



CRS Certification Protocol

Version 4.0, May 2024

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1. Introduction

This document explains the structure of certification to Certified Responsible Soy (CRS) / Certified Responsible Corn, and the procedures that should be followed in order to obtain and maintain certification.

This standard can be used to certify the soy production. If a producer does also cultivate corn on its farm, it is also possible to apply this standard to the corn production. It can however not be used as a stand-alone standard for corn.

2. Definitions

Certification :	Action by a party (in this case: the certification body, CU), to confirm there is satisfactory confidence that a sufficiently identified product, process or activity is in conformity with a standard, regulation or rule.
Certification body:	Body that conducts certification of conformity.
Certifier:	Person who under supervision of the Program Manager is responsible for marketing of program, instructions to the (Senior) Inspector, certification decision, reporting to the client, issuance of certificates, customer relations and post certification activities.
Client:	Contract partner of CU for inspection and certification programs, with the aim of being inspected and certified.
Client number:	Unique number that CU provides the client to identify himself as a CU client. The client number does not indicate that the client is certified.
Inspection	Investigation by means of competent judgement and/or by means of testing of a product, process or activity and determination of its conformity with a standard or other normative document; this includes inventories (first inspections).
Inspector	Person who is responsible for the execution of inspections and reporting to the Account Manager or Certifier and client.
Non-conformity	Deviation of product from specified requirements, or the failure to maintain one or more required management system elements.
Production unit	Companies or company unit where actions are carried out defined under "production" in the different normative documents.
Scope Certificate	Document issued under the rules of a certification system, demonstrating that adequate confidence is provided that a duly identified product, process or service is in conformity with a specific standard or other normative document.
Transaction Certificate	Certificate in which CU declares – based on an issued scope certificate – that the production process of a certain lot of products is inspected and positively evaluated.

3. Scope

This certification protocol describes the rules for the implementation of the CRS standard for both the agricultural producers as well as for the other relevant elements of the supply chain. This document covers all phases of audit and certification, from registration till the final certification by the Certification Bodies.

4. Normative references

As a basic principle, all relevant CRS documents are valid for the certification scope. The normative references listed below are directly linked in the certification process.

Relevant references:

- CRS Normative document;
- CRS Inspector checklist;
- ISO 19011:2018; Guidelines for quality and/or environmental management systems auditing;
- CRS Group certification standard;
- CRS Chain of Custody document;
- Audits Area mass Balance document.

5. Certification process

For the certification of both producers and traders the principles of ISO19011:2018 shall be followed. Therefore, the following certification activities are defined and applicable to the CRS certification program.

- Registration / initiating audit;
- Conducting document review;
- Preparing for the onsite audit activities;
- Conducting onsite audit activities;
- Preparing, approving and distributing the audit report;
- Completing the audit;
- Conducting audit follow up;
- Certification.

5.1. Registration

Registration of the project needs to be done through an application form. The minimum information required for registration are which operators will be included in the certification program, company/contact details, crop plan, geolocation data of the farm (latitudes & longitudes) and when applicable processing activities on site.

The following elements of the supply chain shall be registered:

- Farms / plantations;
- Traders / processors.

Registration is completed when all information is available and accepted by the certification body.

5.2. First initial assessment

For the CRS standard no deforestation and no conversion of lands is a key element. Therefore, a first assessment is performed to check if the lands of the farm comply with this requirement. To assess compliance with the no deforestation and no conversion requirements of the standard, the independent CB will assess and interpret the satellite images of the farm. The minimum resolution for these images is 30 x 30 meters (e.g. based on Landsat), when possible better resolutions are used (e.g. 10 x 10 meters in case of Sentinel). Natural color and false color images are used to evaluate the texture and intensity of vegetation color to make sure what kind of vegetation cover(planted crop or native vegetation)/biome is analyzed. In case of assessment of a farm group, all farms are analyzed. When farms do comply, they can enter the CRS certification program after acceptance by the CB and Cefetra.

5.3. Audit planning (Farms / plantations)

The inspection of a producer is linked to the registration, no inspection can take place until the producer's registration has been accepted.

All records to be externally inspected in the first year shall go back to the sowing stage of the soy of the last harvest. If more than three months have passed after the initial inspection before corrective evidence is provided to Control Union, a complete inspection needs to be performed before a certificate can be issued. As the certification is linked to a specific harvest season, an annual CRS audit must take place. The certificate is linked to a harvest, which is also indicated on the certificate (i.e. '23-'24 harvest). In case of reasonable suspicion, especially due to the results of precedent surveillances, the CB may induce the surveillance audit of the operator in shorter than annual intervals.

- Timing

The first inspection have to be done during or before the harvesting time, when all control points and sufficient records/evidence are available.

- Alternative timing

Alternative timing options may be followed where inspection during harvest time is not possible during or before harvesting time. In this case, justification for this alternative timing must be given by CU and noted in the audit report. Example of justification can be logistics and timing constraints of farmer and/or auditor.

- Unannounced surveillance audits

The CB may decide to schedule an unannounced surveillance audit as an instrument of risk management.

5.4. Inspection Execution (Farms / Plantations) - audits

The operator seeking certification must give the certification body, for inspection purposes, access to all parts of the unit and all premises, as well as to the accounts and relevant supporting documents. They must provide the certification body with any information deemed necessary for the purpose of the inspection.

When requested by the certification body, the company seeking certification shall submit the results of its own voluntary inspection and sampling programs.

5.5. Certification

Based on a positive audit showing conformity with the CRS requirements to soybean and corn production, the CB issues certificates to the operation being audited successfully. Granting of a scope certificate is conditional on compliance by the producer with all the applicable requirements set out in this normative document and will be issued linked to a harvest season.

The CB shall document properly all certifications carried out in a register. In each case, such a register must contain the names, addresses, registration numbers and audit reports of the audited entities. The CB must update their register on an ongoing basis. All results of inspections, and copies of all certificates which are issued shall be archived for at least 10 years.

5.5.1. Transaction certificates

From producers audited, and which have been certified as being in compliance with the requirements of the CRS, the amount of soybean can be classified as certified “Certified Responsible Soy” or “Certified Responsible Corn”. The certification body will issue a transaction certificate (TC), mentioning the metric tons which can be claimed as certified soybean meal. The total of certified soy listed in the TC’s will never be more than the total of soybean or corn certified in the fields.

5.6. Non conformances and sanctions

5.6.1. Critical non conformance

This type of non-conformance is when the producer does not comply with 100% of the Major Musts control points. Positive certification is not possible.

In case of the CRS certification program, all indicators are counted as Major indicators. This means that producers must comply with all requirements.

5.6.2. Warning

For all types of detected non-conformances, a warning is issued.

A time period allowed for correction will be agreed upon between the certification body and producer with a maximum of three months.

NOTE) The producer MUST close out Critical non-conformances before obtaining/regaining certified status.

5.6.3. Decision and sanctions

The certifier shall decide on all sanctions. If there is a non-conformance detected during the inspection, the producer must be served a warning when the inspection is finalized.

5.6.4. Resolution

The producer must either resolve the non-conformances communicated or appeal to the certification body in writing against the non-conformances, explaining the reasons for the appeal. If the non-conformances are not resolved within the permitted time scale, the sanction will be

escalated as explained in 5.6.1

5.6.5. Lifting of sanctions

If a producer notifies the certification body that the non-conformance is resolved before the set period, the respective sanction will be lifted, subject to satisfactory evidence and closing out. This means the producer will receive a certificate as explained in 5.5.

5.7. Validity of the CRS certificates

The CRS certificates generated on a farm are normally sold immediately to customers. However, it is allowed to keep a stock up to 5 years. For this purpose, the CB (CU) does keep a balance. At the end of the 5th year the certificates are withdrawn from the balance.

Guidance: if certificates are generated in 2024, they are valid until December 2029 and will be withdrawn from the balance in January 2030.

6. Requirements for Certification Bodies

In order to perform certification audits according to the CRS standard Certification Bodies must comply to the following requirements

- Recognition by a national public authority or an accreditation body¹;
- Conduct audits in conformity with standard ISO 19011:2018 establishing guidelines for quality and/or environmental management system auditing;
- The workflow of the certification process complies with the requirements of ISO Guide 65 (EN 45011);
- Conduct audit and certification according to the principles and requirements of ISO 17021:2006;
- Cooperation agreement with the scheme holder to conduct certification audit;
- Must have its own grievance mechanism available for complaints related to the CRS program.

6.1. Independence, impartiality, confidentiality, and integrity

All personnel must operate to high levels of professional integrity, be free from commercial, financial, or other pressures, which might affect their judgment and are expressly forbidden from promoting any goods or services during evaluation activities.

Information relating to the applicant producer including details of products and processes, evaluation reports and associated documentation will be treated as confidential (unless otherwise required by law). No information is released to third parties without the prior consent of the applicant.

Employees or subcontractors of the Certification Body involved in the CRS program are not permitted to carry out any activities which may affect their independence or impartiality and specifically shall not carry out consultancy or training activities for the producers on whom they perform inspections. Training is not considered consultancy, provided that, where the course relates to management systems or auditing, it is confined to the provision of generic information that is freely available in the public domain, i.e., the trainer cannot provide company-specific solutions. Inspectors must strictly observe the producer's and the CB's procedures to maintain the

¹ Accreditations for similar product certification schemes would also qualify.

confidentiality of information and records.

7. Requirements for auditors

All auditors and certifiers shall need to comply at least with the following general requirements:

- At least a post-high school diploma or equivalent (minimum course duration of 2 years obtained in a discipline related to agricultural farming);
- Minimum 3 years of overall experience, of which minimal 2 years after completing the study, in agricultural industry. Experience in production, quality systems or food safety.
- Inspection experience on agricultural industry;
- Knowledge in handling and evaluation of data sources;
- Personal aptitude in the sense of ISO 19011:2018;
- The auditor should plan and carry out the audit with respect to the nature, timing and extend of evidence gathering procedures in such a way that a meaningful level of assurance for a decision regarding compliance is available;
- To guarantee the quality of the audits and the competence of the auditors, each auditor undergoes a shadow audit at least once every three years.

In addition, the following specific program-related requirements are applicable:

- One-day practical inspection course setting out basic principles of the CRS program;
- Formal training in HACCP principles either as part of the auditor's formal qualifications or by the successful completion of a course based on the principles of Codex Alimentarius;
- Formal food hygiene training either as part of the auditor's formal qualifications or by the successful completion of a course;
- Formal pesticide and fertilizer training either as part of the auditor's formal qualifications, or by the successful completion of a course;
- "Working language" skills in the corresponding native/working language. This must include the locally used specialist terminology in this working language.

8. Consultation with External Stakeholders and a Complaints System

During the audit process, auditors should consult with external stakeholders to gather their opinions and verify their understanding of the complaints system. Stakeholders should be informed of the channels available to file any complaints or concerns related to certification.

This practice aligns with ISO standard requirements, ensuring transparency, impartiality, and effective complaints management.

9. Review of this protocol

This protocol should be updated, when necessary, e.g. in case a new CB is appointed.