**Purpose:** To provide a procedure for certification of organic growers group.

**Scope**: To cover the certification requirements to be received from applicant along with application

**References**: ISO 17065, COR.

**RESPONSIBILITY**

Business Development Executive, Quality Manager, Reviewers, Certifier, Other personnel involved in Certification

**Grower Group inspection & Certification**

* Grower Groups are organized groups of farmers /producers who intend to produce organic products by the organic processes as per the - COR (Canadian Organic regime)
* Organic grower group will be based on the Internal Control System (ICS) and will apply to grower groups, farmers’ cooperatives, and structured group of producers affiliated to a processor. To avail of this service, under the -COR the producer group must have satisfied the criteria as mentioned in - C.12 & SFCR of COR requirements, CAN/CGSB-32.310-2020 and CAN/CGSB-32.311-2020 -has to be followed.
* *The grower group composed of production units, sites, or facilities, shall be recognized as a "person" according to part 13 of SFCR.*
* *All members of the grower group shall apply similar production systems and should be in geographical proximity to each other. Only small farmers can be members of the group covered by group certification. Largefarms can also belong to the group but have to be inspected annually by*
* *the MSASPL.*
* *The grower group shall be established formally, based on written agreements with its members. It shall have a central management, established decision procedures, and be a legal entity.*
* *The grower group shall have in place an effective and documented internal control system (ICS).*
* *The management of the grower group shall sign a legally enforceable agreement with the MSASPL specifying the responsibilities of both parties. The management shall obtain signed obligations from all grower group members to comply with the Canada Organic Standards and to permit inspection by the MSASPL, the IOAS, or the CFIA.*
* *The practices of the grower group operation shall be uniform and reflect a consistent process or methodology, using the same inputs and processes.*
* *Participation in the grower group shall be limited to those members who market their organic production only through the grower group.*
* *A member of a grower group shall register to only one grower group for a given product. The maximum size of a grower group shall be 2,000 members.*

Grower group may organized on itself (co-operative etc.) and as a structured group of producers affiliated to a processor.

* All members of the grower group will apply similar production systems and should be in geographical proximity to each other.
* Only small farmers can be members of the group covered by group certification. Large farms can also belong to the group but each large farms of the group shall be inspected annually by the MS ASPL.
* As per the COR, a small farm (With the reference of the grower group) should have the following:

a. farm where the cost of external certification is 2% or more of their annual gross revenue.

b. less than 50 acres.

The member of grower group participate in the ICS, who market their organic production only through the grower group except the member which is individually certified. A member of a grower group shall register to only one grower group. Maximum size of a grower group shall be 2000 members.

* MS ASPL must sign a legally enforceable agreement with the management of the grower group specifying the responsibilities of both MS ASPL and the management of the grower group. Refer MS ASPL-CD-FR-25.
* Management of the grower group will obtain signed obligations from all grower group members to comply with the Canada Organic Standards and to permit inspection by the MS ASPL, the CVB or the CFIA.

**Establishment of the ICS**

The ICS will have a registered legal identity and a constitution of the organization and will be presented by an organizational chart. The organic grower group will be established formally, based on written agreements with its members. It will have central management, established decision procedures, and be a legal entity.

1. The grower group shall document and implement an internal control system (ICS) with or supervision and documentation of production practices and inputs used at each sub-unit, and collected at each production unit, site, or facility to ensure. An identified person or body is responsible for verifying compliance with the Canada Organic Regime. of each member of the group.
2. The internal control system of the grower group will include a contractual arrangement with each member of the grower group and MS ASPL will verify during the audit.
3. The internal control system shall be implemented by competent personnel. Internal including ICS manager and ICS inspectors. ICS inspectors designated by the grower group shall carry out internal controls.
4. The grower group needs to identify and appoint an adequate number of internal inspectors within the group based on the type, structure, size, products, and the activities of the group. The ICS inspectors shall be trained and annually and their knowledge shall be assessed and documented at the end of the training..
5. The ICS inspectors will carry out at least 1 annual onsite inspection visit to each individual member including visits to fields and facilities. Any additional risk-based inspections shall be conducted in accordance with the schedule and the procedures provided by the ICS manager.
6. The ICS inspectors shall draft internal inspection reports and submit it within a timeframe specified in the ICS to the ICS manager.
7. The internal control system will contain appropriate records as follows

* Production description, production and/or preparation specifications for products to which the application applies
* Maps, description of the farms and the facilities of all members
* List of inputs (ingredients and agricultural substances)
* A copy of organic production and/or preparation plans.
* Traceability records, including information on the quantities, on the following activities, where relevant:

1. Purchase and distribution of farm inputs including plant reproductive material by the group.
2. Production including harvest.
3. Storing
4. Preparation
5. Delivery of products from each member to the joint marketing system.
6. Placing on the market of products by the grower group.
7. The internal control system will have a mechanism to remove non-compliant group members from the list and they need to notify MSASPL when a member is sanctioned and/or voluntarily withdrawn. Corrective actions required by the MSASPL during the previous certification cycle, as well as any corrective measures implemented by members concerning these requests.

* A complete list of registered group members.
* Continuous verification of implementation of the internal inspections.
* Summary of the internal inspection reports including the date of the last internal inspection with the name of the ICS inspector.
* The training of members of the group on the ICS procedures and the requirements of COR .
* The approval of new members in an existing group or, where appropriate, the approval of new production units or new activities of existing members upon the approval by the ICS manager on the basis of the internal inspection report

8- The internal control system will record all nonconformities. The ICS will require from the member to respond to the NC report issued by the ICS within 30 working days of its receipt. The response will either provide evidence of completion of corrective action taken to address each NC or present a plan with milestones as to how each NC will be addressed. This plan will include a completion date not exceeding 90 working days from receipt of the NCs. The ICS will accept times greater than those stated for the closure of a NC as long as they are justified and documented.

MS ASPL will evaluate by checking the ICS, staff qualifications and auditing the farms on the basis of the risk assessment. The internal control system will contain appropriate records including:

1. Farmer application, agreement with the ICS and land records.
2. Farm maps, crop maps, and overview map (Village or community map) with the description of the farms and the facilities of all members.
3. production description, production and/or preparation specifications for products to which the application applies.
4. list of inputs (ingredients and agricultural substances).
5. A copy of organic management production and/or preparation plans
6. A complete list of group members (Approved farmer list) .
7. continuous verification of the implementation of the internal inspections and approval committee.
8. summary of the internal inspection report

**Initial certification**

* MS ASPL will evaluate the effectiveness of the internal control system to assess the compliance of all members with the COR requirements.
* The certification inspection of the grower group by the MS ASPL will include an assessment of the risks to organic integrity within the grower group and the geographical location in which it functions. A sample of all sites under the grower group's responsibility will be subject to inspection visits by the MS ASPL to assess the effectiveness of the ICS.
* The MS ASPL may justify exceptions to this rule based on risk assessment.
* The percentage of number of group members subject to the initial certification inspection will be based on the results of a risk assessment and the following calculations: Factors to define the risk as normal, medium, and high will include:
* Factors related to the magnitude of the grower group
* Organisation size and sites' size
* Value of the products
* Numbers of years the grower group has functioned
* Number of new members registered yearly
* volume and value of the production
* The type of non-compliances
* Staff turnover
* The management structure of the internal control system
* Factors related to the characteristics of the organization.
* Variations in the product systems
* Risks for intermingling and/or contamination
* Geographical dispersion of the sites
* Degree of uniformity among the production units, sites or facilities
* For normal risk situation, the percentage of group members subject to the initial certification inspection will not be lower than the **square root of the total number of units** under the responsibility of the group.
* If the risk is medium, the resulting number will be **multiplied by 1.2**.
* If the risk is high, the resulting number will be **multiplied by 1.4**.
* All calculation totals ending with decimals are to be rounded up.
* MS ASPL will assign auditors/ inspectors who have appropriate training on inspection of internal control systems.
* During the certification inspection the auditors/ inspectors will determine whether:
* all internal control documentation is in place
* internal inspections of all group members have been carried out annually
* new group members are only included after successful resolution of any NCs found during the internal inspection, according to the procedures agreed with the MS ASPL.
* All noncompliance has been dealt with appropriately by the internal control system.
* Inspection records have been maintained up to date by the internal control system.
* The auditors/ inspectors will carry out a witness audit to determine whether the inspections of the internal control system are conducted as written by ICS manager.

**Maintenance of certification**

* Each year the MS ASPL will define and justify a risk-based sample of members subject to annual inspection to assess the effectiveness of the ICS. The minimum number of members subject to annual CB inspection shall be square root of the total number of members multiplied by 1.5.
* In cases of high risk members the MSASPL may increase the number of group members subject to annual inspection to at least 2 times the square root of the number of the members in the grower group (for example, ICS has issued a lot of internal sanctions, or a lot of new members).
* The members visited by the MS ASPL will be predominantly different from 1 year to another. In addition to the risk factors defined as above, the MS ASPLs may consider the following selection criteria when selecting the sites being subject to visits:
* results from internal control system inspection
* complaint files
* significant variations of the sites' size
* modifications since the last certification
* The MS ASPL will ensure that the grower group maintains an updated list of all members and informs the MS ASPL in a timely manner anytime there are changes to the status of the members and changes to the group as a whole.
* The MS ASPL will ensure that the grower group has established procedures for adding new members to the grower group.

**Records**

* The MS ASPL will ensure that the grower group has record-keeping protocols for the individual production units, sites, or facilities within a grower group.
* The MS ASPL will maintain records of sample inspection to ensure that over time, the inspections are representative of the grower group as a whole and take into account any previously identified risk.

**Certification documents**

* The MS ASPL will provide certification documents to the grower group as a whole. Members within a grower group that have had its operations or product certified cannot possess individual certificates unless that member has obtained its own certification independent from the grower group for a different product.

**Suspension and Cancellation**

**1.The MSASPL shall hold the grower group as a whole responsible for the compliance of all members.**

**2.The MSASPL have a documented suspension policy in the event of noncompliance.(**ASPL-CD-PR-20)

**3. The MSASPLshall suspends or cancels the certification granted to the grower group as a whole, in accordance with part 13 of the SFCR, in cases where the grower group's internal control system fails to act on these noncompliances.**

**Certification Application**

*An applicant will contact MS Agroland Services Private. Limited. office through email, website, or visiting office or any other communication medium.*

*On receipt of applicant queries, MS Agroland Services Private. Limited. will provide an initial inquiry form (ASPL-CD-FR-42), a copy of COR Organic Standards, and a brief about MS Agroland Services Private. Limited to the applicant via the website www.agrolandgroup.com. The applicant has to complete the form & send it electronically through email and shall also, send a duly signed copy by an authorized representative for further submission of*

*the quotation by MS Agroland Services Private. Limited. The operator needs to pay the agreed amount as per the quotation to MSASPL for further proceedings. After the payment, the Business Development team sends the application packet comprising the OMP and other relevant documents (, ASPL-CD-OGG -01, , ASPL-CD-OMP-OGG-01,ASPL-CD-COR-CL-15) as per the applied scope and issues the client I’d.,*

*The MS Agroland Services Private Limited shall verify that the applicant does not hold a valid Canadian Organic Standards certificate for an identical/same product, issued by*

*another CFIA accredited CB and if the product is certified as organic under*

*another organic system (such as USDA NOP, EU, JAS etc.).*

The first step for getting MS Agroland Services Pvt. Ltd (MS ASPL) certification is that the operator contacts the MS ASPL office. As per the request MS ASPL sends a detailed application package including the application form, OMP, MS ASPL certification procedure, and copy of COR Organic Standards etc to the operator. To apply for certification the operator needs to complete the application form along with the associated documents to the MS ASPL office.

**Application review procedure**

*After receipt of the completed application form, a detailed review will be undertaken regarding the completeness of the application form, If any clarification is needed then MS ASPL reverts to the operator for the correction. on receiving the updated application, OMP, etc from the operator and also considering the availability of the competent resources and capabilities related to the respective schemes.*

**Certification Agreement with MS ASPL**.

*In case of a positive decision of the outcome of the application review, further Certification Agreement (ASPL-CD-FR-25) and proposal (ASPL-CD-FR-05) are to be submitted to the applicant. The operator sends back a signed, proposal, and certification agreement to MS ASPL.*

***Audit Process.***

* Once the application is complete and approved, the inspection officer/audit manager assigns an auditor who is appropriately qualified and trained to undertake the audit according to the applied certification scope. Qualified auditors will be performing audits (document review, initial audit, in conversion audit, certification audit, extension to scope, renewal, and surveillance). For certification audit, at least one team member must have appropriate technical knowledge for which certification is sought. Technical expertise may be covered or assisted by technical experts if necessary
* For calculation of audit days, risk assessment is carried out based on information provided in the Certification application
* In coordination with the operator audit date is planned in case of an annual, additional audit.
* The inspection officer will prepare the assignment and the allocated auditor will send the audit plan to the client.
* The assigned auditor shall receive scheduling information along with appropriate working documents from the inspection officer/audit manager. It is the responsibility of the inspection officer/audit manager to issue the sampling kit comprising of hand gloves, sampling bag, sampling forms hairnet, mask, and all essentials needed for sampling.

ON-SITE AUDIT.

on-site audit is planned at the earliest opportunity after the finishing of the review The audit is carried out according to the following steps:

. On-site audits are to be conducted when an authorized representative of the operation who is knowledgeable about the operation is present.

2. Audits are to be scheduled when land, facilities, and activities that demonstrate the operation’s compliance with or capability to comply with the production and handling requirements can be observed. These requirements do not apply to unannounced on-site audits.

3. Auditor will be provided, with previous on-site audit reports, organic system plans, supporting documents, and other information that must be verified by the auditor.

4. The auditor ’s evaluation ensures that the on-site audit of an operation verifies:

- The operation’s compliance or capability to comply with the regulations, standards & guidelines

- That the information, including the organic system plan, accurately reflects the practices used or to be used by the applicant or by the certified operation

- That prohibited substances have not been and are not being applied to the operation through means which, at the discretion of the certifying agent, may include the collection and testing of soil; water; waste; seeds; plant tissue; and plant, animal, and processed product samples.

The audit process is as follows:

1. **Opening Meeting**

Scope of audit, objectives, points to be checked, changes that occurred since last audit, audit plan and interview with the operator and / or personnel in charge (with respect to the application form). Auditor completes Attendance record (ASPL-CD-ANX-50) during the opening meeting.

1. **Collecting and verifying information**

During the audit, the auditor will collect and record objective evidence to demonstrate that the operator’s system is both implemented and effective. Information relevant to the audit objectives, scope, and criteria (including information relating to interfaces between functions, activities, and processes) will be collected by appropriate sampling and verified to become audit evidence. Such evidence will be obtained from interviews, review of documentation and records, observation of processes and activities and conditions in the processes audited. Records will identify personnel interviewed.

MS Agroland Services Pvt. Ltd. Will ensure that during the Annual/ Unannounced/ Surveillance audit etc., the auditor verifies on-site that previously submitted corrective actions have been, and remain, fully implemented, auditor is also verified that any changes in organic standards and MS ASPL requirements have been effectively implemented by the operators.

1. ***Preparing the Finding Report***

All findings of the audit i.e. compliance issues, non-compliance issues, observations, the opportunity for improvement etc. are to be gathered in the checklists ( ASPL-CD-COR-CL-03,) and audit report (ASPL-CD-FR-34) by auditor along with objective evidence.

Audit Reports are numbered for traceability purposes. The numbering format used is the same of the client ID

The audit checklists are filled on-site during the audit and Certification Audit Reports are filled after the audit.

The auditor also lists down noncompliance issues in Audit Findings sheet (ASPL-CD-FR-26) and CAPA sheet (ASPL-CD-FR-26A) copy of it is also provided to the client at the end of the closing meeting or within 24 hours from the end of the audit.

The finding report will be prepared and issued by Auditors during the closing meeting.

1. ***Nonconformities***

There are two types of nonconformities – Major and Minor. Non-conformity will be substantiated by objective evidence or absence of objective evidence such as witnessed, recordable, verifiable, and quantitative collection of facts. Auditor, will review the findings and record them.

* **Major nonconformity.**

Major non-conformities are severe violations that affect the integrity of the organic system in the implementation of the standards prescribed in the COR, Regulations (EU) 2018/848. The deadline to take major non-conformity is 30 days. If the client does not correct a major nonconformity before the deadline, the Certificate is suspended for a given period determined by MSASPL on a case-by-case basis. In case the non-conformity is not corrected during the suspension period, the Certificate shall be withdrawn.

* **Minor nonconformity**

Minor non-conformities shall mean such non-conformities in the organic certification system of the project that do not affect the integrity of organic certification.Client will get 90 days period to take corrective actions for this type of non-conformity.If the client does not correct a minor non-conformity before the deadline, it is converted into a major non-conformity and additional 30 days deadline is granted to take corrective action. In case of open minor non-conformity, a COR, EU certificate can be issued.

* **Opportunities for Improvement (OFI)**

Opportunity for improvement (OFI) is a statement made by the auditor in a condition where he does not find objective evidence of failing (nonconformity) and in other words it is a potential non conformity (failing could happen in future if it is left unattended). There is no set deadline for action plan against OFI. The action taken for OFI is verified during next audit.

The review of corrective actions taken by the client is done by the Secondary Technical Reviewer. Non-conformities may be closed based on document review or the inspection officer/audit manager may plan an additional audit to verify implementation of corrective action. Certification decisions can be taken only after the closure of major and minor non-conformity.All the corrective action plans, including evidence of operation, shall be submitted within 30 days from the day of activity unless the client’s certificate expires prior to that date in such cases, the corrective action plan shall be submitted prior to the certificate expiring.

1. ***Closing Meeting***

The auditor must conduct a closing meeting with an authorized representative of the operation who is knowledgeable about the inspected operation to confirm the accuracy and completeness of audit observations and information gathered during the on-site audit. The auditor must address the need for any additional information as well as any issues of concern.

***Secondary/Technical Review***

On submission of completed audit pack by the auditor, secondary review of the audit pack will be carried out by designated secondary technical reviewer. The secondary technical reviewer cannot be part of audit process. Secondary reviewer checks audit documents. Reviewer reviews completeness of audit documents, language and grammar. He/she also cross checks information provided in audit report/checklist with the information available in supporting documents collected/verified during audit. In case any document/information is missing or incomplete, the reviewer seeks clarification from the auditor. Once the reviewer is satisfied with review results, the audit documents along with all supporting documents are provided to the certifier/certification manager for final review . The Certifier/certification manager check the information provided in audit documents and based on it provides the NC closure report to the operator. Then the certification decision is taken by the certification committee.

**Certification**

- The Assessor will review the Audit report and the file will be submitted to the certification committee. If additional documents are required, a communication will be sent to the operator.

**Certification decision**

***Certification decision***

**The certification decision shall always be made by the certification committee. Certification decisions shall be made by the committee only after successful completion of the secondary review. A certification decision is made after a full and satisfactory review is made of all documentation provided and gathered. Auditors are not permitted to make ultimate certification decisions regarding their own audits or audits they have carried out themselves.**

**The certification decision is recorded on the Certification Decision document (**ASPL-CD-ANX-78**).**

**Certification is granted based on the basis of the information gathered during the evaluation**

**process and any other relevant information on verifying followings:**

* **The applicant is in compliance with its organic system plan and all procedures,**
* **The activities of the applicant’s operation are in compliance with the regulations and**
* **The applicant is able to conduct operations in accordance with the plan.**

The certification decision will be communicated to the operator along with the draft scope certificate and client certificate information form (ASPL-CD-FR-08). **MSASPL shall issue a scope certificate based on the certification decision of the Required scope after the confirmation of the operator about the details in CCIF and the draft scope. The certificate shall be issued annually by MSASPL. as per the prescribed format. The scope certificate must be signed by a designated authorized person of MSASPL.**

In case of a decision not to grant certification, applicant will be communicated for the denial of the

certification or existing client will be informed about the withdrawal of certification along with the

reason for the decision. The client will be provided with relevant notices along with copy of

Certification Audit Report and Certification Decision.

MS Agroland Services Private Limited. shall maintain the information of the certified applicants and/or

products with following information

* Identification of the product
* Name of the standards or other normative documents on which the products have been certified.
* Applicant name
* Validity of the certificationn

1. **MSASPL shall ensure that the date on which certification is granted shall not precede the date on which the certification decision was completed.**

***Note: If the ICS fail to send the Corrective action taken report, any clarifications, additional documents as required by MS ASPL within six months from the date of inspection, the ICS is informed that a fresh inspection is required for certification.***

**Label approval**

The operator may make the label incorporating the logo (MS ASPL & - COR -) and other relevant details and will send to MS ASPL for approval. The label approval committee of MS ASPL approves the label as per standards and sends the approval decision to the operator. Operator may use the label for marketing only after the label approval.

**Appeals**

If the operator does not accept the certification decision, he/she can request for reconsideration of the decision in writing. Then the file will be submitted to the certification committee for re-consideration. If the operator still does not agree with the revised decision, he/she can appeal to the appeals committee in writing within 14 days of the notification of certification decision. The file will then be submitted to the appeals committee, which takes final decision on the case. In case the operator is not is not satisfied with the MS ASPL appeal process, operator can submit a complaint against MS ASPL to the accreditation body

**Handling complaints**

Operators are free to approach MS ASPL for any type of complaints against the MS ASPL staff, the MS ASPL certification system or other operators certified by MS ASPL . Any complaints may be verbally directed to MS ASPL staff and/or through e-mail or post to the MS ASPL office. Complaints will be handled confidentially.

**Standards**

The latest version of COR standards can be downloaded from:

[**https://www.inspection.gc.ca/organic-products/standards/eng/1300368619837/1300368673172**](https://www.inspection.gc.ca/organic-products/standards/eng/1300368619837/1300368673172)

*Records*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S.NO** | **Document Name** | **Document No** | **Maintained by** | **Retention period** |
| **1** | **Initial Enquiry Form** | ASPL-CD-FR-42 | **QM And AQM** | **5 Years** |
| **2** | **OMP** | ASPL-CD-OGG -01, ASPL-CD-OMP-OGG-01, | **QM And AQM** | **5 Years** |
| **3** | **Application packet** | , ASPL-CD-OGG -01, | **QM And AQM** | **5 Years** |
| **4** | **Quotation** | ASPL-CD-ANX-98 | **QM And AQM** | **5 Years** |
| **5** | **Proposal and Agreement** | Agreement (ASPL-CD-FR-25) and proposal (ASPL-CD-FR-05 | **QM And AQM** | **5 Years** |
| **6** | **Audit Planning** | ASPL-CD-PR-12 | **QM And AQM** | **5 Years** |
| **7** | **Assignment Letter** | ASPL-CD-FR-24 | **QM And AQM** | **5 Years** |
| **8** | **Audit Plan** | ASPL-CD-FR-06 | **QM And AQM** | **5 Years** |
| **9** | **Attendance Record** | ASPL-CD-ANX-50) | **QM And AQM** | **5 Years** |
| **10** | **Inspection Checklist** | ASPL-CD-COR-CL-03 | **QM And AQM** | **5 Years** |
| **11** | **Audit report** | ASPL-CD-FR-34), ASPL-CD-COR-CL-09, ASPL-CD-COR-CL-10, ASPL-CD-COR-CL-11 | **QM And AQM** | **5 Years** |
| **12** | **Observation Sheet** | ASPL-CD-ANX-51 | **QM And AQM** | **5 Years** |
| **13** | **Sampling and traceability sheet** | ASPL-CD-ANX-110 | **QM And AQM** | **5 Years** |
| **14** | **Sampling form** | ASPL-CD-FR-33 | **QM and AQM** | **5 years** |
| **14** | **Audit Finding sheet** | (ASPL-CD-FR-26) | **QM And AQM** | **5 Years** |
| **15** | **CAPA** | ASPL-CD-FR-26A | **QM And AQM** | **5 Years** |
| **16** | Technical Review And Certification Decision Process | ASPL-CD-PR-16 | **QM And AQM** | **5 Years** |
| **17** | **NC Findings closure process** | ASPL-CD-PR-14 | **QM And AQM** | **5 Years** |
| **18** | Non Compliances Closure Report | ASPL-CD-ANX-77 | **QM And AQM** | **5 Years** |
| **19** | **Certification Committee** | ASPL-CD-ANX-02 | **QM And AQM** | **5 Years** |
| **20** | **CCIF** | ASPL-CD-FR-08 | **QM And AQM** | **5 Years** |
| **21** | Label Assessment Form | ASPL-CD-ANX-61 | **QM And AQM** | **5 Years** |
| **22** | Re-verification of the Reviewed Operator File | **ASPL-CD-ANX-84** | **QM And AQM** | **5 Years** |
|  |  |  |  |  |