

Dear GLOBALG.A.P. scheme manager,

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1 TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

This technical communication is uploaded to the GLOBALG.A.P. document center and the CB Extranet. It is also sent to the scheme managers of each approved and provisionally approved certification body (CB), to the technical committees, to the hosts of the national technical working groups, to the GLOBALG.A.P. Advisory Board, to accreditation bodies that have signed a memorandum of understanding, and to all benchmarked scheme and checklist owners. You can ask us to add selected persons to the mailing list or to send these technical news releases to all your registered staff by sending your request to Valentin Pazachev at pazachev@globalgap.org.

Several of the sections included have been previously communicated to you and have been added with minimal or no changes. These are marked with *Previously communicated: XX Month XXXX*. Sections with new information have been marked with (New) next to the heading.

2 INTEGRATED FARM ASSURANCE

2.1 About IFA v6 implementation

2.1.1 Operational and non-operational P&Cs for years 2 and 3 (New)

As described in the “GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations – Rules for certification bodies” section 7, “Audit process,” the certification body (CB) audit content shall be organized in a three-year cycle. In the audits in years 2 and 3, checklists will be available for CBs in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems. These checklists identify operational and non-operational requirements. CBs shall still audit every principle and criteria (P&C) and will be able to amend the previous year’s comments in the non-operational items where needed. The requirement for an annual recertification (subsequent) audit remains. The certificate validity is still 12 months.

The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat consulted with the technical committees and certification body committee members to decide these operational items for audits in years 2 and 3. Answers (including comments) from the previous year’s audit will be copied over to the current year’s audit, provided that there is no change, and will still be editable for the CB auditors during the audit.

We are happy to announce that CBs now have access to the list of operational and non-operational items (not the CB audit checklists for years 2 and 3) in the audit method and justification guideline for Integrated Farm Assurance (IFA) standard version 6 Smart for fruit and vegetables and flowers and ornamentals, as well as for IFA v6 Smart/GFS for aquaculture. This list is also available in the CB Extranet for IFA v6 QMS and IFA v6 Smart for hops.

The checklists with operational and non-operational items will only apply for producers that continue with the same CB for recertification. The overall **minimum** audit duration cannot be reduced. For IFA v6 GFS, the list of operational and non-operational items will become available after GFSI recognition is achieved.

2.1.2 Guidelines for CBs for implementing effective unannounced audit procedures (New)

We would like to inform CBs that the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat has developed guidelines to support CBs facing logistical challenges when implementing unannounced audit procedures.

The purpose of this document is to present key points for consideration that may help CBs create operational procedures to facilitate the unannounced CB audit process while minimizing the risk of unannounced CB audits being rejected and producers subsequently being sanctioned.

The document “Implementing effective unannounced audit procedures – Guidelines for certification bodies” is available for CBs in the CB Extranet and is a guideline, not an obligatory or normative document.

2.1.3 Auditing guideline for IFA v6 Smart/GFS for aquaculture (New)

The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat recently published the auditing guideline for IFA v6 Smart/GFS for aquaculture (similar to the IFA v6 Smart audit method and justification guideline for fruit and vegetables) in the document center. You can find this document [here](#).

2.1.4 Changes in the GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations – Rules for CBs (New)

After the last Integrity Surveillance Committee (ISC) meeting, it was decided to amend the following sections of the “GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations – Rules for certification bodies”:

a) Section 10.1 c) (iii): Increase of the daily ISC cost reimbursement fee from €1,000 to €1,200 per day.

During the 36th ISC meeting, the decision was made to increase CBs’ cost contribution to €1,200 per man-day of CIPRO assessment. The decision was made due to the increase in logistical costs of CIPRO reassessments in recent years. The cost contribution had not been changed in the past ten years. The new cost contribution will be applicable from October 2024 (the 37th ISC meeting) and will be re-evaluated in 3 years’ time.

However, the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat will only implement this cost reimbursement fee obligation and send out the invoices after the notification of the final decision of the ISC (due to the outstanding decision of the reassessment fees for CBs).

b) Clarification of section 11.3: The definition of the Second Warning in section 11.3.2 of the “GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations – Rules for certification bodies” indicates that the Second Warning occurs after the First Warning if the First Warning is not closed. However, the GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations also state that warnings are not consecutive. Therefore, a CB may receive a Second Warning **directly**, without having received a First Warning beforehand.

2.2 Changes in IFA v6 GFS

Previously communicated on 2 May 2024

We would like to inform you that due to the GFSI recognition process for IFA v6 GFS, we made some changes in the GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations that apply for IFA v6 GFS.

The changes are as follows:

Audit reporting for GFSI-recognized GLOBALG.A.P. standards

As communicated in TN 03/2023 (no changes since TN 03/2023): Section 8.1. p) of the “GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations – Rules for certification bodies,” section 7.1 d) of the “GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations – Rules for producer groups and multisite producers with QMS,” and section 7.1 d) of the “GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations – Rules for individual producers” currently read:

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

This text is amended for IFA v6 GFS as follows:

“CBs shall provide the final CB audit report including the completed audit checklist to producers registered for any GLOBALG.A.P. GFSI-benchmarked standard, at the latest by the time of the certification decision.”

Producers moving between certification programs

As communicated in TN 03/2023 (no changes since TN 03/2023): Herewith we communicate the addition of section 5.2.4 to the “GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations – Rules for producer groups and multisite producers with QMS” under section 9, “Additional requirements for IFA v6 GFS,” and to the “GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations – Rules for individual producers” under section 8, “Additional requirements for IFA v6 GFS.”

The text to be added is as follows:

“CBs shall complete a risk assessment on producers that switch from any GFSI-approved Certification Programme to any GLOBALG.A.P. GFSI-benchmarked standard. This risk assessment shall consider, but shall not be limited to, such aspects as:

- Unannounced audits
- Suspensions
- Withdrawals
- Cancellations, etc., by the previous certification program

In all cases, audits of producers moving from another GFSI-benchmarked Certification Programme to a GLOBALG.A.P. GFSI-benchmarked standard shall always be considered as an initial audit and not a subsequent (recertification) audit.”

Clarification for the non-conforming product procedure in FV-GFS 11.01 and AQ 17.02

As communicated in TN 03/2023 (no changes since TN 03/2023): We would like to inform you that P&C FV-GFS 11.01 in IFA v6 GFS for fruit and vegetables and P&C AQ 17.02 in IFA v6 Smart/GFS for aquaculture are amended to include the text:

“Where the root cause is related to significant food safety reasons, the procedure in place shall be implemented and maintained for the determination and implementation of corrective actions. Such actions shall aim to eliminate the cause of a non-conformity to prevent reoccurrence.”

So, since the launch of TN 03/2023, FV-GFS 11.01 reads:

FV-GFS 11.01	Procedures are in place to manage and handle non-conforming products.	<p>Documented procedures, including a hold-and-release process, shall be in place to prevent unintended use or delivery of non-conforming products.</p> <p>Products may be considered non-conforming because of food safety issues, quality issues, maximum residue limit exceedance(s), cross contamination issues, etc.</p> <p>Non-conforming products shall be identified during production and handling. Non-conforming products shall be segregated, appropriately handled, and potentially redirected to a suitable end use (processing, animal feed, etc.). If not</p>
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		<p>redirected, the products shall be disposed of appropriately.</p> <p>The non-conforming product procedures shall also address the treatment of dropped product, as per the risk assessment.</p> <p>Products that pose a risk to food safety shall not be harvested or shall be discarded. Discarded products and waste materials shall be stored in clearly designated areas to avoid contamination of products. Signs shall be used to identify waste products, where appropriate. These areas shall be routinely cleaned and/or disinfected according to the cleaning schedule.</p> <p>Where the root cause is related to significant food safety reasons, the procedure in place shall be implemented and maintained for the determination and implementation of corrective actions. Such actions shall aim to eliminate the cause of a nonconformity to prevent reoccurrence.</p>
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and AQ 17.02 reads:

AQ 17.02	Procedures are in place to manage and handle non-conforming products.	<p>Documented procedures shall be in place specifying that all non-conforming products be clearly identified and quarantined as appropriate. These products shall be handled or disposed of according to the nature of the problem and/or specific customer requirements.</p> <p>Where the root cause is related to significant food safety reasons, the procedure in place shall be implemented and maintained for the determination and implementation of corrective actions. Such actions shall aim to eliminate the cause of a nonconformity to prevent reoccurrence.</p>
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Maintenance of competency for auditors approved for GFSI-recognized standards

As communicated in TN 03/2023 (content adapted since TN 03/2023): We would like to inform you that sections 12.3.5 i) and 13.3.5 i), found under section 14, “Additional requirements for IFA v6 GFS,” in the “GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations – Rules for certification bodies,” are to be replaced by the following text:

“The CB shall have in place a procedure to ensure that annually every auditor conducts at least five on-site audits at a number of different producers.

In the case of a CB auditor approved for GFSI-recognized GLOBALG.A.P. standards, the audits required for maintenance of competency shall be against any GLOBALG.A.P. GFSI-benchmarked GLOBALG.A.P. standards with *at least one* of these annual on-site audit being against the respective GFSI-recognized GLOBALG.A.P. standard.

If this requirement cannot be met, the CB auditors shall carry out 5 on-site audits against any GFSI-approved Certification Programme (see list [here](#)), with at least one of these annual on-site audits being against the respective GFSI-recognized GLOBALG.A.P. standard.

For example, a CB auditor may conduct 4 audits to any GFSI-approved Certification Programme and only one audit to IFA v6 GFS to maintain competency for IFA v6 GFS.”

Random selection of 25% of the sample for Option 2 producer groups/Option 1 multisite producers with QMS

As communicated in TN 03/2023 (content adapted since TN 03/2023): As it reads in the “GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations – Rules for producer groups and multisite producers with QMS,” section 6.1.2.1. e), under section 14, “Additional requirements for IFA v6 GFS,” “at least 25% of the sample shall be randomly selected from the actual number of producer group members/production sites.”

We would like to remind CBs to record in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems (Audit Online Hub (AOH)) the producer group members/production sites randomly selected.

Text is also added to section 6.1.2.1 e), under section 14, “Additional requirements for IFA v6 GFS” in the “GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations – Rules for producer groups and multisite producers with QMS” (changes underlined):

“Selection of members/sites shall be based on the risk assessment carried out by the CB. However, at least 25% of the sample shall be randomly selected from the actual number of members/sites.

The risk assessment shall include consideration of the members’/sites’ internal audit program findings and the sites’ specific risks.”

The changes above will be included in the next update of the IFA v6 normative documents (IFA v6.1) and will additionally apply to the Harmonized Produce Safety Standard (HPSS).

2.3 Clarifications for preharvest water analysis (New)

We would like to communicate that P&C 30.05.01 in IFA v6 for fruit and vegetables has been adapted to include the consideration of preharvest water analysis, and to add clarification for municipal water use (changes underlined):

“All pre- and postharvest water shall be analyzed for food safety (physical, chemical, and microbiological contamination) at a frequency consistent with the risk assessment and current sector-specific standards or relevant regulations. Water analysis shall be part of the water management plan and completed at least once per year, or more frequently if required by the risk assessment (e.g., in controlled environment agriculture (CEA) production).

A minimum of one analysis per season or certification cycle shall be required on water that comes into contact with products during pre- and postharvest activities, with samples taken as near the point of application as possible. A minimum of one analysis shall be required even when using municipal water sources.

The water analysis shall reflect the nature and extent of the water system, the scope of production (type of product, applications, harvesting, handling, water sources, etc.). Where different water sources are used, they shall each be sampled. Samples shall be taken from locations that are representative of the water source, usually as close to the point of application as possible. Analysis shall be performed during the time of water use on products and during the period of highest risk.

There shall be a documented procedure for water analysis, including:

- Frequency of sampling
- Person responsible for sampling
- Method of sample collection
- Laboratory analyzing the samples

- Location sampled

Records of all analysis shall be maintained, and in cases where municipal water or a group water scheme is used during pre- and postharvest activities, the results of the water analysis provided by the water supplier (municipality or group water scheme operator) may be used as evidence during the audit process. (Group water schemes are those operating in rural areas, outside the scope of urban public mains systems. They can be public or private, depending on whether the water comes from the public mains or a private source such as a lake, river, well, or spring.) However, the producer and/or product handling unit (PHU) must still consider the risk of contamination occurring between the entry point to the farm and/or PHU and the point of use. These may include distribution systems, pipes, storage points of water, etc. In cases where a risk of contamination is identified, at a minimum, an annual water analysis (in addition to the results of the water analysis provided by the water supplier) shall be required by the producer and/or PHU to confirm that the water meets the minimum requirements as per the risk assessment."

The changes above will be included in the next update of the IFA v6 normative documents (IFA v6.1).

2.4 About birds in production sites and PHUs (New)

We would like to remind you that reasonable precautions shall be taken by producers, as described in the requirements of the GLOBALG.A.P. IFA standard, to effectively minimize the risk of contamination arising from the presence of birds on the farm, especially during harvest (farm level) and postharvest (storage and/or packing level) operations.

The IFA standard's requirements focus on the protection of harvested products and harvest containers if they stay outdoors in the field, and on the efficient closing of produce handling facilities (indoor storage or packing), to avoid birds nesting inside through adequate control of entrance points (e.g., via window netting, use of strip curtains in entrances, etc.). Furthermore, there is no requirement in the IFA standard for a producer to kill birds or to destroy or remove their nests.

If a producer has developed means to effectively control the associated risks and can demonstrate this through adequate measures and justifications, the presence of birds (e.g., swallows) and their nests could be allowed near outdoor production areas, for example in on-farm corridors or small landscape structures that are used to improve connectivity for the species on landscape level and protect and promote local wildlife species that are established in the farm's agricultural area (e.g., trees, groups of trees, hedges, and small ponds). If providing nesting for the birds outdoors, the producer shall place the nests in places that minimize the risk of product contamination.

In cases where a birds' nest is already established within the production area, appropriate measures shall be planned and taken by the producer to reduce possible product contamination without using destructive techniques to rid the production area of the nests.

Compliance with GLOBALG.A.P. standards is also based on locally applicable legislation, where in some countries removing or destroying specially protected species' already established nests in indoor packing/storage facilities is prohibited. Therefore, GLOBALG.A.P. standards do not require such techniques from producers.

Please consider and compile the cross-requirements from the following sections of the IFA v6 normative documents during your audits:

- "GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations – Rules for individual producers," section 1, "Introduction," fifth paragraph: "Legislation relevant to principles and criteria (P&Cs) more demanding than GLOBALG.A.P. requirements overrides the GLOBALG.A.P. requirements."

- IFA v6 Smart P&Cs for fruit and vegetables:
 1. FV-Smart 19.07: “Appropriate measures shall be taken to reduce possible product contamination by animals within the production area. Where there is evidence of animal activity that may result in product contamination, appropriate measures shall be taken. Eliminating wildlife or using destructive techniques to rid the production area of all animals are not considered appropriate measures.”
 2. FV-Smart 21.01: “The risk assessment shall be:
 - Available for all production sites, including structures
 - Reviewed at least annually or when changes occur (new risks emerge or new sites or crops enter production)
 It shall consider:
 - Biological, physical, and chemical hazards...”
 3. FV-Smart 21.02: “A management plan shall:
 - Be reviewed together with the risk assessment (annually or when changes occur) and address all risks identified in the risk assessment
 - Describe the control measures implemented for the risks identified
 - Be appropriate to farm operations...”
 4. FV-Smart 22.01.01: “A documented biodiversity plan for the farm shall be available. This can be a generic plan that has been made farm-specific. This biodiversity plan shall:
 - Take into account local legislation and tailor the plan contents to the on-farm reality (open field, greenhouse, vertical farming, etc.)”

2.5 Changes in the residue monitoring system checklist v6.0_Sep22

Previously communicated on 8 May 2024

We would like to inform you that in the residue monitoring system (RMS) checklist version 6.0_Sep22, “Definitions” tab, changes have been made to point 6 under:

- “Criteria 2.4 and 2.7– Minimum number of samples for the **production** of fruit and vegetables, combinable crops, tea, and hops: Rules for level of sampling”
- “Criteria 2.5 and 2.7– Minimum number of samples for the **traded** fruit and vegetables, combinable crops, tea, and hops: Rules for the level of sampling”

The present text in point 6 reads: “If the RMS operator is able to demonstrate **compliance** to the **standard level** in the two years prior to the year of implementation of RMS v6, the reduced level applies.”

The new text for point 6 reads: “If the RMS operator is able to demonstrate **compliance** to the **reduced level** in the two years prior to the year of implementation of RMS v6, the reduced level applies. If the RMS operator is **not** able to demonstrate compliance to the reduced level, the **standard level** applies.”

This updated text for point 6 is applicable from the publication date of this communication. The text that appears in point 6 in the “Definitions” tab will be updated in the next version of the RMS checklist.

2.6 Sublicense and certification agreements (New)

We have received reports that the sublicense and certification agreements cannot be digitally signed by two parties. Our investigation shows that this occurs when the document is opened in a web browser and not in an Adobe application. In order for the document and signature fields to work correctly, please always download the file and open it in an Adobe application, not in a web browser.

2.7 GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking regulations v6.1 (New)

The GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking regulations were updated to version 6.1 on 15 May 2024 and published [here](#).

The updates are:

- New: BCSO agreement definition; sections 6.2 b) and 7.3 c) (vii)
- Changes: General improvements of language; sections 1, 1.4, 3.5.8 c) & d) (iii), 4 k), 6.1 j), 7.1 b), and 10.

2.8 Emergency procedure for CBs operating in Israel, Lebanon, the Palestinian territories, and Japan

Previously communicated in TN 01/2024

Due to the war in Israel and the Palestinian territories, and the dramatic earthquake that occurred in Japan early in January 2024 in the prefectures of Ishikawa, Fukui, Niigata, Toyama, and Nagano, the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat offered the possibility to activate the emergency procedure for certificate validity extension for a maximum period of six months.

In addition, certification bodies that are not able to conduct on-site inspections/audits due to the current official travel restrictions and state of emergency circumstances (*"force majeure"*) in Israel (including Israel and the Golan Heights; Israel and the West Bank), Lebanon, the Palestinian territories, and in Japan in the prefectures of Ishikawa, Fukui, Niigata, Toyama, and Nagano, are allowed to conduct inspections/audits remotely following the GLOBALG.A.P. Remote procedure (version 1.3)/GLOBALG.A.P. Full Remote procedure version 6 (for IFA v6 Smart audits).

The time frame for the application of the GLOBALG.A.P. Remote procedure is:

- Up to **31 December 2024** for Israel, Lebanon, and the Palestinian territories
- Up to **30 October 2024** for Japan's prefectures of Ishikawa, Fukui, Niigata, Toyama, and Nagano

If further extension of the time frame of validity for applying the GLOBALG.A.P. Remote procedure is required, it will be communicated in a timely manner by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat.

The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat will continue to communicate updates on this topic and remains available to respond to questions or concerns.

2.9 Transition tools to IFA v6 GFS/Smart

As communicated in TN 01/2024, the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat has launched the IFA v6 transition tools for other scopes/product categories in order to facilitate a smooth transition from the previous IFA version to IFA v6.

CBs are encouraged to inform their clients directly about the availability of this tool to facilitate a seamless transition. All the IFA v6 transition tools are now available on the GLOBALG.A.P. website.

[Fruit and vegetables, GFS edition – English](#)

[Fruit and vegetables, GFS edition – Spanish](#)

[Fruit and vegetables, Smart edition – English](#)

[Fruit and vegetables, Smart edition – Spanish](#)

[Aquaculture – English](#)

[Flowers and ornamentals – English](#)

3 HARMONIZED PRODUCE SAFETY STANDARD

3.1 Random selection of 25 % and unannounced audit of 20% of the sample in Option 2 producer groups/Option 1 multisite producers with QMS

Previously communicated on 2 May 2024

We would like to remind you that according to the HPSS general regulations, section 5.2.3 d), “for producers with high-risk products, at least 20% of the inspections of the selected producer members or production sites shall be unannounced.” Also, according to the HPSS general regulations section 5.3.2.1 g), “at least 25% of the square root sample of the actual number of sites or producers shall be randomly selected,” and section 5.2.3 e), “the 25% of the selected producer members or sites shall be selected randomly.”

We hereby ask you to indicate in the audit reports which producer group members/production sites were randomly selected and audited unannounced, following the requirements above.

4 ADD-ON-RELATED UPDATES

4.1 GRASP add-on

4.1.1 Exception granted to conduct GRASP v2 assessments in countries without a national interpretation guideline extended until 31 October 2024

Previously communicated on 4 June 2024

As communicated in TN 01/2024, in countries where national interpretation guidelines (NIGs) for the GLOBALG.A.P. Risk Assessment on Social Practice (GRASP) version 1.3-1-i existed and a GRASP v2 NIG was presented to the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat before the end of 2023, we allow CBs to conduct assessments against GRASP v2 even without a published NIG for GRASP v2 to give the local stakeholders a longer period to finalize the NIG for GRASP v2. The exception period is now extended from **1 July to 31 October 2024** for specific countries.

In the countries listed below, CBs can conduct assessments against GRASP v2 without further requirements until the end of October 2024:

Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Colombia, Croatia, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, France, Germany, Georgia, Guinea-Bissau, Guatemala, Hungary, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Latvia, Lithuania, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, São Tomé and Príncipe, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Ukraine, United States, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe.

This list is also available on the [GLOBALG.A.P. website](#).

After 1 July 2024, in the countries listed below, CBs shall use the new NIGs for GRASP v2. These will be available in the [GLOBALG.A.P. document center](#). The relevant countries are:

Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Lebanon, Morocco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, North Macedonia, Malaysia, Philippines, Romania, Spain, South Africa, Switzerland, Thailand, and Türkiye/Turkey.

Auditors conducting GRASP v2 assessments in countries not listed above shall proceed using the process described in the GRASP v2 general rules, section 5.3, “Special registration of assessors in countries without a NIG.”

4.1.2 Clarification for GRASP v2 compliance level requirements (New)

We would like to clarify here that for all GRASP v2 assessments conducted for the first time, the Minor Must compliance level for the first year is:

- **Minor Musts: 70% compliance** with all Minor Must criteria is compulsory in the **initial** assessment of GRASP v2.

For **family farms without workers**:

- **Minor Musts:** Any non-compliance with Minor Must criteria is accepted in the initial assessment of GRASP v2.

The points above refer to the initial or to the first-year recertification assessment against GRASP v2 and the surveillance assessments taking place during the first year of validity of the GRASP v2 letter of conformance (LoC).

In the following years, the Minor Must compliance levels change to:

- **Minor Musts: 75% compliance** with all Minor Must criteria is compulsory in all the surveillance and/or subsequent assessments of GRASP v2.

For **family farms without workers**:

- **Minor Musts: 100%** compliance with all Minor Must criteria is compulsory in all following subsequent and/or surveillance assessments of GRASP v2.

4.1.3 Clarification of GRASP v2 – Country risk classification concept and interview rules, section 5.4.1 c) (New)

For low-risk countries without interviews, the sample for document review is at least 50% of the square root of the total number of workers.

We want to clarify that this sample **shall include all the categories and types** of employment, migratory status, and gender of workers working on the farm during the year before the day of the assessment (in the GRASP v2 audit report field “Workers during the year before today’s assessment”). If the producer has subcontracted workers during the year before the day of the assessment, they shall be included in the sample for document review, as described in section 5.4.1 c).

4.1.4 Clarification for GRASP assessors’ qualifications (New)

The GRASP v2 general rules, section 7.2 g) reads that “all assessors shall have previous experience in assessments/audits in the country of application of GRASP,” and that “this shall include at least: A minimum of two audits conducted, as auditor, in the country of application of GRASP (scheme or norm audited shall include similar criteria to the scope of GRASP and similar P&Cs on workers’ well-being as in IFA).”

After the implementation of this rule and the difficulties CBs faced complying with it when trying to expand their business into other countries, the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat has decided to allow that the requirement of a minimum of two audits could be met even when the GRASP assessor participates as an observer in these audits (audits against schemes with criteria similar to the scope of GRASP and similar P&Cs on workers’ well-being as those in IFA).

Another alternative for CBs is to use auditors who are not qualified for GLOBALG.A.P. primary production audits, but are certified social auditors, to accompany GLOBALG.A.P. auditors during

GRASP assessments. These social auditors shall comply with the formal skills indicated in the GRASP add-on.

If CBs still have problems signing off auditors in new countries where no previous GRASP assessments were conducted, we kindly ask you to communicate these cases to the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat at: standard_support@globalgap.org.

4.1.5 GRASP v2 self-paced IHT training for interview techniques (New)

As you are all already aware, GRASP v2 has already been implemented, and interviews are an important tool used during GRASP assessments.

Based on the CBs' and our stakeholders' feedback, and after analyzing the data collected through the common questions submitted via email to the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat, we introduced self-paced training for already approved GRASP v2 in-house trainers (IHTs). The main objective of this training is to align interview methodology during GRASP v2 assessments.

This training is **mandatory** for all approved GRASP v2 IHTs, who shall attend it **at the latest by the end of November 2024**. CBs shall retain records of this training.

The training is available in the GLOBALG.A.P. Academy platform in English and Spanish.

After this period, the training will become available to GRASP assessors as well, for all those who would like to attend it (optional training for GRASP assessors).

If you have problems while logging in, please contact the GLOBALG.A.P. Academy at academy@globalgap.org or cbtraining@globalgap.org. If you have any technical questions, kindly send an email to standard_support@globalgap.org.

4.2 SPRING add-on news

4.2.1 Parallel ownership in the SPRING add-on to be phased out after 1 January 2025 (New)

Previously in TN 03/2023, it was communicated that for the phasing out of parallel ownership (PO), we allow a transition period until 1 January 2025 for producers with a validity of one year in their cycle. During this period, PO is also allowed for Option 1 producers when they buy the same products originating from IFA-certified production processes from suppliers that do not hold a Sustainable Program for Irrigation and Groundwater Use (SPRING) add-on LoC for those products. At the same time, PO at the Option 2 producer group level is allowed.

Here we want to notify you that after 1 January 2025, PO (for single products) will **no longer** be allowed in the SPRING add-on for Option 1 or for Option 2. Please be aware that the prohibition of PO will apply for the producers'/producer group members' production processes for the same single product **and** when producers/producer groups buy this same product from a supplier that does not hold a SPRING LoC for this product.

So, after 1 January 2025, an Option 2 producer group might hold an IFA v6 Smart certificate for apples that includes the PO attribute. This may be because not all members of the group have IFA-certified production processes for apples, or because the group buys apples originating from production processes not certified to IFA. If this producer group is also registered for SPRING for apples, PO will not apply for apples. Furthermore, all producer group members producing apples that are included in the IFA v6 Smart certificate shall also be included in the SPRING add-on LoC. This producer group would also not be allowed to buy apples from suppliers that do not hold a SPRING LoC for apples.

4.3 FSMA PSR add-on (New)

Please note that the FDA published revised agricultural water requirements on 5 May 2024. The new requirements are effective as of 5 July 2024 and have been enforced as early as 7 April 2025 for the majority of producers. We are already taking action to update the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule (PSR) add-on accordingly.

5 GLOBALG.A.P. IT UPDATES

5.1 GLOBALG.A.P. database functionality

Previously communicated on 5 July 2024

Thank you for your patience as we continue to restore the performance of the GLOBALG.A.P. database. We recognize that there have been instances of downtime and are working with high priority on minimizing these interruptions. In parallel, the implementation of a variety of measures aimed at easing the data load and improving the critical issue of system speed is ongoing.

Temporary suspension of some CB sanction steps

In light of the problems with the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems, we will not take into account the following two items from the GLOBALG.A.P. certification body sanction catalog version 6 for the CB KPI rating until further notice. Nevertheless, we will continue to monitor these aspects and send reminders about missing items.

Incomplete or late upload of the certification data	Certificates not updated within 28 days; issuance of paper certificates without a prior database registration; sanctions not entered into the database in time; wrong product/incorrect quantity/incorrect certification scope certified in database; etc.	If the percentage of such cases exceeds 5% of the total number of certificate holders for that CB, then the sanction applies following "GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations – Rules for certification bodies," sections 11.3.1 b) (iii), 11.3.2 b) (iii), 11.3.3 d) (iv), and 11.3.4 e) (iv), along with a €100 fine for every reached sanction level. (If the correction requires the assistance of the customer support team, an additional administrative fee applies.)
Incomplete or late upload of CB audit report and the checklist for GRASP	Late upload of the checklists, aquaculture license holders without GRASP, etc.	The GRASP general rules require the upload of the report within 28 days at the latest after the time period for corrective actions has expired (within 3 months of the initial or 28 days of the subsequent CB audit). If a CB does not follow this rule and uploads the GRASP CB audit checklist after this time frame, the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat imposes a fine of €150 on the CB. Payment of this fine will not extinguish the damages liability of the CB derived from the omission.

Planned measures to improve database performance

We are also introducing several new measures to ease the data load on the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems and increase speed for users.

- CBs will **not be required** to upload CB audit reports to the database and/or to AOH for the following standards/add-ons. In addition, the monthly 20% upload requirements will be temporarily suspended until further notice. CB audit reports must, however, remain available on request, so uploading them to AOH is still recommended.
 - IFA v5.2, v5.4-1-GFS, v6
 - GLOBALG.A.P. Chain of Custody (CoC)
 - Harmonized Produce Safety Standard (HPSS)
 - Produce Handling Assurance (PHA)
 - GLOBALG.A.P. Compound Feed Manufacturing (CFM)
 - SPRING add-on
 - BioDiversity add-on
 - GLOBALG.A.P. Farm Sustainability Assessment (GGFSA) add-on
 - Impact-Driven Approach to Sustainability (IDA) add-on
 - TR4 Biosecurity for Bananas add-on
 - Other-party private solutions:
 - AH-DLL GROW add-on
- CBs **must continue to upload** CB audit report files to the database and/or to AOH for the following standards/add-ons where the 100% upload requirement is obligatory. This is due to external reporting requirements. (The FSMA PSR add-on was removed from the list after the CB communication on 5 July 2024.)
 - GLOBALG.A.P. Risk Assessment on Social Practice (GRASP) add-on
 - RMS checklist for IFA v6
 - Full Remote audits for IFA
 - Other-party private solutions:
 - Nurture Module
 - Coop Italia Pesticide Transparency add-on
 - GLOBALG.A.P. PLUS add-on
- We are analyzing the use of Validation Service and its influence on the speed of the database, including improving the code related to Validation Service integration with the database. Based on potential findings, we may eventually choose to separate the GLOBALG.A.P. database from Validation Service in terms of searching for a certificate and receiving bookmark responses. However, due to dependencies such as the availability of the GLOBALG.A.P. Number (GGN) per site being limited to Validation Service, we cannot suspend its use entirely.
- We will clean up unused and/or inactive bookmarking lists by deleting any list older than two years.
- We will set up a new and more advanced monitoring system to identify any other reasons and pinpoint actions that may cause database speed reduction.

Despite the current challenges, it is important to note that the use of the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems is still **obligatory**, and any certificate not registered in the GLOBALG.A.P. database is considered invalid. Any decision by a CB not to use the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems to register certificates is considered a fundamental breach of the contract between the CB and FoodPLUS GmbH according to the license and certification agreement.

Our Customer Support team remains available for workflow-related assistance. We kindly ask you to provide the precise date, time, GGN, and action taken in the database in the case of any specific malfunction, as additional details are invaluable in identifying the root cause of technical issues.

In addition to the above, the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat will allow a longer period for CBs to record the certification decision in the GLOBALG.A.P. database. Until further notice, the period allowed to record the certification decision in the database will be prolonged from 28 days to 40 days. This is to give more time for administration.

Please note that a gap in certificate validity shall still be avoided. Please also note that the actual certification decision has to be made within 28 days of the successful completion of the CB audit to be compliant with the GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations.

Furthermore, the FSMA PSR add-on has been included in the list of standards and add-ons that do not require a CB audit report to be uploaded. It is crucial to remember the regulatory and market requirements of the supply chains for those producers with products that have the United States as a country of destination. Importers are required to carry out verification activities through their Foreign Supplier Verification Program (FSVP) including reviews of *full* audit reports, non-compliances, and corrective actions.

Importers expect producers' audit reports to be uniform to facilitate these reviews, and they must receive these audit reports as protected or otherwise controlled documents which prevent alterations. A translated version of the documents needs to be provided by the CB upon request.

While we currently will not be assessing KPIs for CB audit report uploads, in light of these needs, CBs are still **strongly** encouraged to use AOH for IFA v5.4-1-GFS with FSMA PSR add-on audit reports. Furthermore, while market needs related to FSMA and FSVP generally apply to the FSMA PSR add-on, this applies for any IFA v5.4-1-GFS audit where the United States is the country of destination.

5.2 Avoid using non-printable characters for producer data (New)

We would like to ask CBs to avoid using non-printable characters (including but not limited to the following examples: –, ½, |, ♦, and °) when entering producer data (name, address) in the GLOBALG.A.P. database, because this causes massive performance issues in the database API.

5.3 Reminder to upload CB audit reports (New)

During routine checks, the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat identified many CB audit reports that were missing from the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems.

For clarification in GRASP v2: Where/If CBs choose the GLOBALG.A.P. database as the preferred platform/IT system, they are required to upload* the following to the database:

- 100% of farm checklists in the case of Option 1
- 100% of QMS checklists and sampled site member checklists in the case of Option 1 QMS or Option 2
- 100% of LoCs in all cases

*Please note: uploads to be done under the GGN of the producer group (certificate holder) rather than under the GGNs of the producer group members; uploads in the form of an AOH audit report

6 GLOBALG.A.P. FEES (NEW)

6.1 Fees for further harvest and new fee table

On 29 April 2024, the new [GLOBALG.A.P. fee table v8](#) that will become valid from 1 August 2024 was published.

In a [revised new fee table](#) (v8.0_1) and a new [GLOBALG.A.P. North America \(GGNA\) fee table](#), both published on 18 June 2024, the concepts of first and further harvest are redefined. The registration fee for the plants scope (IFA and HPSS) is calculated based on the area registered and accepted under first harvest for each crop. Any area that is used more than once in the annual certificate validity for the cultivation of the **same product only** shall be registered as further harvest. Areas registered under further harvest of the same product, are **not** subject to additional registration fees.

Further changes introduced in this new fee table v8.0-1 are:

- Hops removed from HPSS' available scopes
- Certification license fee for IFA Smart/GFS and HPSS changed
- Registration fee for IFA Crops GFS changed
- Registration and certification license fee for CoC changed
- Registration and license fees for TR4 Biosecurity for Bananas introduced
- Assessment license fee for GRASP add-on changed
- Assessment license fee for Biodiversity add-on changed
- Registration fee for IDA add-on introduced
- Assessment license fee for Primary Farm Assurance (PFA) Option 1 producers changed
- Registration fee for the IDA module introduced
- Explanations for registration and certification/assessment license fees added

Further changes introduced in the new GGNA fee table v8.0-1 are:

- Registration fee for IFA fruit and vegetables/combinable crops/tea/hops changed
- Certification license fee for all IFA changed
- Certification license fee for HPSS changed
- Fees for TR4 Biosecurity for Bananas removed
- Assessment license fee for GRASP add-on changed
- Assessment license fee for SPRING add-on introduced
- Explanation for FSMA PSR add-on introduced
- Assessment license fee for GGFSa add-on introduced
- Assessment license fee for Non-GM/"Ohne Gentechnik" add-on introduced
- Assessment license fee for IDA add-on introduced
- Registration fee for IDA module introduced
- Assessment license fee for PFA changed
- Fee for Other Programs introduced

- Explanations for registration and certification/assessment license fees added

The new fee table also applies for IFA v5.4-1-GFS.

For IFA v5.2 the old fee is still applicable for all subsopes that are still active, including combinable crops, tea, and plant propagation materials.

6.2 Breakdown of fees in Validation Service

The invoice breakdown for certificates issued in Validation Service is now available in the CB-AT platform. There is a new menu option, "Invoicing," through which monthly invoicing runs are available. This is only in case the certification decision was done in Validation Service. The database invoicing system remains the same as before.

7 PRODUCT LIST UPDATES (NEW)

There have been some updates to the GLOBALG.A.P. product list.

The latest versions of the GLOBALG.A.P. product list (v5.20 and v6.0_Jul24) are available on the GLOBALG.A.P. website:

[GLOBALG.A.P. product list v5.20](#)

[GLOBALG.A.P. product list v6.0_Jul24](#)

The following products have been added to the scope **aquaculture**:

- Giant kelp (*Macrocystis pyrifera*) (ID 102454) under seaweed/macro algae
- Milkfish (*Chanos chanos*) (ID 102453) under finfish
- Blue crab (*Callinectes sapidus*) (ID 102457) under crustaceans

Shepherd's purse (*Capsella bursa-pastoris*) has been added to version 5.20 of the GLOBALG.A.P. product list under the fruit and vegetables subscope (ID 102455) and under the plant propagation materials subscope (ID 102456). It has also been added to version 6.0_Jul24 of the GLOBALG.A.P. product list under the fruit and vegetables product category (ID 102455).

A new species of dragon fruit/pitaya (ID 175) (*Hylocereus guatemalensis*) has been added to the GLOBALG.A.P. product list under the fruit and vegetables subscope (version 5.20) and product category (version 6.0_Jul24).

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Sincerely,

GLOBALG.A.P. Certification Body Administration, Benchmarking, and Compliance team