



Indian Council Of Food And Agriculture (ICFA)-AGROCERT
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INDIAN COUNCIL OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (ICFA)-AGROCERT



INDIA Good Agriculture Practices (INDGAP) Certification Scheme

Certification Process - BasicGAP

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1. OBJECTIVE

To ensure an objective assessment and certification of the BasicGAP produce at the farm, promotion of uniformity in the operation of the certification scheme and the interaction between the ICFA-AC and the producers seeking certification.

2. SCOPE

This document covers the certification process of agricultural produce based on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) - Basic Requirements (BasicGAP) defined under INDGAP Certification Scheme.

3. CERTIFICATION FOR GAP CERTIFICATION

3.1 Individual farmer applies for certification to ICFA-AC.

3.2 The Scheme is open to all individuals farmers engaged in farming.

3.3 The information on how to obtain certification for agricultural produce is also available on the website of ICFA-AC.

4. CERTIFICATION PROCESS FOR INDIVIDUAL FARMER

4.1 Application for certification of individual farmer

4.1.1 Any farmer who is a legal entity can apply for certification to ICFA-AC.

4.1.2 The application shall be made before sowing of the crops.

4.1.3 All relevant information concerning farmer applying for certification shall be recorded for the producer to become registered. This information will be used to supply the registered farmer with a unique client number, which will be used as a unique identifier for all certification activities.

4.1.4 The information required is consistent with the information of Certification Agreement signed between the farmer and the ICFA-AC. The following information is required for each farmer wishing to be registered:

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- i) Name of farmer/farm to be certified.
- ii) Annual Area under cultivation.
- iii) Crop produce to be covered.
- iv) First harvest or further harvest timings.

4.1.5 The ICFA-AC maintains and makes publicly available accurate information describing its certification processes for granting, maintaining, extending, renewing, reducing, suspending or withdrawing certification, and geographical areas in which it operates on its website: www.agrocert.in. The information shall include:

- a) Reference to the Certification Criteria.
- b) Procedure for obtaining Certification.
- c) An application form.
- d) List of documents required to be submitted along with the application.
- e) Information on fee for application, initial certification and continuing certification.
- f) Documents describing the rights and duties of certified clients, and
- g) Information on procedures for handling complaints and appeals.

4.1.6 The ICFA-AC respond to all enquiries received from prospective applicant farmer for certification with complete information for facilitating a registration of an applicant, within seven days of receipt of the query.

4.1.7 The prospective farmer shall apply to the ICFA-AC on the Application form prescribed by the ICFA-AC, and provide minimum information as:

- a) Name and address of farmer / Applicant.
- b) Farmer's contact details.
- c) Proof of legal entity,
- d) Location and total land held at location,
- e) Whether land is held under ownership or lease

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- f) Crop produce being handled,
- g) Relevant certification criteria against which certification is sought,
- h) Produce handling area,
- i) Number and competence of manpower,
- j) Annual area under cultivation crop wise and
- k) Other details like, Any registration with Government Department

4.1.8 The prospective applicant shall along with the application declare any judicial proceedings relating to the operations / produce, any proceedings by any Regulatory body or suspension / cancellation / withdrawal of any certification / approvals under any Regulations or otherwise.

4.1.9 Certification is granted only against the latest relevant certification criteria. The ICFA-AC will review all applications for the above and ensure the same.

4.1.10 All applications for certification shall be reviewed for adequacy and deficiencies observed, if any, shall be informed to applicant within seven days of receipt of application. Review of applications will be done by a competent person. Records of review will be maintained.

4.1.11 The applications found to be complete and supported by necessary documents will be accepted and registered in order of receipt with a unique identification number, acknowledged and records maintained. Registration should be done within seven days of receipt of the application.

4.1.12 Antecedents of applications shall be verified. If punished under the law, the application from the same farm/farmer will not be entertained during the period of punishment and in any case for at least one year from the date of punishment.

4.1.13 Applications from farmers who have earlier either misused the Certification/certification mark, or whose earlier certificate was cancelled because of violation of terms and conditions/misuse of certification mark shall not be entertained within one year of cancellation of the certificate by ICFA-AC or any other CB.

4.1.14 Applications from farmer found to be misusing the Certification/certification Mark while their application is being processed for grant of certificate, shall not be processed any further, and rejected after giving a due notice of 15 days. Fresh applications from them shall be treated as per clause 4.1.13 given above.

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4.1.15 Requests for grant of certificates from ex-applicants shall be processed like a fresh applicant and the entire procedure for grant of certificate be adhered to.

4.1.16 ICFA-AC will reject or close an application under the following conditions;

- a) If Initial Evaluation is not carried out within six months of registration of application,
- b) If the follow up evaluation carried out after organization has confirmed necessary corrective actions is not satisfactory
- c) Lack of competent personnel for production/cultivation and handling,
- d) If farmer shows no progress towards completion of corrective actions within three months of Initial Evaluation and six months of Registration of application,
- e) Misuse of Certification/certification mark,
- f) Evidence of malpractice and
- g) Voluntary withdrawal of application.

4.1.17 In the event of a closure/rejection of an Application, the application fee submitted with the application will not be refunded.

4.2 Certification process for individual farmer

4.2.1 Control Points and Compliance Criteria (CPCC)

The Control Points and Compliance Criteria (CPCC) checklist based on respective standards shall be used both for internal and external evaluation. Any producer/farmer opting for BasicGAP needs to comply with Annex A Table 1 & 2, of Section 3. If a group of farmers join to seek a group certification they need to comply with requirements stipulated in Section 4C as per standard.

4.2.2 Pre-assessment

4.2.2.1 The applicant may seek a pre-assessment, which is not mandatory, during which the ICFA-AC shall check the applicant's state of preparedness for the evaluation, and availability of competent personnel and adequate records of producers/farmer on CPCC.

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4.2.2.2 Deficiencies observed with respect to the certification criteria during the pre- assessment will be informed in writing to the applicant.

4.2.2.3 There will be only one pre-assessment.

4.2.3 Initial evaluation

4.2.3.1 A single stage Initial evaluation will be carried out by a competent evaluation team as appointed by ICFA-AC.

4.2.3.2 Initial Evaluation of the farm produce and the processes at the site of the applicant will be conducted on satisfactory fulfillment of all application requirements.

4.2.3.3 The ICFA-AC will communicate the composition of the team and duration of Initial Evaluation to the applicant for verifying any conflict of interest and any objections to the team composition by the applicant should be examined on merit.

4.2.3.4 Timings and date of Initial Evaluation shall be decided in consultation with the applicant ensuring that processes such as harvesting representative of normal operations are be open for witnessing during the planned Evaluations as follows:

a) Inspection timings

i) The inspection of a producer takes place after registration and depends on the produce to be inspected. The ideal timing for evaluation of all control criteria will be during harvest time when sufficient records/evidence is available, especially to facilitate verification of the control points related to harvest.

ii) Alternative timing options may be followed where evaluation during harvest time is not possible. The first inspection therefore takes place before or after harvest. Justification for alternative timing may be logistics and time constraints of producer and auditor, variation in harvest dates, perennial crop not yet producing mature produce, etc. Practically, inspection of records and visual evidence requires that the evaluation must take place as close to harvest as possible, for the evaluators to verify as many control points as possible.

b) First Inspection Timing for Multiple produce Certification

i) The producer may be seeking certification for more than one produce, and the produce may not all have the same seasonal timing, i.e. harvest of one produce does not necessarily coincide with the harvest of other produce.

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- ii) Where the farm produce to be included in the certification scope are concurrent, i.e. harvested at the same time, then the first evaluation will be timed so that at least one crop produce can be evaluated at harvest, making an assumption that the other crops getting ready for harvest will be compliant to the same degree.
- iii) Where the crops to be included in the certification scope are consecutive, i.e. the production of one crop finalizes before the production of the next one commences, then in the first year a full evaluation of the first crop must be made during harvesting. Subsequent crops grown in that same first year can be added to the certificate only when compliance has been verified for each crop, either through a site inspection at harvest of each crop or through data collection and discussion with the applicant.

4.2.4 Evaluation process

The team will witness the processes covering as many CPCC as possible during evaluation of the applicant. Any nonconformity observed during evaluation with respect to the conformance criteria shall be informed in writing to the applicant for taking necessary action. The nonconformities shall be classified as critical, major or minor depending on their severity as defined in the standard.

4.2.5 Compliance levels for certification

4.2.5.1 The producer/farmer is required to comply with three types of compliance criteria set out in the standard in order to obtain certification. These are Critical, Major and minor, which must be fulfilled in all respects before certification.

4.2.5.2 Compliance is indicated with a “Yes” (for compliant), “No” (for not compliant) on the checklist – Annex A Table 01. The producer/farmer need to undertake a self- assessment as indicated in Annex A Table 02 of Section 3, as provided by ICFA-AC, to ensure compliance to the requirement of the Standard. Evidence/comments should be provided for each control criteria- these shall enable the audit trail to be reviewed after the event, and will include details of references taken during the evaluation. It is, however, obligatory to give evidence /comments for all the critical and major compliance criteria inspected in all external evaluation, self-assessments, and internal evaluation.

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4.2.5.3 The level of compliance shall be established based on the following:

- a) Critical- 95% compliance of all applicable critical control points
- b) Major - 85% compliance of all major control points is compulsory
- c) Minor - 70% of compliance of all applicable minor control points is compulsory.

4.2.5.4 ICFA-AC maintain records of all certification activities- application registration, documents provided by applicant, on site evaluation report and evaluation and review of reports for grant of certification.

4.2.6 Internal self assessment quality assurance

The individual producer/farmer shall carry out an internal self-assessment at least once a year. This self assessment will be carried out under the responsibility of the producer/farmer.

The self-assessment shall be against the complete checklist (Critical, Major and Minor) of the applicable scope(s). The completed checklist shall be available on site for review by the evaluator during the ICFA-AC evaluation.

4.3 Grant of Certification

4.3.1 The certificate will be granted after ensuring:

- a) Complete compliance to the Certification Criteria based on evaluation reports (See 4.2.4),
- b) Certification scheme requirements,
- c) Satisfactory resolution of nonconformities raised.

There shall be no conditional grant of certification.

4.3.2 On grant of certification, the ICFA-AC inform the farmer/producer and issue a Certificate, uniquely identified, to the farmer/producer indicating the names of the produce certified, the certification criteria against which the certification has been awarded, effective date, validity date, and the name and address of the farmer /producer site where certified as a minimum.

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4.3.3 No Brand names shall be mentioned on the Certificate document or any other document intimating grant of certification.

4.3.4 The effective date of certification shall not be before the date of decision to grant the certification to the farmer/producer.

4.3.5 The certificate for produce certification shall be for a period of 1 years from the date of decision to grant the produce certification.

4.3.6 Scope of certification

4.3.6.1 The produce scope is linked to the location where that crop is produced.

Certificate is issued to the registered producer/farmer, on the farms where the crops are produced and for the produce declared. The legal entity of the places certified must be declared by the certificate holder.

4.3.6.2 The entire production/ cultivation process of the declared and registered produce must comply with requirements. Certified locations/farms cannot be separated into growing areas or handling facilities that are certified and other growing areas or handling facilities of the same product that are excluded from certification.

4.4 Surveillance Evaluation

4.4.1 Surveillance evaluations of the certified farms/producers shall be carried out at least once a year or as per the requirement / need felt by the ICFA-AC. The ICFA-AC may allow a grace period of one month based on valid grounds beyond which delays will lead to suspension of the certificate. The surveillance should be suitably timed around harvest time of some crop under certification.

4.4.2 The full checklist and verification process shall be completed by the evaluator annually. There must be at least one produce registered in the field or in the storage evaluated to give the confidence that any other registered crops not present at that time, are handled in compliance with the standard.

4.4.3 The certification body shall ensure coverage of the entire CPCC checklist as mentioned in Annex A Table 01 of Section 3 so that basic operations and their controls are witnessed during the evaluation. Surveillance planning must keep in view the crop maturity timings to coincide visit with harvest time as for as possible.

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4.4.3 In case where the farmer/producer is certified to a number of produce of different types under the same certificate, ICFA-AC will plan for surveillance evaluation with a view to covering as much of the entire range of crops/ produce during the certification period.

4.4.4 During the surveillance evaluation, the evaluators shall as a minimum check and report on the following;

- a) Status of compliance to the requirements of the certification criteria,
- b) Internal self assessment reports,
- c) Handling and disposal of nonconforming products,
- d) Actions taken on nonconformities observed during the previous evaluation,
- e) Redressal of complaints, if any,
- f) Information on farm produce and the names of consignees to whom certified produce have been supplied.

4.4.5 If any nonconformity is observed, the same shall be categorized as either a Critical, Major or Minor. The nonconformity report shall be provided to the client in writing, generally on site, for correction and corrective action. Details of the same will be reported in the Surveillance evaluation report.

4.4.6 The frequency of surveillance evaluation may increase, with duly recorded justification for reasons like investigation of complaints, any doubts about continuing adherence to standards prescribed etc.

4.4.7 If the surveillance evaluation results in an infructuous visit due to any reason, the ICFA-AC will conduct another surveillance evaluation. Such additional evaluations will be charged to the certified unit as decided by the ICFA-AC.

4.5 Suspension of certification

4.5.1 The ICFA-AC will issue due notice of at least one week for suspension of certification to the farm/producer. In case of serious failures, the notice may not be required.

4.5.2 A Suspension is issued when:

- a) Unsatisfactory performance during two consecutive Surveillance evaluations on account of any of these aspects is observed:
- b) A suspension may also be issued to the producer/farmer who voluntarily asks for it, for some (partial) or all (complete) of his/her products.

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4.5.3 After the Suspension is issued, a time period allowed for correction and corrective action will be set by the ICFA-AC not exceeding 6 months. If the suspension is voluntary, the period for corrections and corrective actions is set by the producer/farmer himself/herself, which must be agreed upon with the ICFA-AC, but not exceed 6 months.

4.5.4 During the period of suspension, the producer/farmer shall be prevented from using the logo/trademark, License/certificate or any other type of document that has any relation to certification.

4.5.5 The producer/farmer shall be advised to undertake a root cause analysis and identify the necessary corrective actions for resolving the same.

4.5.6 The ICFA-AC shall revoke suspension only when corrective actions have been taken and verified by ICFA-AC

4.5.7 Suspension shall not exceed a period of six months. If the cause of the Suspension is not resolved within the time period set, the certification shall be cancelled.

4.6 Cancellation of certification

4.6.1 A Cancellation shall be issued when:

- a) A producer/farmer cannot show sufficient corrective action after Suspension has been issued and six months have elapsed.
- b) A nonconformity in one scope leads to doubt about the integrity of the produce,
- c) Major contractual nonconformities are detected.
- d) Certified client contravenes the terms and conditions of certification and provisions of certification scheme like suspension of certificate, inadequate corrective actions, lack of compliance to criteria for Certification etc

4.6.2 A Cancellation of the contract will result in the total prohibition of the use of the logo/trademark, License / certificate.

4.6.3 A producer that has had a Cancellation applied may not re-submit for certification until 12 months after the date of Cancellation

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4.6.4 The producer must either resolve the nonconformities communicated or appeal to the CB in writing against the nonconformities explaining the reasons for the appeal.

4.6.5 Certification body shall cancel the certification at the request of the certified client, if the operation(s) in the certified client's premises can no longer be carried due to reasons of natural calamities such as flood, fire, earthquake etc, or closure of operations.

4.7 Recertification

4.7.1 The certificate can be renewed at the end of every year, depending on the performance of operation of certification.

4.7.2 The ICFA_AC will send the recertification / certification renew notice to the certified client at least four months prior to expiry of certificate validity period.

4.7.3 The certified farmer/producer shall apply for recertification/ renew of the scope certificate in the prescribed format as provided by ICFA-AC along with fee, at least 3 months before expiry of the certification.

4.7.4 The ICFA-AC will review the performance of the certified client who has sought recertification, with respect to compliance to certification criteria during the certification cycle prior to a decision on the recertification.

4.7.5 The review shall be based on:

- a) The surveillance evaluation reports,
- b) Handling and disposition of nonconforming products,
- c) Any suspension of certificate during the previous validity period,
- d) Corrective actions taken,
- e) Complaints, if any received, and
- f) Adverse information, if any.

4.7.6 Recertification shall be based on the satisfactory performance of the certified client.

4.7.7 There will be no conditional recertification.

4.7.7 When performance of the certified client is not satisfactory, the ICFA-AC will withhold the recertification by clearly stating the reasons and give time for effecting corrective actions. The verification and decision on recertification shall be taken within 3 months of the expiry date.

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4.7.8 The corrective actions shall be verified generally on site unless the ICFA-AC can verify the same off-site prior to considering for recertification.

4.7.9 The recertification shall be effected from the date of the expiry of the previous certificate and the intervening period shall be treated as period of suspension and clearly stated on the Certificate. The certified unit shall not claim certification or use the Certification during this period.

4.7.10 In case the certified unit/farm does not complete satisfactorily actions within three months, the certificate shall stand expired from the date of expiry of previous validity.

4.8 Change of Ownership/Name

4.8.1 In the event of change of ownership, the new owner (farmer/producer) shall submit proof of change of ownership. He/she shall also submit acceptance to the agreement for Certification with the ICFA-AC regarding the operation and payment of fees. The same process shall be followed as and when an existing applicant undergoes a change in ownership. Such changes shall not call for a visit to the site.

4.8.2 In case of change of name, the applicant/certified farmer/producer shall inform the change in the name to the ICFA-AC supported with documentary evidence, and if satisfied the ICFA-AC will endorse the new name in the application/certificate.

4.9 Extension of scope

4.9.1 Extension of scope of certificate for inclusion of additional produce, varieties under the same certificate shall be done after ascertaining that the certified client has requisite resources required for the new produce/variety and technical skills as evaluated at harvest of that particular produce.

4.9.2 The extension of scope shall be clearly mentioned in the certificate document along with its date of inclusion for avoiding any misrepresentation or misinterpretation. Irrespective of the date of inclusion, the validity of the Certificate shall remain unchanged.

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4.10 Certificate

4.10.1 The ICFA-AC will provide a certification document to the certified client with the following information that clearly conveys, or permits identification of:

- a) The name and geographic location of the client.
- b) The dates of granting, extending or renewing certification.
- c) The expiry date or recertification due date consistent with the recertification cycle.
- d) A unique identification code.
- e) The certification criteria, including issue number and/or revision, against which the product(s) are certified.
- f) The scope of certification with respect to product(s) as applicable at the identified site.
- g) The name, address and certification mark of the certification body; other marks (e.g. accreditation symbol) may be used provided they are not misleading or ambiguous.
- h) Any other information required by the certification criteria used for certification.
- i) in the event of issuing any revised certification documents, a means to distinguish the revised documents from any prior obsolete documents.

4.10.2 The effective date on a certification document shall not be before the date of the certification / recertification decision.

4.10.3 The formal certification documentation shall include the signature of the individual(s) of the ICFA-AC assigned such responsibility.

4.11 Fee

4.11.1 A fee will be charged to the client for various activities of the scheme, without any discrimination between units, geographical location, size of the unit.

4.11.2 The ICFA-AC fee structure is publicly accessible on website: www.agrocert.in and also be provided on request by the applicant.

4.11.3 ICFA-AC will notify and obtain consent to its fee structure from the clients prior to grant of certification. As and when the fee undergoes a change, the same shall be communicated to all applicants and clients certified under this scheme of certification for their acceptance.

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