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1. INTRODUCTION

1. The official language for all documents associated with the Small Producers' Symbol is Spanish. In the case of any doubt arising from a translated version, the Spanish document shall be used as the only valid version.
2. The ISO 19011: 2002 "Guidelines for quality and/or environmental management systems auditing" has been used as the basis for developing these procedures.
3. These procedures fulfill the ISO/17065 Standard "Conformity assessment - Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services".

2. OBJECTIVE

To define the procedure that should be followed to determine the Work Plan necessary for conducting an Evaluation of Compliance to the requirements of the standards.

3. SCOPE

This procedure applies to both the Document-based Procedure and the Complete Procedure, and to Small Producers' Organizations as well as Buyers and other stakeholders.

4. REFERENCES

4.1 **THIS PROCEDURE ARE COMPLEMENTARY TO THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURES AND CANNOT BE UNDERSTOOD WITHOUT THEM:**

- 4.1.1 Certification Procedures for Small Producers' Organizations
- 4.1.2 Registration Procedures for Buyers and other stakeholders

4.2 **IN ORDER TO ADEQUATELY UNDERSTAND AND CORRECTLY APPLY THIS PROCEDURE, IT IS ALSO NECESSARY TO CONSULT THE CURRENT VERSIONS OF THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS:**

- 4.2.1 General Standard of the *Small Producers' Symbol*
- 4.2.2 Applicable, complementary Standards and Policies
- 4.2.3 Regulations on Costs
- 4.2.4 **Format to Calculate Work Days**

5. DEFINITIONS

- 5.1 **Evaluation Activities:** The evaluation techniques used at different levels of evaluation, in order to gather information that will signify compliance or non-compliance with standards.
- 5.2 **Buyer (BUY):** A company that buys products certified with the *Small Producers' Symbol* to place them on the final consumer market under its own name or trademark, and that complies with the respective criteria in the applicable General Standard of the *Small Producers' Symbol*.
- 5.3 **Criteria:** The criteria defined in the General Standard of the *Small Producers' Symbol*.
- 5.4 **On Site Evaluation:** An on-site evaluation at the location(s) where activities of the organization or company to be evaluated take place, to verify compliance with the Standard.
- 5.5 **Document-Based Evaluation:** An evaluation based exclusively on documents that verify compliance with the Standard, to be presented or sent by the applicant to the Evaluator.
- 5.6 **Evaluatee:** Applicant subject to an evaluation in order to obtain Certification or Registration.

- 5.7 Evaluator:** A person assigned by *SPP Global* or the Certification Entity who is responsible for the process of evaluating the applicant.
- 5.8 Objective evidence:** Records, declarations of facts, or any other information that can be verified and reproduced.
- 5.9 Working Groups:** Communities, zones or groups that, as part of the internal organizational structure of a first-level Small Producers' Organization (SPO), bring together individuals who directly belong to a first-level SPO. These groups may be informal or may have legal status, as long as such legal status does not directly intervene in the membership of the first-level SPO.
- 5.10 Standards':** set of standards, including those in the General Standard and other specific standards and regulatory policies in effect in the *Small Producers' Symbol* system.
- 5.11 Small Producers' Organization (SPO):** A Small Producers' Organization that meets the criteria for Small Producers' Organizations, as specified in the General Standard of the *Small Producers' Symbol*. When a trading company is part of the structure of a single Small Producers' Organization that is certified with the *Small Producers' Symbol*, it is considered to be part of the Small Producers' Organization.
- 5.12 First-Level Small Producers' Organization:** SPO whose members are producers and individuals.
- 5.13 Second-Level Small Producers' Organization:** SPO whose members are first-level SPOs (and occasionally members of a first-level SPO and/or individuals).
- 5.14 Third-Level Small Producers' Organization:** SPO whose members are second-level SPOs (and occasionally members of a first-level SPO and/or individuals).
- 5.15 Fourth-Level Small Producers' Organization:** SPO whose members are third-level SPOs (and occasionally members of a second-level or first-level SPO and/or individual members).
- 5.16 Complete Procedure:** Includes a Document-based Evaluation and a Field Evaluation of compliance with all applicable criteria specified in the General Standard, as part of a Certification or Registration process.
- 5.17 Document-based Procedure:** Consists exclusively of a Document-based Evaluation of compliance with the applicable Critical Criteria specified in the General Standard, as part of a Certification or Registration process.
- 5.18 Complementary Sites:** Those Offices, Processing Plants and Warehouses, additional to central offices.

6. PROCEDURE

6.1 GENERAL ASPECTS

- 6.1.1** The purpose of the activities in an evaluation of compliance is to gather objective evidence that assures conformity with the criteria established in the Standards.
- 6.1.2** In order to determine the time required for an evaluation of compliance, it is necessary to consider all the factors corresponding to each case, and depending on the type of evaluation procedure.
- 6.1.3** In order to obtain objective evidence, it is necessary to work at different levels of verification and to use the appropriate verification techniques that will, in turn, have an impact on the time required for completing the evaluation.

6.2 ACTIVITIES FOR AN EVALUATION OF COMPLIANCE

6.2.1 DOCUMENT BASED- PROCEDURE

In this case a document-based evaluation is conducted only on the basis of the information provided on the evaluation form by the evaluatee, in relation to compliance with critical criteria.

6.2.2 ON SITE VISIT AS A COMPLEMENT TO DOCUMENT BASED- PROCEDURE

- a) In this case, on-site evaluation should be programmed only for the critical criteria in the standards for which sufficient documentation is lacking.
- b) Evaluation of criteria 4.1.1 and 4.2.1 of the General Standard of the *Small Producers' Symbol* is obligatory.

6.2.3 COMPLETE PROCEDURE IN THE FIRST EVALUATION

In this case the evaluation of all the criteria in the standards should be programmed.

6.2.4 COMPLETE ANNUAL EVALUATION

- a) Follow-up is provided to the conclusions from the review by filling out the evaluation form that must be updated.
- b) The criteria for the Commercial Agreement between small producers' organizations, buyers, collective trading companies owned by small producers' organizations, intermediaries and maquila companies are reviewed.
- c) Follow-up is provided to the results from previous evaluations.
- d) Use of the *Small Producers' Symbol* is reviewed to determine if it has been appropriate.
- e) Other topics that have arisen from any complaints received during the past year are reviewed.

6.2.5 CONTROL EVALUATION

- a) In this case the evaluation should only be programmed with the objective of corroborating information from the last Certification or Registration report, with special attention to any corresponding corrective actions.
- b) Use of the *Small Producers' Symbol* is reviewed to determine if it has been appropriate.
- c) Other topics that have arisen from any complaints received during the past year are reviewed.

6.2.6 MONITORING EVALUATION

In this case the evaluation should only be programmed with the objective of corroborating information for exclusively addressing established cases of non-compliance.

6.3 APPLICATION OF STANDARDS IN THE LEVELS OF EVALUATION

6.3.1 Levels of Evaluation

There are only two levels of evaluation to verify the compliance of the General Standard criteria at on-site evaluations.

- a. Level A: At the level of Central Offices and Complementary Sites
- b. Level B: Production Units in context of their 1st level SPO or Working groups

6.3.2 Evaluation of standards at the different levels

- a) The following chart presents the chapters and subchapters of the General Standard criteria and the levels in which they must be evaluated:

Subchapter of the General Standard	Evaluation Level
CRITERIA FOR SMALL PRODUCERS' ORGANIZATIONS	
4.1 Small Producer's Organizations	Level A y Level B
4.2 Organizational Criteria	Level A y Level B
4.3 Production Criteria	Level A
4.4 Management System Criteria	Level A

Subchapter of the General Standard	Evaluation Level
4.5 Commercial Criteria	Level A y Level B
4.6 Strengthening the Small Producers' Sector	Level A
4.7 Environment and human health criteria	Level B
4.8 Criteria for dignified living	Level B
4.9 Labor criteria	Level A y Level B
5. CRITERIA FOR REGISTRATION OF BUYERS, COLLECTIVE TRADING COMPANIES OWNED BY SMALL PRODUCERS' ORGANIZATIONS, INTERMEDIARIES AND MAQUILA COMPANIES	
5.1 General Considerations	Level A
5.2 Commitment to Promoting the Local Economy	Level A
5.3 Transparency y Traceability	Level A
5.4 Strengthening the Small Producers' Sector	Level A
6.COMMERCIAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN SMALL PRODUCERS' ORGANIZATIONS, BUYERS, COLLECTIVE TRADING COMPANIES OWNED BY SMALL PRODUCERS' ORGANIZATIONS, INTERMEDIARIES AND MAQUILA COMPANIES	
6.1 Contract	Level A
6.2 Sustainable Price	Level A y Level B
6.3 Pre-financing	Level A y Level B
6.4 Timely Payment	Level A y Level B
6.5 Quaity	Level A
6.6 Origin Criteria	Level A

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- b) It is important to point out that the Central Offices are considered to be the primary level of evaluation, since it is necessary to evaluate compliance with all the standards and to assure that mechanisms for compliance are in place for the other levels.
- c) It is necessary to evaluate the sample of Complementary sites, as it is indicated in chapter 6.7 of this document.

6.4 EVALUATION TECHNIQUES

6.4.1 Observation

- a) This technique is used to obtain direct information regarding the behavior of a group of persons, whether directors, technicians or members.
- b) Observations should be recorded by the most appropriate means in order to assure that there is evidence of all the aspects evaluated, particularly when significant cases of non-compliance are found.

6.4.2 Review of Documents

¹ Although it is specified in all subchapters the evaluation level, the CE must adapt the information to be requested to the different persons to its perspective and to the level of information that the CE has. Example: in case of 6.2.4 criterion of the General Standard, the individual producer can provide the information regarding the price paid for his product, however the producer does not have necessarily detailed information on the price paid by the customer to the Small Producer's Organization.

- a) This technique provides important information with respect to the activities of organizations or companies.
- b) A review of documents involves an examination of the information contained in them, associated with mechanisms, methods and systems of SPOs or companies.
- c) The review of documents can take place at the beginning, during or after the process, with the aim of comparing current operations.
- d) We understand documents to be information existing in either printed or electronic form.
- e) It is important to be aware of the fact that documents do not necessarily indicate the way in which activities are carried out, where all the power in decision-making lies, or how all tasks are carried out.

6.4.3 Interviews

Interviews have a specific objective, and all the questions are oriented toward meeting that objective. Typically, a script for the interview is prepared, with questions specified.

There are three types of interviews:

- a) Open. No questions are prepared; only the objective is specified.
- b) Semi-structured. Consists of questions without a predetermined sequence. The conversation determines the order of the questions, and whether the questions will be expanded or limited.
- c) Structured. Follows a script, which allows for:
 - ✓ Comparing responses to the same question with the same level of detail by different individuals.
 - ✓ Assuring that important aspects are not omitted, that the focus remains on the objective, and that the information obtained is relevant.

6.5 DETERMINING THE TIME NECESSARY FOR AN EVALUATION OF COMPLIANCE

6.5.1 DOCUMENT-BASED PROCEDURE

For the Document-based Procedure there are Work days tables, presented in the 'Regulation on Costs' in which it is established the days the Certification Entities must consider to determine the offer.

6.5.2 ON-SITE VISIT AS A COMPLEMENT TO THE DOCUMENT-BASED PROCEDURE

- a) In order to determine the number of workdays, the following activities are considered, when applicable:
 - i. Evaluation of Central Offices
 - ii. Evaluation of Complementary Sites
 - iii. Evaluation of the selected sample, according to level of SPO
- b) In Annex 1, the pages on the "Complete Procedure for SPOs" and on the "Complete Procedure for Buyers and other stakeholders" specify the size ranges for Small Producers' Organizations, and for Buyers and other stakeholders, respectively.
- c) The Certification Entity must assign times for each activity, the CE must use Annex 1 to register the time and calculate the evaluation days.
- d) The Certification Entity must use Annex 1 to present the SPP certification or registration offer and send it to the applicant with a copy to *SPP Global*. *SPP Global* is responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of information.

6.5.3 COMPLETE PROCEDURE IN THE FIRST EVALUATION AND COMPLETE ANNUAL EVALUATION

A. Complete Procedure On-Site

- a) In order to determine the number of workdays, the following activities are considered, when applicable:
 - i. Preparation for visit
 - ii. Evaluation of Central Offices
 - iii. Evaluation of Complementary Sites
 - iv. Evaluation of selected sample, according to level of SPO
 - v. Preparation of evaluation report
 - vi. Examination
- b) In Annex 1, the pages on the “Complete Procedure for SPOs” and on the “Complete Procedure for Buyers and other stakeholders” specify the size ranges for Small Producers’ Organizations, and for Buyers and other stakeholders, respectively.
- c) The Certification Entity must assign times for each activity, they must use Annex 1 to register the time and calculate the evaluation days.
- d) The Certification Entity must use Annex 1 to present the SPP certification or registration offer and send it to the applicant with a copy to *SPP Global*. *SPP Global* is responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of information.

6.5.4 CONTROL EVALUATIONS

- a) In order to determine the number of workdays, the following activities are considered, when applicable:
 - i. Preparation of visit
 - ii. Evaluation of Central Offices
 - iii. Evaluation of Production Units of Small Producers’ Organizations, when applicable
 - iv. Preparation of evaluation report
 - v. Examination
 - vi. In Annex 1, the pages on the “Complete Procedure for SPOs” and on the “Complete Procedure for Buyers and other stakeholders” specify the size ranges for Small Producers’ Organizations, and for Buyers and other stakeholders, respectively.
 - vii. The Certification Entity must assign times for each activity, the CE must use Annex 1 to register the time and calculate the evaluation days.
 - viii. The certification Entity must use Annex 1 to present the SPP certification or registration offer and send it to the applicant with a copy to *SPP Global*. *SPP Global* is responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of information.

6.5.5 METHODOLOGY FOR CALCULATING WORKDAYS

Following, the methodology to calculate the workdays for the evaluations is explained, taking the number of production units of the SPO in question as the main factor. These calculations are carried out in the Annex. "Format to Calculate Work Days":

- i. The number of producers from the Small Producers' Organization who will be included in the SPP Certification must be taken as a reference. The PU sample (Production Units) to be evaluated will be determined according to the following ranges:

- a) If the SPO has up to 200 members to be included, evaluate 2% of the PUs, considering at least 1 PU.
- b) If the SPO has more than 200 members to be included, evaluate the fifth root of the total number of PUs.

The sample must be distributed in the different working groups included in the SPP certification, which are determined by each SPO.

- ii. In the case of second or third level Organizations, a complementary sample of the base organizations must be calculated, according to the following guidelines:

- a) For second level SPOs, evaluate 10% of the first level SPOs that exist.
- b) For third level SPOs, evaluate 10% of first level SPOs and 5% of second-level SPOs, considering at least 1 SPO in both cases.

For these organizations, the Production Unit sample from point (i) is taken within the SPOs to be evaluated.

- iii. If the SPO has producer members that will not be included in the SPP Certification, because they are not organic or do not have the product to be SPP certified, the sample determined in point 1 must be completed by adding the fifth root of the total number of elements from this last group, considering at least 1 PU.

6.6 CRITERIA FOR SELECTING THE SAMPLE IN EVALUATIONS OF SMALL PRODUCERS' ORGANIZATIONS

The following selection criteria should be used to determine exactly which Organizations, Working Groups or Production Units should be selected:

- a) **Was it evaluated during previous visits?** If a certain organization or Working Group was already visited during previous evaluations, visiting other groups should be considered.
- b) **History of Compliance:** If an organization or Working Group has presented positive results, visiting other groups should be considered. If during the previous evaluation, there were organizations or groups with difficulties, some of them should be included in the new evaluation.
- c) **Representativity:** It is important to attempt to assure that the sample has the highest level of representativity possible in terms of geographic area, size of producers, variety of products and other local relevant parameters.
- d) **Geographic Distribution:** According to the days considered for the evaluation, the groups selected should be those located in an area that can be reached in a small amount of time or in an amount of time that will allow for meeting the established time periods.

There is no order of priority for the criteria presented here. It is the responsibility of the Certification Entity that the Evaluator finds a balance among the different criteria in each case.

6.7 CRITERIA FOR SELECT THE SAMPLE OF COMPLEMENTARY SITES

In order to decide what complementary sites does the CE choose, the following criteria for selection should be use:

1. Identify only the complementary sites currently involved in the SPP production, purchases, processing and trading chain.
2. Include 20% of the complementary sites with a minimum of 1

3. Distribution:
 - i. Assure the representation of types of complementary sites
 - ii. Assure the geographic representativity
4. Caring for the economic feasibility of evaluation in proportion to the size of operations.
5. In cases where there is inconsistency in the information available, may include or add site (s) specific (s) in the sample.

6.8 FACTORS FOR INCREASING OR DECREASING WORKDAYS

- a) After the necessary number of workdays has been determined, they may be adjusted, depending on the following factors:
 - i. Factors for increasing the number of workdays
 - a. Extreme geographic scattering of Complementary Sites (Offices, Processing Plants, Warehouses), of Working Groups or of the Production Units of Small Producers.
 - b. Number of products to be included in the Certification or Registration: the production and sometimes the processing of different products is a factor that makes the evaluation process more complex.
 - ii. Factors for reducing the number of workdays
 - c. Combination with inspection(s) for another (other) certification system(s): the inspections or audits conducted in a parallel manner for other certification programs generate information that overlaps with the information required for the evaluation for the *Small Producers' Symbol*.
 - d. Quality of the evaluatee's information systems: if an organization or company has a very efficient internal control system, this facilitates evaluation work
 - e. Information from previous evaluations: the information generated during previous evaluations may diminish the amount of information required and may make the evaluation process in general more efficient.
 - f. The analysis of factors for increasing or decreasing the number of workdays should be shared between the Evaluatee and the Certification Entity.
 - g. There may be other factors that impact the amount of work to be carried out, and must be justified for each particular case.