	Sustainable Stewardship Private Limited	Doc. No. PD- 06
	<b>GUIDELINES FOR CERTIFICATION OF GROWER GROUPS</b>	Rev. No: 00; Rev Date:
	Issue No. 01 ; Issue Date : 01.09.2023	Page 1 of 4

## GUIDELINES FOR CERTIFICATION OF GROWER GROUPS

### GENERAL

Grower Groups are organized group of farmers /producers who intend to produce organic products/engage in organic processes in accordance with the National Standards of Organic Production.

To qualify for group certification properties must:

- The producers in the group must apply similar production systems and the farms should be in geographical proximity.
- Individual farms with land holding of 4 ha (10 acres) and above can also be a part of the group but will have to be inspected separately every year by the **SSPL**.
- The total area of such farms shall be less than 50% of the total area of the group
- The grower group shall be based on the Internal Control System (ICS) and shall apply to grower groups, farmers' cooperatives, contract production and small scale processing units.
- The grower group shall consist of minimum 25 and maximum 500 farmers.
- Processors and exporters/traders can own/ manage the Internal Control System (ICS) but will have to be inspected annually by the external CB
- Separate certificates (Scope and Transaction Certificates) are required to be issued for the ICS, processors and traders to maintain the traceability of the product flow.

### SECTION-1-CONSTITUTION OF THE ICS

The ICS will have a registered legal identity and have a constitution of the organization and shall be presented by an organizational chart. For implementation of the procedures to maintain the internal control system, responsibilities shall be delegated to individual members / committees for carrying out specific activities.


### SECTION-2-Responsibilities

#### 2.1 ICS Manager

ICS manager shall develop and implement the ICS and would be responsible to organize internal inspections, coordinate between field staffs, approval staff, and the accredited Certification Body. The ICS manager shall define procedures for the following:

##### 2.1.1

- for approval for inclusion of new members in the existing group
- rating of non conformities as major if found using prohibited substances and as minor in case of inadequate documentation
- for verification of implementation of corrective actions taken by the defaulting farmers
- for imposing sanctions on default members of the group (removal from the group, downgrading the organic

	Sustainable Stewardship Private Limited	Doc. No. PD- 06
	<b>GUIDELINES FOR CERTIFICATION OF GROWER GROUPS</b>	Rev. No: 00; Rev Date:
	Issue No. 01 ; Issue Date : 01.09.2023	Page 2 of 4

status)

## 2.2 Internal inspectors

The ICS shall nominate adequate number of internal inspectors from their group and there shall be at least one internal inspector per 50-60 farmers for ensuring 100% inspection of all farmers in the group is carried out twice a year. The inspectors shall be well versed with the standards to perform internal inspections.

## 2.3 Approval manager / committee

Qualified person or approval committee shall be designated from within the group to take the approval decision. The approval manager/committee shall be well versed with organic procedures of ICS, internal standards and NPOP standards.

## 2.4 Field officers

Field officers shall be identified from among the group, one at each production area. The field officer shall train the farmers by organizing field extension services.

## 2.5 Purchase officers

Purchase officers shall be identified who would be responsible for correct purchase of produce from the farmers. The purchase officer is required to be well versed with ICS.

## 2.6 Warehouse manager

If there are separate warehouses, it may be necessary to have a warehouse manager who would be responsible for handling the produce. He / she shall be well versed with the procedures of ICS for proper implementation.

## 2.7 Processing manager

If the ICS operator operates a processing unit, it may be necessary to assign a processing manager. The processing manager is required to be trained in the handling procedures. When the processing of the produce is being organized in a company, the latter needs to be inspected by the certifier and would be responsible for processing according to the internal handling rules. In such case, the processing unit shall have a formal contract with the grower group. This processing unit will be treated as separate entity and scope will issued separately for the processing unit.

## SECTION-3- CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The ICS personnel shall not have any conflict of interest that might hinder the work. All possible conflicts shall be declared in a written statement. In such cases, the ICS shall ensure that alternative solutions are found. CB must verify the conflict of interest within the group.

## SECTION-4-

### 4.1 GENERAL- PROVISION OF DOCUMENTS


Each member of the grower group will be supplied with docket in local languages, which will contain the following:

- Internal standards document in local language. Details and description of the various steps required for the process flow right from cultivation to harvest and sales of the products (Each member / staff shall be communicated when there is a revision in the standards.)
- Farm data sheet, to indicate last use of prohibited inputs
- Farm Diary which should indicate the main crops cultivated use of inputs, harvested quantities.
- Prevailing farming system and package of practices available for the area
- Schedule on training programmes.

### 4.2 OPERATING DOCUMENTS

The ICS manager shall prepare the operating document, which shall be followed by all the members of the group. The operating document will contain the following: -

- An overview map (village or community map) showing location of each member's production unit. The map

	Sustainable Stewardship Private Limited	Doc. No. PD- 06
	<b>GUIDELINES FOR CERTIFICATION OF GROWER GROUPS</b>	Rev. No: 00; Rev Date:
	Issue No. 01 ; Issue Date : 01.09.2023	Page 3 of 4

should indicate the crops cultivated in rotation and also mark any farm in an area, which could be identified as high risk due to drift from non-conventional farms.

- Farmer's list with code and name of the farmer, total area, area under crop (or number of plants), date of registration with the group, date of last use of forbidden products, date of internal inspection, name of internal inspector, result of internal inspection (separate lists for in-conversion farmers).
- List of farmers who have been issued sanctions with the reason and the duration of the sanction (if relevant).
- The risk shall be assessed by ICS manager for the grower group every year. The risk assessment should be made at the farm level, processing, transporting and during trade. The ICS will take all measures to minimize the identified relevant risks.

## SECTION-5- SAMPLING PLAN

- 5.1** The **SSPL** shall undertake inspections of the ICS after ensuring that 100% internal inspections by the ICS have been undertaken at least twice for all the registered members of the grower group.

The sampling plan for inspection shall be based on the inspector's perception of risk based on the following factors:

- Size of holding
- Number of the members in the group
- Degree of similarity between the production system and crop system
- Inter-mingling / contamination
- Parallel production
- Split production
- Local hazards
- Change in the production plan
- Joining of new members in the group

## **5.2 RISK ASSESSMENT**

A minimum sample (square root of the number of members registered in the grower group) size of the members in the grower group shall be inspected by CB. Based on the risk assessment made by the CB prior to the inspection visit, the number of sample inspections shall be planned.

Risk based criteria for farmer sample are as follow:

- High risk:** 2 X square root of number of farmers
- Medium risk:** 1.5 x square root of number of farmers
- Low risk:** Square root of number of farmers

The audit sampling plan shall be based on the table set out below but the level of sampling may vary from this due to auditor's perception of group risk.



**GUIDELINES FOR CERTIFICATION OF GROWER GROUPS**

Number of producers covered in the group	Low risk	Medium risk	High risk
	Square root of number of farmers	1.5 x square root of number of farmers	2 X square root of number of farmers
25	5	8	10
26-36	6	9	12
37-49	7	11	14
50-64	8	12	16
65-81	9	14	18
82-100	10	15	20
101-121	11	17	22
122-144	12	18	24
145-169	13	20	26
170-196	14	21	28
197-225	15	23	30
226-256	16	24	32
257-288	17	26	34
289-324	18	27	36
325-361	19	29	38
362-400	20	30	40
401-441	21	32	42
442-484	22	33	44
485-500	23	35	46