



System Requirements for Certificate Holders

Sustainability Framework
Programme

System Requirements for Certificate Holders Sustainability Framework Programme	
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Introduction and scope

This Standard applies to **all** Sustainability Framework Programme Certificate Holders, regardless of the nature of their activities. It applies to both land use level and supply chain verification. The objective is to outline requirements for the systems and procedures that shall be in place within the Organisation prior to being verified and receiving a certificate.

This Standard is to be used together with other normative standards – a list of relevant standards can be found in **box 1**.

Box 1: List of normative documents of the Sustainability Framework Programme

- **Standard SP-01. Sustainability Framework.** The Framework contains the requirements applicable to producers working on land use level (land managers), processors and manufacturers. For some products, a product- or sector-specific adaptation of the framework may be applicable.
- **Standard SP-03. Supplier Management and Due Diligence Standard.** This standard is applicable to Organisations that apply a risk-based due diligence system to confirm that the products are compliant with the Sustainability Framework.
- **Standard SP-04. Claims and Seal Use Standard.** This standard regulates claims and use of the Preferred by Nature Seal related to the Sustainability Framework Programme. It also contains the requirements related to carbon compensation, that is a prerequisite for the use of Seal.
- **Standard SP-05. CoC and Traceability Standard.** This standard contains requirements for chain of custody models and traceability systems used to manage claims and trace products in the supply chain.
- **Standard SP-09. Terms and Definitions.** The standard contains definitions and concepts used in the Sustainability Framework Programme.

Version history

Version 0.1, 25 September 2020

Version 1.1, 3 June 2021

Version 1.2, 15 December 2021

Version 1.3, 13 January 2023

Terms and definitions

Procedure

The established way of doing a series of actions. In the Sustainability Framework Programme context, required procedures describe how systems are intended to work.

Scope

Scope defines the boundaries of the organisations' system in terms of models applied, products included, crops/species/commodities handled, claims covered, sites and production lines included.

Site

A site is defined as a single geographical location with clear boundaries within which products can be handled, produced or processed.

System

In terms of the Sustainability framework, a system is the combination of necessary defined processes, instructions, procedures (where used), software, data, communications, etc., that works towards meeting the Sustainability Framework and other applicable normative documents.

Top Management

Person or group of people who directs and controls the organisation at the highest level. In the context of this Standard, top management shall have control over all sites, entities and *outsourced* operations included in the scope.

1. Scope

Requirements	Guidance
<p>1.1. The Organisation shall define and document the scope of the activities, products and entities included in the scope of the verification.</p>	<p>Depending on the type of entity and activities being evaluated, the scope can be defined by a range of attributes, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Properties / legal entities, including members and subcontractors, if applicable, • Area and location (geolocation data for land managers where relevant), • Suppliers, if applicable, • Commodities and, if applicable, species, • Products with their input material, • Due diligence system applied, • Chain of Custody (CoC) system(s) used for each site, • Production lines, if applicable
<p>1.2. Any change of scope shall be documented and communicated to Preferred by Nature as relevant.</p>	<p>Changes to the scope should be documented and available to auditors. Also, any changes to the scope of operations, such as the inclusion of new products or suppliers into a Due Diligence System (DDS) or the opening of new production areas, should be communicated to Preferred by Nature and verified before inclusion in the scope.</p>
<p>1.3. If the scope covers multiple entities/properties, the Organisation ensures compliance of those entities/properties with all applicable requirements.</p>	<p>If the scope of the verification covers different entities, which may or may not be individual legal entities, it is the responsibility of the certificate holder to ensure that all entities/properties meet all applicable requirements. It includes cases where certain activities are outsourced to third parties.</p>

2. Responsibilities and competence

Requirements	Guidance
<p>2.1. A position is defined with overall responsibility for conformance with all applicable requirements.</p>	<p>One overall responsible position or person should be defined as having the overall task of ensuring that all relevant requirements are met for the whole scope of the certificate.</p>
<p>2.2. The responsible person (and other designated staff) have sufficient authority and resources to ensure that requirements are met.</p>	<p>To ensure efficient implementation of the requirements, the Organisation should ensure that authority is delegated, and sufficient resources are allocated to ensure that requirements are being met consistently and that necessary changes are made and maintained.</p>
<p>2.3. Individual responsibilities for relevant requirements are defined and known.</p>	<p>The Organisation has allocated responsibilities to designated personnel.</p> <p>For larger entities, documented job descriptions exist for the personnel responsible for the Organisation's implementation of relevant requirements, which includes the competency and authority required for the position.</p> <p>Organisational charts can clearly show relevant personnel's responsibilities.</p>
<p>2.4. Staff and workers, including contractors and seasonal workers, demonstrate awareness of and competence in all aspects of fulfilling the requirements relevant to their position and role.</p>	<p>This requirement is important for auditors to ensure that all staff and workers are aware of their roles and have the necessary competence to ensure that the Organisation meets applicable requirements.</p> <p>Relevant training should be delivered to the personnel responsible for implementing procedures.</p>

3. Systems, procedures and records

Requirements	Guidance
<p>3.1. Systems are established and implemented to achieve and maintain conformance with all applicable requirements. The systems shall be adequate and proportionate to the size and complexity of operations.</p>	<p>It is clear which elements work together to achieve compliance. Such elements may be procedures and work instructions, necessary software, digital folders and files, communications etc.</p>

Requirements

Guidance

3.2. Procedures covering the specified scope and all applicable requirements, including identifying and addressing non-conformances, shall be established, implemented and kept updated.

Procedures should be developed as appropriate for the size and complexity of the Organisation. Smallholders and small-size entities may have very short and simple procedures. Very small operations (e.g. single family operations) may not need written procedures at all. In this case, it is essential to demonstrate clarity about consistent ways of operation to the auditors.

Procedures have been developed and are kept up to date to cover all requirements.

For large Organisations, it may be necessary to implement a documented management system that allows for tracking changes to procedures.

3.3. Relevant information, records, documents, workers, locations or entities (including members, suppliers and sub-contractors) are available for Preferred by Nature auditors to evaluate conformance.

Records must be kept available, both for the appropriate implementation requirements by designated personnel within the Organisation and for the purpose of audits.

Note that some information may be made publicly available in the summary of findings.

3.4. The Organisation has all relevant evidence, including records and documentation, stored and kept for a minimum of 5 years.

All records shall be available during audits upon request. A reasonable timeframe is generally 5 business days upon request.

4. Internal performance evaluation

Requirements

Guidance

4.1. Internal performance is evaluated for all entities included in the scope at least annually against the Sustainability Framework Programme requirements and:

- a) evaluation is documented, where appropriate to the size;
- b) gaps or weaknesses are addressed and corrected in a timely manner.

Internal monitoring should cover all entities and group members/sites (where applicable) as well as suppliers and sub-suppliers when due diligence is applied to products.

Internal evaluation systems, documentation and intensity should be appropriate for the size and complexity of the organisation/activities. In the case of very small entities, the evaluation may be ongoing and does not need to be documented if a generally good compliance level is maintained.

Preferred by Nature is an international non-profit organisation working to support better land management and business practices that benefit people, nature and the climate. We do this through a unique combination of sustainability certification services, projects supporting awareness raising, and capacity building. For more than 25 years, we have worked to develop practical solutions to drive positive impacts in production landscapes and supply chains in 100+ countries. We focus on land use, primarily through the forest, agriculture and climate impact commodities, and related sectors, such as tourism and conservation.

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