available in the AOH Legacy Process:

- Nurture Module version 11.2, v11.3, and v11.4
- Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule (PSR) add-on version 1.2 and v1.3
- Coop Italia Pesticide Transparency add-on version 1.0-2
- GLOBALG.A.P. PLUS version 1.1

3. Terminology for certification, standard, or add-on.

- Whenever the term "audit" is used, it shall refer to an inspection, audit, or assessment depending on the relevant Option for certification, standard, or add-on.
- Whenever the term "certificate" is used, it shall refer to a certificate, proof of assessment, letter of conformance, or letter of attestation depending on the relevant standard or add-on.

- Whenever the term "producer(s)" is used, it shall refer to persons (individuals) or businesses (companies, individual producers, or producer groups) that are legally responsible for the production processes and the products of the respective scope, sold by those persons or businesses, as well as companies certified to the GLOBALG.A.P. CoC or GLOBALG.A.P. Compound Feed Manufacturing (CFM) standards.

- Whenever the term "general regulations" is used, it shall refer to the GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations and/or the relevant add-on's general rules.

- Whenever specific rules are referred to, they are identified by including the name of the relevant standard or add-on.

4. Applicable timelines and general rules

- From 15 November 2020, all (i.e., 100%) checklists for the FSMA PSR add-on (including its IFA checklist part) shall be uploaded per month.

- From 1 December 2021, 50% of all checklists for IFA v5.2, IFA v5.3-GFS, and IFA v5.4-GFS, shall be uploaded per month. This requirement is extended to IFA v5.4.1-GFS.

- From 1 December 2021, 50% of all checklists for HPSS v1.2 or PHA v1.2 shall be uploaded per month.

- From 1 April 2021, all (i.e., 100%) checklists for Nurture Module v11.2 shall be uploaded per month. This requirement is extended to v11.3 from 6 September 2022, and v11.4 from 1 April 2023. The Nurture Module audit reports consist of the Nurture Module and IFA checklists (see "Nurture Module Scheme Rules", section 5 d).

- From 15 May 2020 (when the GLOBALG.A.P. Remote procedure was first published), all (i.e., 100%) audits conducted according to the GLOBALG.A.P. Remote procedure for IFA v5.2 and the FSMA PSR add-on shall be uploaded per month.

- From 25 January 2021 (when Nurture Module v11.2 was released in AOH), all (i.e., 100%) audits conducted according to the GLOBALG.A.P. Remote procedure for the Nurture Module shall be uploaded per month.

- From 1 October 2021, 50% of all checklists for CoC v6.0 shall be uploaded per month.

- From 10 August 2022, all (i.e., 100%) checklists for GLOBALG.A.P. PLUS shall be uploaded per month.

- From 10 August 2022, all (i.e., 100%) checklists for the Coop Italia Pesticide Transparency add-on shall be uploaded per month.

IFA checklists that are uploaded for the FSMA PSR add-on or Nurture Module, or because the GLOBALG.A.P. Remote procedure is being used, may be counted towards the 50% referenced for IFA.

General rules

- When a new version of a standard or add-on is published and the preceding version is added to the AOH Legacy Process, the upload rules for that standard or add-on shall remain the same. E.g., following the publication of Nurture Module v11.4, and the addition of v11.3 to the AOH Legacy Process, the upload rules for v11.3 are the same as they were for v11.2 (i.e., 100% of the checklists for v11.3 shall be uploaded per month).

- The percentage for any standard or add-on is calculated based on the total number of audit reports for all valid versions (e.g., 50% for IFA means 50% of (IFA v5.2 + IFA v5.3 + IFA v5.4-GFS + IFA v5.4-1-GFS))

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- The use of AOH is not currently considered in CB key performance indicator scoring, and no sanctions will be issued for unintentional operational mistakes. Violations of the uploading rules will however be subject to sanctioning.

- The required percentage of uploads is based on the number of certification decisions, rather than the number of audit reports (see point 5.6).

- The number of checklists to be uploaded (resulting from the percentage calculation above) shall always be rounded up to the next whole number.

- All deadlines are linked to the date of the audit and not to the date of the certification decision.* (see clarification below)

- Initial, recertification, surveillance, and unannounced audits are included.

*Two processes are relevant here:

(i)   The uploading of audit reports/checklists to AOH conducted by the CB (linked to audit date)

(ii) The monitoring of CB performance by the Customer Support team with regards to process (i) above (linked to the date of certification decision (DoCD))

Uploading of audit reports to AOH: The date indicated in the AOH upload rules correlates with the date of the audit (e.g., all remote audits for IFA v5.2 and the FSMA PSR add-on conducted from 15 May 2020 onwards shall be uploaded to AOH.).

Monitoring of CB performance: The certification decisions taken in the database and the certification decisions recorded in AOH (as part of the audit upload process) for a defined period are compared. Audit reports in AOH must have their status set to "closed" in order to be considered in this comparison. Hence, during this monitoring, the DoCD in the database is compared with the DoCD recorded in AOH (for closed audit reports).

The Customer Support team checks the percentage of uploads and sends warning emails to urge CBs to comply with these AOH upload rules. This warning system is defined in the AOH upload rules and the AOH upload rules update that are available in the GLOBALG.A.P. document center. The Customer Support team shall forward the cases of CBs that, according to this sanctioning system, may be subject to a Yellow Card sanction to the Integrity Surveillance Committee (ISC). The ISC shall review the case and apply any corresponding sanctions according to the GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations.

5. Specific rules for the introduction period

5.1   For as long as less than 100% of the checklists for a standard or add-on are required to be uploaded to AOH, this shall be considered an introduction period and the specific rules below apply.

5.2   IFA checklists uploaded for the FSMA PSR add-on, Nurture Module, and through the GLOBALG.A.P. Remote procedure may be counted towards the percentage referenced for IFA.

5.3   Whenever the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat proposes a change to the percentage of uploads for IFA, there shall be an evaluation meeting with the Certification Body Committee to determine further strategy based on the feedback collected.

5.4   For as long as the AOH Legacy Process is still valid for a specific standard or add-on, the use of AOH will not be considered in CB key performance indicator scoring, and no sanctions for unintentional operational mistakes will be issued. However, errors in the content of checklists uploaded by CBs (e.g., insufficient or incorrect comments, incorrect control points and compliance criteria interpretation) remain subject to evaluation by the Certification Integrity Program (CIPRO).

When the corresponding standard or add-on becomes mandatory in the AOH Smart Process, the prescribed AOH upload rules shall apply and mistakes made during its use will affect CB key performance indicator scoring. Additionally, from 15 May 2021, the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat began to strictly enforce the requirement for the specified percentage of audit checklists to be uploaded to AOH (see 5.5).

5.5   Sanctioning process for missing uploads

5.5.1   If the number of audit reports not uploaded to AOH per month exceeds 10 audit checklists or 5% of the total number of audit checklists required for any month monitored by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat (whichever is lower), a First Warning shall be issued to the CB. The CB shall upload the missing audit checklists by the end of the following month.

5.5.2   If, in subsequent monitoring by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat, 10 audit checklists or 5% of the total number of audit checklists required for any month (whichever is lower) are missing, or if any of the previously missing audit checklists were not uploaded by the deadline, the First Warning shall be escalated to a Second Warning. The CB shall upload the missing audit checklists by the end of the following month.

5.5.3   If, during the third monitoring process in a row by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat, 10 audit checklists or 5% of the total number of audit checklists required for any month (whichever is lower) are missing, or if any of the previously missing audit checklists were not uploaded by the deadline, the Second Warning shall be escalated to a Yellow Card. The CB shall upload the missing audit checklists by the end of the following month.

5.5.4   If, during the fourth monitoring process in a row by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat, 10 audit checklists or 5% of the total number of audit checklists required for any month (whichever is lower) are missing, or if any of the previously missing audit checklists were not uploaded by the deadline, the Yellow Card shall be escalated to a Red Card. The CB shall upload the missing audit checklists by the end of the following month.

5.5.5   Yellow Cards and Red Cards are managed by the ISC. Anytime the performance of a CB results in a Yellow Card or Red Card, this information shall be sent to the ISC for a decision at the next ISC meeting.

5.6   The percentage of uploads shall be counted per certificate holder – i.e., the CB may choose any combination of standards, Option 1 or Option 2 audits.

Example 1: CB X is required to upload 50% of all audit reports for a standard or add-on per month.

CB X audits an Option 2 producer group, resulting in one audit report for the QMS and five audit reports for the audited sample of producer group members; a total of six audit reports but only one certification decision.

CB X also audits an Option 1 single site producer, resulting in one audit report and one certification decision.

CB X may either decide to upload the six audit reports for the Option 2 producer group or the one audit report for the Option 1 single site producer. Either decision shall satisfy the requirement.

Example 2: CB Y has audited 100 Option 1 individual producers and 20 Option 2 producer groups against IFA v5.2, as well as 20 Option 1 individual producers and 20 Option 2 producer groups against IFA v5.4-1-GFS.

The total number of certificate holders that has been audited is 160. CB Y shall upload 50% of 160, or 80 audit reports. The CB may select any 80 audit reports – e.g., 80 audit reports for IFA v5.2 audits of Option 1 individual producers to comply with the upload rule

5.7   The number of checklists to be uploaded shall always be rounded up to the next whole number.

Example: The CB has audited 45 certificate holders. 50% of 45 = 22.5, so 23 checklists shall be uploaded.

This means the CB shall always upload at least one checklist if the CB has conducted any audits for the relevant month.

6.   General rules for uploading audit information

6.1   Whenever a new standard, add-on, or an attribute is added to AOH, the upload of audit information for this standard or add-on shall become mandatory within three months of official notification to the CBs. The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat may decide to extend this deadline, which shall be communicated in a timely manner to all CBs and audit management software providers.

6.2   The documents that shall be uploaded (depending on the standard and producer type) are:

- QMS checklists for Option 1 multisite producers with QMS or Option 2 producer groups

- Checklists for Option 1 individual producers or Option 1 multisite producers without QMS

- Checklists for the sampled Option 2 producer group members or production sites of Option 1 multisite producers with QMS

This includes initial, surveillance, unannounced, and recertification audits.

6.3   Depending on the standard or add-on, additional audit information may need to be uploaded. The additional mandatory audit information shall be specified in AOH. Mandatory fields in AOH are highlighted using a red arterisk. The uploaded checklist and the additional mandatory information are required to set the status of the audit report to closed.

6.4   Upload timing

6.4.1   The CB shall upload the required documents within 28 days of the closure of any outstanding non-conformances or on the day of a positive or negative certification decision in the GLOBALG.A.P. database, whichever comes first. CBs may also upload the checklist immediately after the audit while allowing the producer enough time to submit corrective evidence.

6.4.2   The final version of the checklist shall be uploaded:

- In case of a positive certification decision, this shall include the closing of outstanding non-conformances (if any).

- In case of a negative certification decision (suspension), the checklist shall include the remaining open non-conformance(s) after the period to present corrective actions has expired.

- In case of an initial audit, when the CB sets the producer status to "open non-conformance", the checklist shall include the remaining open non-conformance(s) (in accordance with the GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations, part I, 6.4.1 c) (i)).

6.4.3 CIPRO assessors may access the uploaded audit documents. CIPRO assessors may use the uploaded audit documents to assess CB performance.

6.5 Language of uploads

6.5.1 The CB may upload the audit documents in the local working language.

6.5.2 The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat may request a translation of audit documents into English. This translation may be done internally by the CB.

6.5 Data safety and privacy

6.6.1 Access to the audit information in AOH is granted based on the applicable data access rights for each standard and add-on.

6.6.2 Individual producers/Producer groups/Companies agree that the full checklist shall be made available to the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat in accordance with the relevant data access rules.

6.6.3 The comments on the checklist shall not contain confidential business information or any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person, such as names or data that may clearly be linked to responsible persons or any other employees. The CB shall retain this information in their records and be able to recall it upon request.

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