



## Procedures for Authorization of Certification Entities

### Small Producers' Symbol

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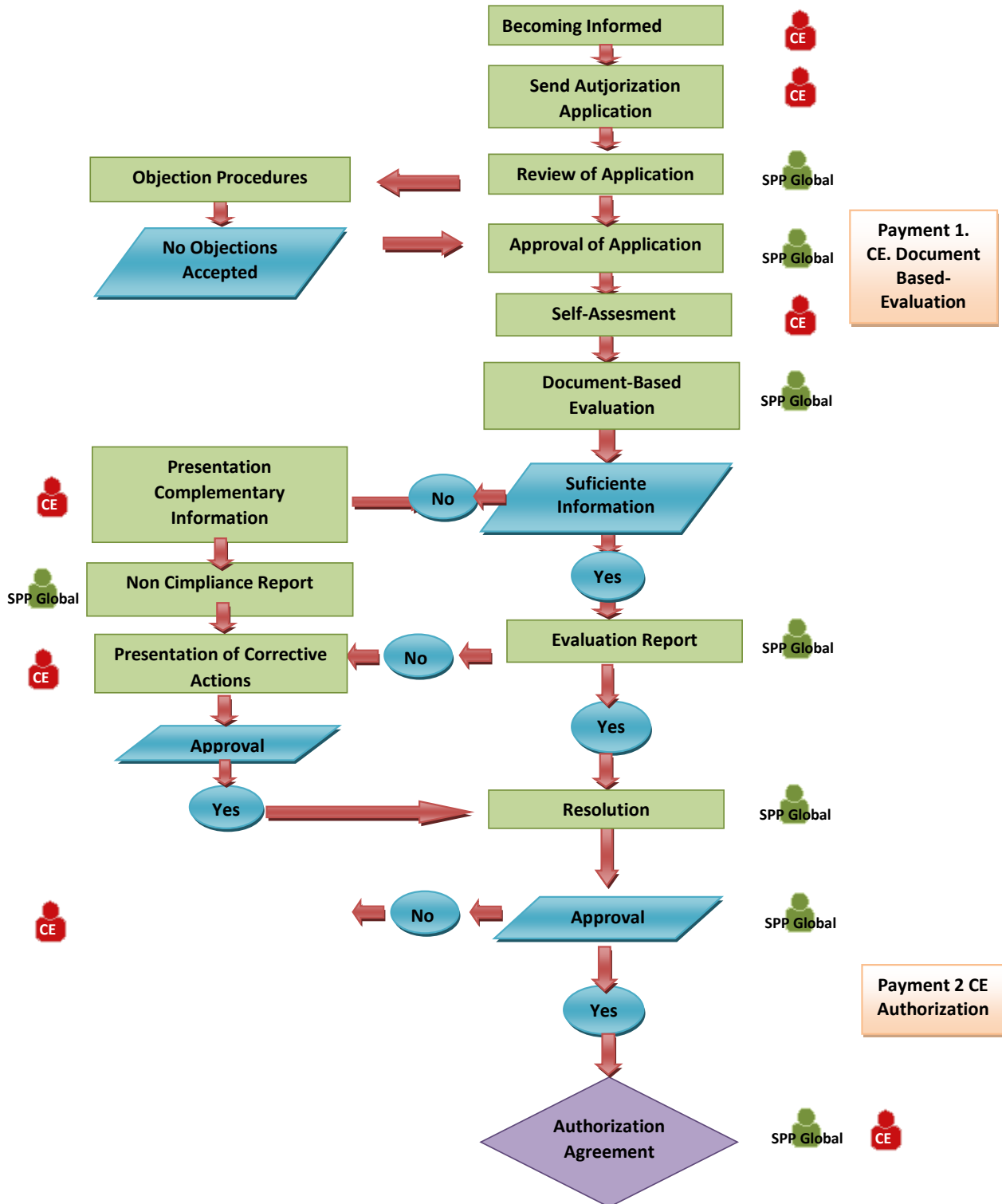


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# 1 DIAGRAM OF PROCESS





## 2 INTRODUCTION

The official language of this document is Spanish, for any clarification regarding this document published in another language, Spanish version will prevail.

## 3 OBJECTIVE

This document establishes the procedures and requirements to be applied by SPP GLOBAL for the authorization and supervision of Certification Entities participating in the Small Producers' Symbol certification program.

## 4 SCOPE

These procedures are to be applied to all Certification Entities that request and that are granted authorization to participate in the Small Producers' Symbol certification program.

## 5 REFERENCES

In order to apply these procedures, it is necessary to consult and apply the versions of the following documents currently in effect:

- a. Authorization Request for Certification Entities
- b. Authorization Agreement for Certification Entities
- c. Regulations on Costs for Certification Entities

## 6 DEFINITIONS

- a. **Corrective Action (CA):** An action presented by a Certification Entity (CE) in the case of non-compliance with a clause in the Authorization Agreement or in the regulations stipulated in the Agreement's Annexes.
- b. **Day:** Calendar day.
- c. **Examiner:** Person with the necessary technical skills, experience and professional prestige for making decisions regarding compliance with the Small Producers' Symbol criteria.
- d. **Evaluator:** Person with the necessary technical skills for conducting the document-based and field evaluations of the Small Producers' Symbol criteria.
- e. **Basic Evaluation:** Is the evaluation conducted every year as part of the supervisin evaluation.
- f. **Evaluation of Certification Entity:** Systematic, independent, documented process for obtaining and evaluating evidence in an objective manner with the aim of determining the degree of compliance with what is established in the Authorization Agreement.



- g. **Evaluation On Site:** It is an evaluation on site to verify the compliance of all the criteria for Certification Entities.
- h. **Objective evidence:** Registries, factual statements, or any other information that can be verified and reproduced.
- i. **SPP GLOBAL: Símbolo de Pequeños Productores Global A.C.**
- j. **Evaluation findings:** Results from the evaluation of objective evidence that demonstrate compliance or non-compliance with the established criteria.
- k. **Non-compliance:** Non-compliance with a clause in the Authorization Agreement or in the regulations established in the Agreement's Annexes.
- l. **CE:** Certification Entity.
- m. **SPP:** Símbolo de Pequeños Productores (Small Producers' Symbol).
- n. **SPP Regulatory Framework:** The set of standards, procedures, regulations, guidelines, **policies**, codes and forms that regulate the program of certification, registration, use and authorization of the Small Producers' Symbol. The Declaration of Principles and Values of the Small Producers' Symbol expresses the basic philosophy of the Regulatory Framework, but is not part of it.

## 7 PROCEDURES

### 7.1 APPLICATION FOR AUTHORIZATION

- a. CEs interested in being authorized to participate in the Small Producers' Symbol certification program should send their applications to SPP GLOBAL. The application should be filled out and signed by an authorized representative, and accompanied by the documentation indicated on the application form. SPP GLOBAL has an official application form that specifies the documents that should be presented to the CE together with the application.
- b. If an interested CE has branch offices and wants to include them in the authorization, these offices must minimally fulfill the following functions and responsibilities:
  - i. Process of qualifying evaluators, providing them with training and monitoring them.
  - ii. Reviewing applications
  - iii. Scheduling inspections and assigning evaluators
  - iv. Reviewing evaluation reports.
  - v. Making decisions regarding certification.
  - vi. Addressing complaints and appeals.
- c. If a branch office of the CE does not fulfill these functions, it will instead be considered as part of the central office.



- d. The branches offices included must guarantee the adequate service independently that the mechanisms of communication must be clear, whether it be centralized or in each region.
- e. If a Certification Entity wants to offer their services for the SPP certification program in a specific continent, it must have minimally a qualified evaluator in that continent who can travel to the country (In which the service is required) to conduct the SPP certification program in those countries.
- f. Attention to particular cases could be addressed separately

## **7.2 REVIEW OF APPLICATION**

- a. Applications are reviewed by personnel assigned by SPP GLOBAL who assure that all the required documents have been presented and are complete.
- b. After an application has been presented, personnel authorized by SPP GLOBAL will assign a reference number, which will be used from that point on to identify any information associated with that particular application.
- c. If there are errors in the application or if a required document has not been annexed, the personnel assigned by SPP GLOBAL will inform the CE so that corrections can be made or additional information can be presented.
- d. The CE has a period of 60 calendar days to present any corrections or complementary documentation. If this does not take place, the authorization process is automatically terminated. The applicant has the option of re-initiating the process in the future.
- e. If the application has been properly prepared, SPP GLOBAL personnel will inform the CE that its application has been approved, and it will provide the CE with a reference number for the application. The CE will also be informed that SPP GLOBAL will initiate the Objection Procedures described below:

## **7.3 OBJECTION PROCEDURES**

- a. After an application has been approved, SPP GLOBAL publishes the applicant's intention to obtain authorization on the SPP GLOBAL web site and also notifies the organizations and companies certified with the Small Producers' Symbol, from the date of this publication and notification by SPP GLOBAL, there are 15 days during which documented objections to the applicant's authorization may be presented. These objections must be substantiated with concrete, verifiable information referring to non-compliance with aspects of the Code of Conduct for the Small Producers' Symbol.
- b. Besides the notification, the SPP Global's Certification and Quality area, conduct a revision of the applicant's background taking contact with the SPP stakeholders of applicants' country of origin
- c. If documented objections are presented, they must be addressed by SPP GLOBAL in accordance with the Dissents Procedures established for the Small Producers' Symbol.



- d. If no objections are received during the established time period, or if the objections presented are rejected, SPP GLOBAL will proceed with the following steps.

#### 7.4 EVALUATION FORM

SPP Global sends to the applicant the Evaluation Form. The Evaluation Form must be completed by the applicant to proceed with the self-assessment. The format presents a list of criteria based on the following:

- i. Procedures for Authorization of Certification Entities
- ii. Criteria of Guide ISO IEC 17065
- iii. Requirements of Authorization Agreement for Certification Entities

#### 7.5 DESIGNATION OF EVALUATOR

- a. SPP GLOBAL will inform the CE applicant of the name of the qualified evaluator designated for conducting the document-based and field evaluations.
- b. For the evaluation to CE, the evaluator must have the qualification of Evaluator type C.
- c. The CE may object to the evaluator assigned by SPP GLOBAL. Such an objection must be presented in writing, together with an explanation of the reasons, properly substantiated.
- d. If the evaluator is not accepted by the CE applicant, the proposal will be modified as many times as necessary, although this will delay the authorization process.

#### 7.6 DOCUMENT-BASED EVALUATION

- a. Consists of conducting an evaluation of all the criteria for Certification Entities, indicated in the Evaluation Form.
- b. The document-based evaluation is always conducted by long distance.

**NOTE: If the requesting Certification Entity prefers, it can be conducted the Complete Evaluation On Site, which can be combined with the SPP System in-person training.**

- c. There is an established cost for the document-based evaluation, depending on the number of branch offices corresponding to the applicant. This cost is specified in the document entitled "Regulations on Costs for Certification Entities" in the Small Producers' Symbol system.
- d. In order for the document-based evaluation to be considered as accepted, the corresponding payment must be made.
- e. The assigned Evaluator initiates the evaluation from the information sent by the requesting CE that includes the Evaluation Form and the documentation required in the Application form.



- f. The document-based evaluation consists of verifying the compliance of all the criteria with the information the CE set in the form and with the documents the CE sent attached to the application form. The evaluator must use the Evaluation Form and make the corresponding notes in it. The maximum time for the evaluation is 30 days.
- g. If there are doubts regarding the information in the documents or the Evaluation Form, the evaluator may request that the CE clarify or complement the information provided, using the most appropriate means available for doing so. The maximum time for this is 21 days.
- h. The CE applicant will receive a report on the document-based evaluation, within a time period of 30 working days after the evaluator has concluded the evaluation.
- i. If cases of non-compliance are detected in the document-based evaluation, these must be resolved before proceeding with the Field Evaluation, and Corrective Actions must be presented within a time period of no more than 60 days (2 months), beginning on the day the document-based evaluation report is received.
- j. The proposed corrective actions will be reviewed by the evaluator within a maximum period of 15 days beginning when the proposed actions are received.
- k. If corrective actions are not presented for the cases of non-compliance within the time period established, the authorization process will be terminated. If the CE applicant still wishes to obtain authorization, it will need to initiate the process again.

## **7.7 EXAMINATION**

- a. After the evaluator has turned over the evaluation report and its corresponding annexes to SPP GLOBAL, SPP Global will evaluate and make the final decision based on the results, issuing the resolution with a positive or negative result.
- b. If the resolution is positive, SPP GLOBAL will notify the CE applicant that the results of the evaluation are positive, and therefore authorization will take place or will be maintained, and the process will move on to the final phase consisting of the signing or ratification of the Authorization Agreement.
- c. If SPP GLOBAL establishes cases of Non-compliance, they should be resolved before the Final Resolution, and corrective actions should be presented within a period of 60 calendar days (2 months), beginning on the date that non-compliance is reported.
- d. The corrective actions proposed will be reviewed by the evaluator within a period of no more than 20 working days after receiving them.
- e. If corrective actions are not presented for the cases of non-compliance within the established time period, SPP GLOBAL will send a Notification Letter to the CE applicant to communicate the reasons this decision was made.





## 7.8 SIGNING OF AUTHORIZATION AGREEMENT

In order for a CE to begin participating in the Small Producers' Symbol program, it must meet the following requirements:

- i. Have received positive notification from SPP GLOBAL, valid for a period of 5 years.
- ii. Have paid the Annual Operation Fee to SPP GLOBAL. The amount of the Annual Operation Fee is specified in the Small Producers' Symbol document entitled "Regulations on Costs for Certification Entities."
- iii. Have signed the Authorization Agreement with SPP GLOBAL.

## 7.9 SUPERVISION EVALUATION

- a. At the end of the fifth year of the CE Authorization, it should be conducted an Evaluation On Site to renew the Authorization granted by SPP Global.
- b. For the annual supervision, it must be conducted an evaluation at some point after Authorization has been obtained for the second year, to fulfill the following objectives:
  1. Verify that the conditions under which authorization was granted have been maintained.
  2. Verify that the certification program has been implemented as established in the regulatory framework.
- c. The first step for the supervision evaluation is to conduct a "basic evaluation" to determine, through a risk analysis, whether or not it is necessary for SPP GLOBAL to conduct a complete evaluation of the CE.
- d. If the risk level is determined in the basic evaluation to be low, nothing more needs to be done in the supervision evaluation. If the risk level is determined to be medium, a Document-Based Evaluation should be completed. If the risk level is determined to be high, an On-Site Evaluation should be completed.

Risk Level	Factor	Type of Procedures to apply
Low	<25	Basic Evaluation
Medium	25-30	Document-Based Evaluation
High	>30	On-Site Evaluation



## **7.10 BASIC EVALUATION**

- a. The CE will send the following information to SPP GLOBAL:
  - i. Previous Evaluation Report
  - ii. Annual Activities Report
  - iii. Any Non-compliance Notes issued to the CE by SPP GLOBAL.
  - iv. The files corresponding to some operators certified or registered by the CE, on the basis of a sampling conducted by SPP GLOBAL of between 10% and 20% of the total number of stakeholders, with a minimum of one
  - v. The following factors should be considered in the sampling: 1) number of stakeholders; 2) variety of stakeholders; 3) geographic distribution; 4) any Non-compliance notes sent to the CE by SPP GLOBAL.
- b. The evaluator will review the Annual Activities Report send previously by the CE.
- c. The evaluator will use the checklist of files to verify the appropriate implementation of the certification program.
- d. The evaluator will prepare an Evaluation Report in which the risk level will be established.
- e. The CE will receive the Evaluation Report, will review it and sign it to indicate acceptance.
- f. If the CE has any doubts or does not agree with the report, the latter may be adjusted if determined to be necessary. In the end the CE should send the report with its signature indicating acceptance.
- g. If the risk level is determined above 25 points, the Document-Based Evaluation it must be conducted through the procedures indicated in Section 7.6

## **7.11 ON SITE EVALUATION**

- a. This type of evaluation is conducted if a high-level risk has been established, above 30 points.
- b. If the CE is in the fifth year of its authorization, an On-Site Evaluation should be conducted, when the fifth year has concluded.
- c. The On-Site Evaluation is conducted according to the following procedures:
  - i. The CE should complete the evaluation form as a self-assessment of all the criteria for Certification Entities, as indicated on the form.
  - ii. The cost of the On-Site Evaluation depends on the work plan established after the evaluation on the evaluation form is completed. This cost is specified in the document entitled "Regulations on Costs for Certification Entities" in the Small Producers' Symbol system.



- iii. In order for the implementation of the evaluation to be considered as accepted, the corresponding payment must be made.
- iv. The assigned Evaluator will begin the evaluation on the basis of the information sent by the CE, including the evaluation form and the supporting documentation indicated on the form.
- v. The evaluation consists of verifying compliance with criteria on the basis of information presented by the CE on the form, and the supporting documents sent by the CE. The evaluator should use the evaluation form and make any notes on this form. The maximum amount of time for the evaluator to complete the evaluation is 21 days.
- vi. If there are doubts with respect to information presented in the documents or on the Evaluation Form, the evaluator may request clarification or complementary information from the CE, using the most appropriate means, and the CE will have a maximum of 21 days to respond.
- vii. The CE will receive a report of the document-based evaluation within a period of 15 work days beginning on the date on which the evaluator completes the document-based evaluation.
- viii. After the evaluation report has been sent to the CE, SPP GLOBAL will prepare a work plan for the on-site evaluation and will send it to the CE for its review. SPP Global must send the work plan within a period of 21 days.
- ix. The CE must confirm its acceptance in writing or propose another date for the Evaluation On Site within a period of 5 days or less following notification.
- x. If there is any comment regarding or modification to the Evaluation Plan, the evaluator should be informed in a timely manner.
- xi. To start the evaluation on site, the evaluator should take care to conduct the following activities:
  - a) Introduce himself/herself to the CE and determine the contact person who will be accompanying him/her.
  - b) Present the Evaluation Plan, to review its objective and scope, clarify any doubts, and if applicable, make modifications
  - c) Present a summary of the methodology, procedures and requirements that will be used during the evaluation.
  - d) Confirm the dates and times of the opening, intermediate and closing meetings between the evaluator and personnel in the area to be evaluated.



- xii. The evaluator must collect and verify the information:
  - a) Regarding the collecting of objective evidence, it should be compiled through interviews, review of documents, and observation of activities and conditions in the areas involved.
  - b) The information compiled through interviews should be confirmed through other independent sources such as: physical observation, measurements, records, etc.
- xiii. The evaluator should conduct the closing meeting. The purpose of the closing meeting is to present the evaluation's findings and conclusions in such a way that they will be understood and acknowledged by the CE.
  - a) The Evaluation Report should be presented and delivered, with any documented cases of Non-Compliance clearly highlighted.
  - b) During this meeting, the CE should be given the opportunity to present clarifications, while attempting to avoid debates.
  - c) At the end of the meeting, the conclusions obtained should be presented, and signatures of agreement should be requested from participants.
- xiv. Procedures in Section 7.7 on Examination proceed as indicated.

## **7.12 EVALUATION TO RENEW AUTHORIZATION**

To be conducted at the end of the fifth year of authorization in accordance with the following procedure:

- a. SPP Global should inform the CE two months before the end of the fifth year of the CE's Authorization.
- b. The renewal evaluation may begin two months before or two months after the end of the fifth year of authorization.
- c. SPP Global should present the Evaluation Plan, which should include a Document-Based Evaluation and an On-Site Evaluation.
- d. SPP Global should present a proposal for costs that should include:
  - i. Document-Based Evaluation
  - ii. On-Site Evaluation
  - iii. Annual participation



## NOTES:

- i. The costs for these items are specified in Regulations on Costs for Certification Entities.
  - ii. The cost of the On-Site Evaluation depends on the On-Site Evaluation Plan, after the Document-Based Evaluation has been conducted.
  - iii. If a Non-Compliance Report was issued in the Document-Based Evaluation, the CE may demonstrate the Corrective Actions or the Corrective Actions Plan when the On-Site Evaluation is conducted.
- e. As part of the On-Site evaluation, the assigned evaluator should accompany one or more on-site evaluation processes of the Certification Entity's clients. Basically, this should take place as part of an ordinary evaluation or through a specific control evaluation
- f. To determine the sample of processes to be accompanied, the following criteria should be considered:
- i. Total number of stakeholders certified and/or registered by the CE
  - ii. Geographic distribution of stakeholders
  - iii. Of the total number of stakeholders, calculate a sample of 5% with a minimum of one.
  - iv. In all cases stakeholders' accessibility for being visited should be taken into account.
- g. The cost of accompanying a process should be covered by the CE as part of per diem expenses for the on-site evaluation.
- h. The CE's On-Site Evaluation Plan should include activities for accompanying a process.

## 8 NON-COMPLIANCE NOTES

At any time SPP GLOBAL may send a Non-Compliance Note to a Certification Entity, when the latter fails to apply the Regulatory Framework to its clients, or fails to comply with the aspects of the Regulatory Framework that apply to CEs.

There are two types of Non-Compliance:

- a. Minor type of Non-Compliance
- b. Major type of Non-Compliance

The two types of Non-Compliance are addressed in accordance with the indications in the following table:



Type of Non-Compliance	Description	Corrective Actions	Person Responsible	Not resolved
1. Minor (MI)	Minor non-compliance that, if resolved in a reasonable amount of time, does not jeopardize the system's quality and/or the SPP's credibility.	Must be resolved before SPP GLOBAL conducts the next supervision evaluation.	RCC <sup>1</sup>	If a Minor non-compliance is not resolved in the required time and manner, it becomes a Major non-compliance.
2. Major (MA)	Major non-compliance that, if not resolved immediately, jeopardizes the system's quality and/or the SPP's credibility, and that consequently must be resolved immediately.	Must be resolved in a short time period established by SPP GLOBAL.	ED <sup>2</sup>	If a Major non-compliance is not resolved in the required time and manner, authorization for applying the SPP program will be suspended.

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<sup>1</sup> Person Responsible for Certification and Quality

<sup>2</sup> Executive Director



## **9 NON COMPLIANCE PROCEDURES**

1. When a case of major non-compliance has been determined, SPP GLOBAL sends a Non-Compliance Note to the CE for it to be reviewed and signed to indicate acceptance.
2. If the CE has observations or is not in agreement, it should inform SPP GLOBAL, indicating the reasons, so that the note can be adjusted if determined to be necessary.
3. If the note is adjusted, SPP GLOBAL sends it back to the CE for its signature. The CE must review the note, sign it and return it within 5 calendar days or less.
4. If a minor case of non-compliance is involved, the CE must take the necessary corrective measures prior to the next evaluation conducted by SPP GLOBAL. When SPP GLOBAL conducts the next evaluation, the CE must demonstrate the measures taken to correct the non-compliance and demonstrate that such non-compliance will not be repeated.
5. If a major case of non-compliance is involved, the CE must resolve the reasons within the time period indicated by SPP GLOBAL. If the reasons are not resolved, the CE will be suspended as indicated in Section 9.
6. SPP GLOBAL will send the Suspension notification to the CE, indicating the reason, the aspect of the regulatory framework for which compliance is lacking, the corrective actions to be taken, and the time period established by SPP GLOBAL for carrying out such actions.

### **9.1 SUSPENSION**

#### **1. REASON:**

- i. Not resolving a Major Non-Compliance issued to the CE: In this case a Non-Compliance is issued first, and if not resolved, a Suspension is issued.
- ii. Committing an Unacceptable Non-Compliance: In this case a non-compliance is not issued, but rather a Suspension is issued directly.

#### **2. CONSEQUENCES**

- i. Cannot receive new requests for SPP certification or registration
- ii. Must conclude the certification and registration services that had been initiated prior to receiving the Suspension.



- iii. Maintained in SPP GLOBAL's official lists of SPP Certification Entities under the "In Review" status. (SPP GLOBAL's public lists should indicate the meaning of "Suspended" with the following note: "Suspended status is acquired by, for example, not making a payment in a timely manner, but this situation may be corrected and normal status may be recuperated.")
- iv. The ongoing authorization cycle is not interrupted.
- v. In addition any pending debts associated with authorization of Certification Entities must be resolved.

### **3. LIFTING OF SUSPENSION**

- i. A Suspension is lifted when the reasons for which such a status was determined are declared to be resolved.
- ii. In addition any debts associated with authorization, such as annual participation fees or evaluation fees, must be resolved.

### **4. SUSPENSION PROCEDURES**

- i. If the CE does not resolve the reasons for which the Non-Compliance note was issued, in the time period established by SPP GLOBAL, the CE will be issued a Suspension.
- ii. SPP GLOBAL will send the Suspension notice to the CE, with the reason indicated, together with the regulatory framework that is not being complied with, the correction action to be taken, and the time period established by SPP GLOBAL to carry out such action.
- iii. The CE will receive and sign the Suspension notice as acceptance.
- iv. If the CE has observations it would like to make or does not agree with the Suspension, it may notify SPP GLOBAL of such, indicating the reasons for which the Suspension should be eliminated or adjusted, if deemed necessary.
- v. If the Suspension notice was adjusted, SPP GLOBAL will send it to the CE once again for its signature. The time period assigned to the CE to review the Suspension notice and send it back signed is 5 calendar days.
- vi. The time period established to correct the Suspension is 60 calendar days. This time period may vary according to the severity of the matter, and in any case, the time period for resolving the reasons for the Suspension will always be indicated on the Suspension notice.





## **9.2 CANCELLATION:**

### **1. REASON:**

Not resolving the reasons for which the Certification Entity was suspended.

### **2. CONSEQUENCES:**

- i. Cannot receive new requests for SPP certification and registration.
- ii. Must finish the certification and registration services initiated prior to receiving the Suspension.
- iii. Eliminated from SPP GLOBAL's official lists of SPP Certification Entities.
- iv. Must pay any pending debts for authorization of Certification Entities.

### **3. LIFTING OF CANCELLATION:**

- i. Must reinitiate the application process as a new applicant.
- ii. Must demonstrate that the reasons for which authorization was cancelled have been resolved.
- iii. Authorization may not be requested again until at least two years following the date on which notification of cancellation was received.
- iv. Must have paid any debts corresponding to the previous authorization.

### **4. CANCELLATION PROCEDURES:**

- i. SPP GLOBAL issues a Cancellation Resolution that, in all cases, is determined by SPP GLOBAL's Dissents Committee.
- ii. The cancellation moves forward if the reasons for the suspension are not resolved within the established time periods.
- iii. SPP GLOBAL notifies the CE that its authorization has been cancelled, by way of an official notification, specifying the reasons for which the decision was reached. The notification should include a request that the receiver acknowledges receipt.
- iv. SPP GLOBAL eliminates the CE from its official lists of SPP stakeholders.



- v. There is a possibility that SPP GLOBAL's Dissents Committee determines a set of conditions for lifting the cancellation.

**CHANGES WITH RESPECT TO PREVIOUS VERSION OR EDITION**

To see changes with respect to previous versions or editions, please consult our webpage or send a request to: cert@spp.coop

**Previous document**

Procedures for Authorization of Certification Entities  
 Small Producers' Symbol

Version 1 10-Feb-2011

Edition 1. 10-Feb-2011

#	Change	Reason	Type of Change	Date effective
1	A requirement for CE was added to specify that the CE should be minimally counted with a qualified SPP evaluator residing in that continent who can displace the country in question, when required.	To offer a better service by Certification Entities	Content	28-Jan-2017
2	Definitions of Cancellation, Suspension, Deactivation and Regulatory Framework have been added to Section 6 on Definitions.	To include new procedures.	Editing	28-Jan-2017



#	Change	Reason	Type of Change	Date effective
3	Section 7 of Authorization Procedures has been modified to specify the Document-Based Evaluation as the only type of evaluation for authorizing CEs.	To decrease the time and costs involved in the initial evaluation for Authorization of Certification Entities.	Content	28-Jan-2017
4	The Basic Evaluation is implemented in 7.10 as the first step in the Supervision Evaluation.	To carry out a minimal evaluation, each and every year, of all Certification Entities.	Content	28-Jan-2017
5	Risk Determination is implemented for determining whether a Document-Based Evaluation or a Complete On-Site Evaluation will be conducted as part of the Supervision Evaluation.	To determine if a complete evaluation is necessary to assure Compliance with SPP's Regulatory Framework.	Content	28-Jan-2017
6	Section 8 on Procedures for cases of Non-Compliance is implemented.	Such procedures with specific guidelines did not previously exist.	Content	28-Jan-2017