American Farmland Trust

Certification Body Requirements

The American Farmland Trust U.S. Farmed™ Certification Standard

American Farmland Trust

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Introduction

This normative document specifies the requirements that certification bodies shall meet to perform third party certification against the American Farmland Trust (AFT) U.S. Farmed™ Certification Standard (hereinafter U.S. Farmed).

This document, in respect to the U.S. Farmed Certification Program:

- contains standard-specific requirements to supplement ISO 17065:2012,
- describes the requirements that shall be met by AFT's approved certification bodies for the application of the U.S. Farmed Standard, and
- enables the consistent application of the U.S. Farmed Certification Program by certification bodies.

1. Scope

1.1 Certification bodies shall maintain a Quality Management System (QMS) and conform with all applicable requirements outlined in ISO 17065:2012.

1.2 The certification body shall incorporate all the supplemental standard-specific requirements in Section 4-7 and implement it within its QMS per ISO 17065:2012.

1.3 Certification bodies shall conform to these certification body requirements in the case of a conflict with ISO 10765.

2. Normative References

1. American Farmland Trust U.S. Farmed™ Certification Standard
2. ISO 17000:2020-05 Conformity assessment — Vocabulary and general principles
3. ISO 17065:2012 Conformity assessment — Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services
4. ISO 19011:2018 Guidelines for auditing management systems

3. Terms and Definitions

Per ISO 17065:2012, the following terms are used in this document:

- "shall" indicates a requirement
- "should" indicates a recommendation
- "may" indicates a permission
- "can" indicates a possibility or a capability

The definitions outlined in the U.S. Farmed Standard, ISO 17065:2012, and ISO 17000 shall apply, in addition to the following:

Audit. Third-party evaluation conducted by an approved certification body against this Standard. An audit can include the review of documents and records, interviews, and observations.

Auditor. An individual who is qualified and authorized by the certification body to conduct and lead audit activities and audit team members. An auditor may be an employee or subcontractor of the certification body.

Desk Audit. An audit that is conducted remotely. A desk audit includes a review of documents, test data, and/or other evidence ensuring that the client is in conformance with all applicable requirements in the Standard.

Expiration. The end of the validity period of an issued certificate.

Non-Conformity. A failure to comply with a certain section of the Standard, which may be categorized as major or minor, defined as follows:

- **Major Non-Conformity**. A failure to adhere to one or more requirements of the Standard that is either persistent, recurrent, unaddressed, or has the potential to result in a critical failure to achieve the objectives of the requirement(s).
- **Minor Non-Conformity**. A failure to adhere to one or more requirements of the Standard that is temporary, isolated, and that does not result in a critical failure to achieve the objectives of the requirement(s).

Quality Management System (QMS). A set of policies, processes and procedures required for planning and execution (production/development/service) in the core business area of an organization (i.e., areas that can impact the organization's ability to meet customer requirements (sourced from ISO 9001).

Onsite Audit. An audit conducted in-person at the client's site.

Recertification Audit. An assessment of a client against the applicable Standard requirements in order to determine qualification for recertification.

Surveillance Audit. An assessment of a client against the applicable Standard requirements to verify continued conformance, required at periodic intervals to maintain certification.

Suspension. Temporary invalidation of the certificate.

Termination. Revocation or cancellation of the certification, which can be voluntary or involuntary. Can also be referred to as withdrawal.

Virtual Audit. An audit conducted through video walk-through of the client's site (e.g., via Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Whatsapp).

4. General Requirements

4.1 Legal and Contractual Matters

4.1.1 Legal Responsibility

No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

4.1.2 Certification Agreement

No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

4.1.3 Use of License, Certificates and Marks of Conformity

4.1.3.1 The certification body shall exercise the control as specified by the certification scheme over ownership, use and display of licenses, certificates, marks of conformity, and any other mechanisms for indicating a product is certified.

a) Additional mechanisms the certification body uses for indicating a product is certified shall include monitoring certificate holder logo use according to AFT rules set forth in the AFT Trademark Licensing Agreement.

4.1.3.2 No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

4.2 Management Impartiality

No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

4.3 Liability and Financing

No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

4.4 Non-Discriminatory Conditions

No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

4.5 Confidentiality

No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

4.6 Publicly Available Information

No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

5. Structural Requirements

5.1 Organizational Structure and Top Management

No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

5.2 Mechanism for Safeguarding Impartiality

No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

6. Resource Requirements

6.1 Certification Body Personnel

6.1.1 General

No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

6.1.2 Management of competence for personnel involved in the certification process

6.1.2.1 The certification body shall establish, implement, and maintain a procedure for management of competencies of personnel involved in the certification process (see Clause 7). The procedure shall require the certification body to:

a) No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s);

b) identify training needs and provide, as necessary, training programmes on certification processes, requirements, methodologies, activities, and other relevant certification scheme requirements, including ensuring its auditor candidates meet the following minimum requirements:

i) observe or participate in at least three U.S. Farmed audits and lead at least one U.S. Farmed audit while being witnessed by qualified auditor.

(1) This requirement may be waived for an auditor with experience auditing similar chain of custody or traceability certification scheme(s).

ii) have a graduate degree in a field relevant to the material being traced, or two years of professional experience in a relevant technical field; and

iii) have successfully completed an ISO 19011 course on auditing techniques.

c) No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s);

d) No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s);

e) monitor the performance of the personnel, including ensuring its auditors:

i) conduct at least three audits every year against a U.S. Farmed or similar traceability certification scheme(s); and

ii) successfully undergo a witness audit every three years.

6.1.2.2 No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

6.1.3 **Contract with the Personnel**

No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

6.2 Resources for Evaluation

No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

7. Process Requirements

7.1 General

No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

7.2 Application

7.2.1 Applicants shall submit the completed application form to the certification body once authorized by AFT.

7.3 Application Review

No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

7.4 Evaluation

7.4.1 The certification body shall have a plan for the evaluation activities to allow for the necessary arrangements to be managed, including:

7.4.1.1 **Documentation Review**

a) The certification body shall conduct the following records verification exercises relating to certified farm products or value-added products:

   i) Traceability tests on a batch or batches of U.S. Farmed certified product sold or ready for sale. The test shall link the certified output to U.S. farm through a chain of suppliers, unique lots or delivery numbers, traceability records, purchase records (that identify the supplier(s), and the lots or batches of purchase), handling records, supply records.

   ii) Cross-checks of a sample of purchase records with delivery records throughout the supply chain. Records shall include, where relevant, bills of lading, invoices, delivery notes, purchase orders.

   iii) Input/output reconciliation based on a time-period and/or batch of product. The certification body shall verify the conversion factor and determine whether it is accurate.

b) The certification body shall set a time limit for receipt of records during the audit and raise a non-conformity if this is not met.

7.4.1.2 **Sampling**

a) The certification body shall determine the number of supply chains or supply chain actors to review during an audit.

b) The sample plan shall include, at a minimum:

   i) a traceback of at least every U.S. grown ingredient in the final product.

   ii) at least 1.5 times the square root of the total number of a client's supply chain actors.

   iii) onsite visit of critical control points in the supply chain (i.e., a step at which control can be applied), as deemed necessary by the certification body.

c) The certification body may increase or decrease the sampling size based on the complexity of a client's supply chain and risk associated with the ingredient(s) being traced upstream.

7.4.1.3 **Audits**

a) The certification body shall conduct an initial onsite audit of each supply chain actor's facility (See section 7.4.1.2 for sampling), including a visual inspection of segregation of eligible (i.e., demonstrated to be farmed in the U.S.) farm products and non-eligible farm products.

i) The audit should include a desk audit component to allow the certification body to review documentation ahead of the onsite visit to minimize duration spent onsite.

b) The certification body may, at its discretion, conduct additional, announced, or unannounced audits based on risk or random sampling, and to verify implementation of any corrective actions.

c) The certification body may conduct onsite visits of additional upstream supply chain actor(s), and justification shall be documented.

7.4.2 No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

7.4.3 No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

7.4.4 No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

7.4.5 No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

7.4.6 Non-conformities shall be raised when a client is found to be out of conformity with the requirements of the Standard. Non-conformities shall be graded and managed as follows:

7.4.6.1 **Major Non-Conformity**

a) Major non-conformities shall be issued when there is a failure to meet any criterion in the Standard that could impact the product's traceability.

b) A corrective action plan shall be developed by the client and include evidence of implementation.

c) The certification body may conduct a follow-up audit to verify implementation of any corrective measures.

d) Major non-conformities shall be resolved (i.e., closed) within 90 days of issuance.

7.4.6.2 **Minor Non-Conformity**

a) Minor non-conformities shall be issued when there is a failure to meet any criterion in the Standard that is temporary and does not impact the product's traceability.

b) Minor non-conformities shall be resolved (i.e., closed) within one year or by the time of the next annual audit, whichever comes first.

c) Minor non-conformities that are not resolved within the agreed-upon timeframe shall become major non-conformities.

7.4.6.3 **Opportunities for Improvement (OFI)**

a) Opportunities for Improvement shall be issued for areas of conformity that are at risk of becoming minor or major non-conformities. OFIs do not need to be resolved and no evidence is required for the client to achieve or maintain certification.

7.4.7 No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

7.4.8 No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

7.4.9 No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

7.5 Review

No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

7.6 Certification Decision

No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

7.7 Certification Documentation

7.7.1 The certification body shall provide the client with formal certification documentation that clearly conveys, or permits identification of the following:

a) No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

b) No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

c) No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

d) No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

e) the term or expiry date of certification, which is a maximum of three years.

f) any other information required by the certification scheme, including:

i) The AFT logo.

7.7.2 No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

7.7.3 Formal certification documentation (see 7.7) shall only be issued after, or concurrent with, the following:

a) No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

b) certification requirements have been fulfilled;

i) All major non-conformities shall be closed before a certificate is issued, i.e., they have been corrected and those corrective actions have been verified by the certification body (by site visit or other appropriate means).

c) No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

7.8 Directory of Certified Products

No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

7.9 Surveillance

7.9.1 If surveillance is required by the certification scheme, or as specified in 7.9.3 or 7.9.4, the certification body shall initiate surveillance of the product(s) covered by the certification decision in accordance with the certification scheme, as follows:

7.9.1.1 **Surveillance Audits**

a) The certification body shall conduct a surveillance audit annually (every 12 months from the date of initial certification). The surveillance audit's timing may be advanced or delayed by up to 90 days before or after the due date as necessary to coordinate a suitable date.

b) The surveillance audit shall include:

i) a desk audit or virtual audit of the certified product(s) to determine if any changes in ingredients, production, or supply chain has occurred, or

ii) an onsite audit if the desk or virtual audit does not allow the certification body to make a final determination.

7.9.1.2 **Recertification Audits**

a) The certification body shall conduct a recertification audit every three years. The recertification audit’s timing shall allow enough time for potential non-conformities raised at the recertification audit to be corrected, and for the reissuing of the certificate prior to the certificate expiry date to avoid a lapse in certification.

b) Recertification audits follow the same process (planning, evaluation, reporting, closure of non-conformities, review, and decision) as initial audits (See section 7.4.1.3).

7.9.2 No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

7.9.3 No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

7.9.4 No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

7.10 Changes Affecting Certification

No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

7.11 Termination, Reduction, Suspension or Withdrawal of Certification

7.11.1 When a nonconformity with certification requirements is substantiated, either as a result of surveillance or otherwise, the certification body shall consider and decide upon the appropriate action.

a) The certification body shall have a procedure to evaluate a client's request to extend the duration of validity of a certificate according to the following:

i) The certification body may decide to extend the certificate by a maximum of 3 months.

b) The certification body may reduce the scope of certification to remove nonconforming product variants.

c) The certification body may choose to temporarily suspend the certification, pending corrective actions, for up to 6 months.

d) The certification body shall terminate a client's certificate:

i) in case of serious violations with applicable standard requirements;

ii) if corrective measures are not implemented within the timeframe; or

iii) any other valid reason identified by the certification body.

7.11.2 No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

7.11.3 No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

7.11.4 No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

7.11.5 No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

7.11.6 No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

7.12 Records

No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).

7.13 Complaints and Appeals

No additions to the existing ISO 17065:2012 requirement(s).