



GLOBALG.A.P. Benchmarking Regulations



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PREAMBLE

The GLOBALG.A.P. Community aims to have inclusive benchmarking, to recognize and support local initiatives, and to form common and effective good agricultural practices (G.A.P.) to simplify the certification process for producers and decrease unnecessary duplication of audits and costs.

The GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking process was developed to share common objectives with other certification system owners (CSOs) around the globe with respect to safe and sustainable production based on G.A.P. and to build trustful and transparent partnerships.

The GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking process evaluates the equivalence of G.A.P. certification systems worldwide with the GLOBALG.A.P. system, which includes the certification rules and principles and criteria (P&Cs) of any of the Integrated Farm Assurance (IFA) version 6 Smart product categories, other GLOBALG.A.P. standards, and GLOBALG.A.P. owned add-ons.

The GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking process begins with an application by the CSO, followed by a documentary desk review, a peer review, and on-site assessments (OSAs). The desk review and the on-site assessments are conducted by technical experts and the findings are evaluated by an independent Benchmarking Committee.

The core activity of the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking process is the identification of convergences and divergences of the applicant CSO's certification system in relation to the GLOBALG.A.P. certification system. It is possible that the applicant CSO's certification system may go beyond the GLOBALG.A.P. system in some requirements, especially when it comes to specifications for local producers, but only those aspects covered by the GLOBALG.A.P. system shall be reviewed.

Being benchmarked means going through the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking process in which the certification systems are matched and prove full coverage of the GLOBALG.A.P. system to be recognized as equivalent.

Certification systems that cover the GLOBALG.A.P. system requirements to a large extent but leave some exceptions can apply to be listed as a compared scheme on the GLOBALG.A.P. website without benchmarking recognition or the right to use the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems to register producers.

With the differentiation and transparency that this process delivers, producers and retailers are able to ensure that their expectations are fulfilled. The transparency of the process allows the easy identification of differences between the GLOBALG.A.P. and CSO's certification systems, so stakeholders can decide whether these differences play an important role for their businesses.

1 INTRODUCTION

This document describes the benchmarking regulations that apply to any CSO seeking benchmarking recognition of their scheme/checklist according to the GLOBALG.A.P. system against any of the IFA v6 Smart product categories, other GLOBALG.A.P. standards, and/or GLOBALG.A.P. owned add-ons, as well as for CSOs that have successfully completed the benchmarking process, signed the benchmarked certification system owner agreement and are recognized by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat as equivalent to the applied GLOBALG.A.P. certification system.

1.1 Definitions

- a) BCSO agreement shall refer to the benchmarked certification system owner agreement that a CSO signs with FoodPLUS GmbH
- b) Applicant CSO is a certification system owner (scheme/checklist owner) seeking GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking recognition for its scheme/checklist
- c) Benchmarked certification system owner (BCSO) is the owner of a scheme/checklist benchmarked to GLOBALG.A.P. standard(s), IFA product category or GLOBALG.A.P. owned add-on.
- d) GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat refers to GLOBALG.A.P. c/o FoodPLUS GmbH (FoodPLUS) and its team members. Where the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat is mentioned, the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking manager is the main contact person for the applicant CSO/BCSO and shall refer any matters internally to the relevant GLOBALG.A.P. team member.
- e) Stakeholders are market participants that currently do or will potentially implement or demand the scheme/checklist such as producers, food manufacturers, retailers, etc.
- f) Scheme certification bodies (CBs) are certification bodies that conduct audits against a benchmarked scheme.
- g) Certification rules are, in terms of GLOBALG.A.P. standards, the general regulations of the standard or, in terms of GLOBALG.A.P. add-ons, include the relevant GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations as well as their specifications for the add-on.

1.2 Benchmarking categories

- a) Benchmarked scheme: a certification scheme using its own certification rules and G.A.P. requirements that are benchmarked to the GLOBALG.A.P. ones and are recognized by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat, after the benchmarking process, as equivalent to the relevant GLOBALG.A.P. certification rules and the product-specific P&Cs respectively.
- b) Benchmarked checklist: a certification standard using the relevant GLOBALG.A.P. certification rules together with its own G.A.P. requirements that are benchmarked to the GLOBALG.A.P. ones and are recognized by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat, after the benchmarking process, as equivalent to the product-specific P&Cs respectively.

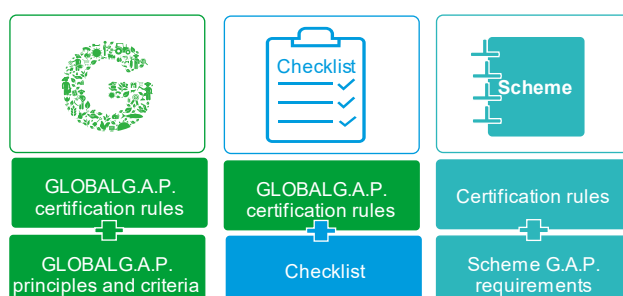


Figure 1 Benchmarking categories

- c) Both categories shall follow all the steps of the benchmarking process as described in this document.

1.3 Benchmarking scopes

- a) Benchmarking scope GLOBALG.A.P. standards: Benchmarked scheme/checklist against a GLOBALG.A.P. standard
- b) Benchmarking scope GLOBALG.A.P. add-on: Benchmarked scheme or benchmarked checklist against a GLOBALG.A.P. add-on

1.4 Implementation and transition period

- a) The procedures and rules indicated in the benchmarking regulations v6 become obligatory for all CSOs with the publication of this document.
- b) Transition period for currently benchmarked schemes/checklists: The rebenchmarking process for recognition against IFA v6 shall run from 1 October 2022 to 31 December 2024.
- c) Audits of schemes/checklists benchmarked to IFA v5 conducted after 31 December 2024 or certificates of schemes/checklists benchmarked to IFA v5 issued with validity from after 30 April 2025 or validity to after 30 April 2026 shall not be recognized as equivalent.

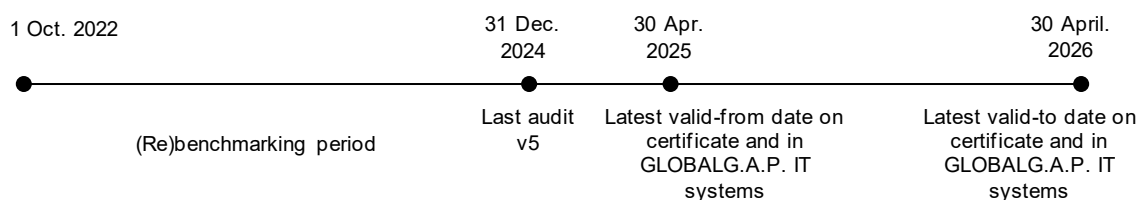


Figure 2 Benchmarking transition period

2 REQUIREMENTS FOR APPLICANT CSOS

2.1 Legal and organizational requirements

CSOs applying for benchmarking recognition and those who obtain it shall:

- a) Be a legal entity with a clearly defined organizational structure, activities, and responsibilities and shall be financed for long-term viability
- b) Have liability insurance that covers any liability that may result from its activities
- c) Have been operational for a period of 12 months prior to the date of application. During this period, certificates shall have been issued to at least 10 producers. A scheme/checklist is deemed to have become operational on the date on which the first certificate is issued by a CB.
- d) For schemes (benchmarking scope GLOBALG.A.P. standards): have a memorandum of understanding with at least one accreditation body (AB)
- e) Use the term G.A.P. only with three dots in the name of the legal entity or the scheme/checklist
- f) Not carry out nor participate in any activities that may entail a conflict of interests or bring themselves, the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat, and/or the benchmarking process and benchmarking recognition into disrepute
- g) Inform the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat of any changes in the applicant CSO's organization that may affect the status of the benchmarking recognition

- h) Inform the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat prior to the inclusion of any changes in the normative documents of the applicant CSO's scheme/checklists (see 2.2a)) if part of the benchmarking cross-reference checklist is concerned
- i) Never make claims regarding the equivalence (in relation to the product categories and benchmarking scope) until the benchmarking recognition has been granted by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat
- j) Not use the GLOBALG.A.P. application process in such a manner as to bring the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat into disrepute and shall not make any statements regarding its approval status which the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat may consider misleading or unauthorized
- k) Inform the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat in a timely manner of any circumstances that may bring the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat and/or the CSO into disrepute and take adequate preventive measures
- l) Not allow products produced under the applicant CSO's scheme/checklist to be advertised or promoted in a way that would discredit or tend to discredit the safety of other products on the market or the reliability of official controls

2.2 Requirements for normative documents

- a) The applicant CSO's schemes/checklists shall consist of a set of normative documents that includes:
 - (i) G.A.P. requirements (P&Cs)
 - (ii) And for schemes, certification rules
- b) The ownership of normative documents of the applicant CSO's scheme/checklist shall be protected (e.g., an identified legal entity shall have copyrighted them or have made an application to copyright them, or have a registered trademark).
- c) The development and maintenance of normative documents of the applicant CSO's scheme/checklist shall:
 - (i) Include the participation of technically competent representatives of direct stakeholders or be subject to formal review by such parties
 - (ii) Be subject to stakeholder consultation. The applicant CSO shall ensure that effective communication for consultations is possible.
- d) Normative documents of the applicant CSO's scheme/checklist shall:
 - (i) Be clear and precise in their wording and structure to facilitate accurate and uniform interpretation
 - (ii) Be publicly available and open for CB audits and/or certification to any and more than one CB complying with the scheme requirements, without restriction by membership or any other limitation. The levying of a reasonable fee for the purchase of the scheme/checklist, a license fee for its implementation, or a training requirement for the use of the scheme/checklist is not regarded as a restriction or limitation.
 - (iii) Be kept updated regarding technical changes or any other changes implemented by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat
 - (iv) For schemes (benchmarking scope GLOBALG.A.P. standards): follow the principles of ISO/IEC 17065 to ensure that CBs can be accredited against such a standard for the scope of the applicant CSO's scheme

- e) If the applicant CSO has more than one scheme/checklist for the same GLOBALG.A.P. standard, product category, and/or add-on, the name of the applicant CSO's scheme/checklist shall be clearly differentiated from other schemes/checklists.
- f) Include a template that specifies how all information is to be displayed in the certificates issued by the scheme CBs (which shall include all the information stated in the GLOBALG.A.P. registration data requirements, only applicable for schemes). In terms of content, the template shall contain all the data that is on the GLOBALG.A.P. online certificate generated in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems.

3 BENCHMARKING PROCESS

3.1 Introduction

- a) The GLOBALG.A.P. stakeholders developed the benchmarking process to determine the benchmarking recognition of an applicant CSO and its normative documents to the relevant GLOBALG.A.P. certification rules and P&Cs. This benchmarking process shall be followed by all applicant CSOs and coordinated by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat.
- b) The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall ensure that the process is implemented according to the principles of independence, impartiality, technical competence, and transparency.

3.2 Actors during the benchmarking process

- a) The CSO benchmarking manager is the person appointed by the applicant CSO who completes the application documents and acts as the contact person for the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat during the application process and after benchmarking recognition. This person shall be proficient in English.
- b) The GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking manager is the person at the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat who is responsible for the benchmarking process and is the principal contact person for the applicant CSO in the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat.
- c) The GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking technical reviewer is appointed by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat and is the competent on-desk technical reviewer for the benchmarking cross-reference checklists. They shall comply with the requirements in Annex I.
- d) The GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking assessor is appointed by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat and is the competent auditor who conducts the on-site assessment. They shall comply with the requirements in Annex I, may not be the same person as the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking technical reviewer, and shall have no conflict of interest with the assessed CSO's scheme/checklist.
- e) GLOBALG.A.P. Community Members are organizations that are affiliated with GLOBALG.A.P. and interested in supporting, developing, and promoting GLOBALG.A.P. standards.
- f) The Benchmarking Committee is comprised of independent stakeholders who participate voluntarily in the Benchmarking Committee and shall comply with the requirements in Annex II.
- g) The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat finally approves the benchmarking process and decides on the benchmarking recognition of a scheme/checklist.

3.3 Language

- a) The language for the benchmarking process is English.
- b) All the documents, including the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking cross-reference checklists, shall be filled out in English and, if applicable, in the original language.
- c) If the original normative documents of the applicant CSO's scheme/checklist are not in English, the applicant CSO shall demonstrate that the documents have been translated by a competent translator.
- d) If the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat has justified doubts concerning the accuracy of the English translation, the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat may request proof that the translation was carried out by a competent translator to ensure the accuracy of the contents or may engage the services of a professional translator to validate the translation submitted by the applicant CSO. The applicant CSO shall cover the costs of language validation.

3.4 Considerations during the application process

- a) The following are considered as initial applications:
 - (i) All applications submitted by a nonbenchmarked CSO
 - (ii) A scope or product category extension of a benchmarked scheme/checklist
 - (iii) An application for a new or additional add-on to a benchmarked scheme/checklist
- b) The following are considered as rebenchmarking applications:
 - (i) A benchmarked certification scheme owner (BCSO) changes the benchmarked scheme/checklist version, and the application is for benchmarking against the same GLOBALG.A.P. standard version.
 - (ii) A BCSO applies for the benchmarking recognition of a new version of a GLOBALG.A.P. standard, product category, and/or add-on for which their scheme/checklist is already benchmarked.
- c) Applications are only possible during specific time slots throughout the year and are processed on a first-come-first-served basis. If a time slot is fully booked, the applicant CSO shall have to wait until the next available time slot.
- d) The benchmarking process takes an estimated minimum of 20 weeks for rebenchmarking applications and an estimated minimum of 26 weeks for initial applications. The duration of each step may vary depending on different factors, e.g., the completeness of the submitted documents and the extent of the discussions during the benchmarking process.
- e) If the application process takes more than 12 months due to factors related to the applicant CSO's internal processes, an extension of the benchmarking application fee shall be charged.
- f) Some steps of the application process are voluntary for rebenchmarking. If there are any discrepancies during the independent technical review, the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat or the applicant CSO may request additional steps as a tool to align a final decision on the convergence or divergence of criteria.

3.5 Benchmarking process steps

3.5.1 Information and application documents

- a) The interested CSO shall contact the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat (benchmarking@globalgap.org) with information regarding which GLOBALG.A.P. standard, product category, and/or add-on the application is for, as well as the name of the CSO benchmarking manager.
- b) The GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking manager shall provide the interested CSO with the relevant application documents, a list of the next in-house trainer (IHT) trainings for the standard(s) and/or add-on(s) they are considering, and the option to hold a meeting for further clarifications.

3.5.2 GLOBALG.A.P. IHT training

To ensure a better understanding and facilitate the filling out of the benchmarking cross-reference checklists, the CSO benchmarking manager shall participate in a GLOBALG.A.P. IHT training – for the standard that is being considered– prior to filling out the application documents.

3.5.3 Application

- a) The interested CSO shall submit the filled-out application documents, together with the required annexes, to the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat.
- b) The relevant application documents include:
 - (i) The application form with information on the applicant CSO's company and their scheme/checklist, as well as the agreement on the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking process
 - (ii) The annexes required by the application form
 - (iii) The benchmarking cross-reference checklists including a clause-by-clause comparison of the G.A.P. requirements (for checklists and schemes) and the relevant GLOBALG.A.P. certification rules (for scheme only) The application documents include guidelines on how to complete them and the applicant CSO shall follow these guidelines during the process of filling out the documents.

3.5.4 Application review

- a) The application review ensures the eligibility of the applicant CSO, and the completeness of all the information and documents required for the benchmarking process.
- b) Once the eligibility of the applicant CSO has been confirmed, the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall invoice the applicant CSO for the benchmarking application fee according to the current fee table.
- c) The GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking manager shall appoint a benchmarking technical reviewer who meets the requirements in Annex I and shall review the benchmarking cross-reference checklists.
- d) The benchmarking process continues with the independent technical review as soon as the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat receives proof of payment.

3.5.5 Independent technical review

- a) The objective of the independent technical review is to evaluate the normative documents of the applicant CSO's scheme/checklist referenced in the benchmarking cross-reference checklists submitted by the applicant CSO.
- b) The applicant CSO may request that the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat replace the assigned GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking technical reviewer if they have valid and well-founded justifications. The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall decide on the appropriateness of this request and on the replacement of the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking technical reviewer.
- c) The GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking manager shall support the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking technical reviewer during this review to facilitate the process and may appoint a second technical reviewer to follow a four-eyes principle.
- d) The GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking technical reviewer shall document all the findings in the benchmarking cross-reference checklist(s).
- e) After the first review, the CSO benchmarking manager, the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking technical reviewer, and the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking manager shall meet to review the findings and clarify any doubts.
- f) The applicant CSO shall submit clarifications or propose amendments to any technical or formal deviations in a timely manner. This shall be done using the benchmarking cross-reference checklist(s) until the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking technical reviewer agrees that the deviations have been addressed or that they need to be evaluated by the Benchmarking Committee.
- g) After having completed the independent technical review, the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking technical reviewer shall prepare a summary of the technical review, listing all the points that were not found to be equivalent, to be evaluated by the Benchmarking Committee.

3.5.6 Peer review

- a) The objective of the peer review is to compile the input of the interested GLOBALG.A.P. Community Members, who may evaluate the benchmarking cross-reference checklist together with all supporting documents.
- b) The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat grants access to the benchmarking cross-reference checklist to all interested GLOBALG.A.P. Community Members to allow them to participate in the peer review process.
- c) The applicant CSO shall answer all the comments they receive. The applicant CSO and interested GLOBALG.A.P. Community Members may meet during the peer review. At the end of the peer review, the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking manager shall verify that all the comments submitted by the GLOBALG.A.P. Community Members have been addressed by the applicant CSO.
- d) The peer review period shall take a maximum of two weeks.

3.5.7 On-site assessment (OSA)

- a) The objective of the OSA is to verify the equivalent implementation of the normative documents of the applicant CSO's scheme/checklist.
- b) The OSA consists of a producer audit conducted in parallel by a CSO's CB auditor and the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking assessor. The objective is to evaluate the equivalence of the G.A.P. requirements and their interpretation, not the performance of the applicant CSO's CB auditor.
- c) For initial applications, at least three OSAs shall be conducted per product category and/or add-on that the CSO applied for. If applicable to the CSO application, the QMS of at least one producer group shall also be subject to an OSA.
- d) For applicant CSOs requesting the rebenchmarking of their scheme/checklist, there will be either a mandatory OSA as part of the benchmarking process, or the CSO's scheme/checklist shall be subjected to at least one assessment per recognized product category by the GLOBALG.A.P. Certification Integrity Program (CIPRO) in the first year of its benchmarking recognition.
- e) The benchmarking assessor shall validate the final independent technical review benchmarking cross-reference checklists on site and present a detailed assessment report with a summary of all the diverging points with clear justifications. The applicant CSO shall address all the issues raised in this report.

3.5.8 Benchmarking Committee

- a) The objective of the Benchmarking Committee is to evaluate the benchmarking report to make a recommendation on the benchmarking recognition to the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat.
- b) The benchmarking report for the Benchmarking Committee summarizes the results of:
 - (i) The independent technical review
 - (ii) The peer review
 - (iii) The on-site assessment
- c) The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall appoint the members of the Benchmarking Committee.
- d) The Benchmarking Committee is comprised of:
 - (i) The GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking manager
 - (ii) The GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking technical reviewer(s)
 - (iii) Minimum two appointed committee members who represent the GLOBALG.A.P. technical committee and one technical expert who represents the future users of the applicant CSO's scheme/checklist. Maximum five members in total.
- e) The Benchmarking Committee members shall comply with the requirements in Annex II.
- f) The applicant CSO may request that the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat replace an assigned Benchmarking Committee member if they have valid and well-founded justifications. The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall decide on the appropriateness of this request and on the replacement of Benchmarking Committee members.
- g) The Benchmarking Committee members may require further clarifications on the normative documents of the applicant CSO's scheme/checklist and/or issues raised by the benchmarking technical reviewer(s). The applicant CSO shall address these in a timely manner in coordination with the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking manager.

3.5.9 GLOBALG.A.P. final review

- a) The objective of the GLOBALG.A.P. final review is to evaluate the recommendation made by the Benchmarking Committee.
- b) Should the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat raise additional comments on the final Benchmarking Committee report, the applicant CSO shall address them in coordination with the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking assessor and/or the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking manager.
- c) The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat decides on the benchmarking recognition.
- d) The GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking manager communicates this decision to the applicant CSO in writing. This communication shall contain clear justifications for the decision if the benchmarking recognition is refused.
- e) The applicant CSO may appeal according to the appeal procedure as described in this document.
- f) Before benchmarking recognition is granted, the applicant CSO shall sign an agreement with FoodPLUS.

3.5.10 Benchmarking recognition

- a) GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking recognition is granted to schemes/checklists that have successfully completed the benchmarking process.
- b) Only certificates issued based on CB audits that are conducted after the benchmarking recognition of schemes/checklists and their registration in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems shall be recognized by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat as equivalent.
- c) The decision on benchmarking recognition shall be communicated in writing and published on the GLOBALG.A.P. website. It shall also be communicated to all stakeholders after the submission of the original version of the final normative documents of the benchmarked CSO's (BCSO's) scheme/checklist.
- d) The final version of the normative documents of the BCSO's scheme/checklist, which are to be used for certification, shall be forwarded to the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking manager within two weeks of benchmarking recognition and shall be published on the GLOBALG.A.P. website with the consent of the BCSO.
- e) The benchmarking cross-reference checklist(s) shall be made available to stakeholders upon request.
- f) The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat recommends translating the final version of the benchmarked normative documents of the BCSO's scheme/checklist into English. If an external third party requests evidence of the equivalency of any other text than the one in the benchmarking cross-reference checklist, the BCSO shall provide information to the requesting third party.

3.5.11 Implementation in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems

- a) After benchmarking recognition, the implementation of the scheme/checklist in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems shall take place. This implementation may take several weeks.
- b) As a minimum requirement, the certificate data shall be transferred to GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems in order to be displayed as an equivalent certificate. The use of an audit tool is voluntary and subject to an additional fee.

4 REQUIREMENTS FOR BENCHMARKED CERTIFICATION SCHEME OWNERS

The BCSO shall:

- a) Fulfil all the requirements in section 2.1, “Legal and organizational requirements”
- b) Sign the contractual agreements with FoodPLUS
- c) Agree to the GLOBALG.A.P. data access rules
- d) Prove ISO/IEC 17065 accreditation of at least one CB for the scope of the recognized scheme within the first six months of benchmarking recognition. This period may be extended if there is a justifiable reason. The accreditation shall be issued by an AB that is a signatory of the International Accreditation Forum Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (IAF MLA) for product certification (or at least MLA level 4) and has signed the memorandum of understanding with FoodPLUS. The current list of ABs that have signed the memorandum of understanding is displayed on the [GLOBALG.A.P. website](#). Exceptions may be granted by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat on a case-by-case basis if the benchmarked scheme/checklist has valid accredited certificates.
- e) Carry out at least annually reviews of the operation of their scheme/checklist and take any action necessary to ensure compliance with the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking regulations. These reviews shall be communicated to the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat to ensure that the basic data is kept up to date.
- f) Have a minimum of 50 producers whose production processes are certified to the benchmarked scheme/checklist after the first year of benchmarking recognition. Exceptions may be granted by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat on a case-by-case basis if the scheme/checklist has valid accredited certificates.
- g) Provide the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat annually with aggregated CB audit data of producers whose production processes are certified to benchmarked schemes/checklist
- h) Provide the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat with an annual update of their liability insurance which covers any liability that may result from its activities as stipulated in the BCSO agreement
- i) Not carry out or participate in any activities that may entail a conflict of interests or bring themselves, the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat, and/or the benchmarking process and benchmarking recognition into disrepute
- j) Inform the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat in the event of any changes in the BCSO’s organization that may affect the status of the benchmarking recognition
- k) Inform the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat prior to the inclusion of any changes in the normative documents of the BCSO’s scheme/checklist if part of the benchmarking cross-reference checklist is concerned. Those changes are considered an application for rebenchmarking, and based on the complexity of the changes, the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat may decide to do only a technical review or include other relevant steps of the benchmarking process such as on-site assessment or review through the Benchmarking Committee.
- l) Inform the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat annually about the management of the benchmarked scheme/checklist and the certification activities. This annual notification shall mainly consist of an update of the information provided during the application and shall be made using a template provided by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat.
- m) Only make claims regarding the equivalence in relation to the product categories/add-ons/standards for which benchmarking recognition has been granted by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat.

- n) Only allow claims to be made by their producers with certified production processes if those producers fulfil all the requirements (technical and contractual) of the benchmarked scheme/checklist.
- o) Not use GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking recognition in such a manner as to bring the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat into disrepute and shall not make any statements regarding its status which the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat may consider misleading or unauthorized
- p) Inform the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat in a timely manner of any circumstances that may bring the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat into disrepute and take adequate preventive measures
- q) Allow only certification processes of products equivalent to products listed in the GLOBALG.A.P. product list. No other products produced under the benchmarked scheme/checklist shall be advertised or promoted as benchmarked/equivalent.
- r) Be authorized to use the GLOBALG.A.P. logo as indicated in “GLOBALG.A.P. trademarks use: policy and guidelines”
- s) Ensure that the GLOBALG.A.P. logo, trademarks, or any equivalence claim never appears on a product, the consumer packaging of a product, or at the point of sale
- t) Be allowed to create their own logo/claim for the product packaging that can be used in accordance with the clauses above
- u) Keep normative documents of the BCSO’s scheme/checklist updated regarding technical changes or any other changes implemented by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat. The period for implementation shall not exceed three months unless otherwise agreed with the BCSOs, depending on the changes to be introduced.
- v) Failure to comply with any of these requirements shall be a limitation for equivalence and benchmarking recognition will be withdrawn
- w) Cease the use of all marketing elements that contain any reference to GLOBALG.A.P. (logo, trademarks, name, normative documents, etc.) and withdraw if the benchmarking recognition of the scheme/checklist is suspended or withdrawn

5 REQUIREMENTS FOR BCSOS OPERATING PARALLEL SCHEMES(S)/CHECKLIST(S) THAT ARE NOT GLOBALG.A.P. BENCHMARKED

- a) If a BCSO operates more than one scheme/checklist in parallel (e.g., one is GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarked and another has not been submitted to the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat for benchmarking recognition), the different schemes/checklists shall be identified in a manner that clearly distinguishes them so that confusion in the market is avoided.
- b) The identity of a parallel scheme/checklist shall not be designed, appear, and/or be communicated in a way that it might suggest that it is GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarked.

6 CB REQUIREMENTS FOR SCHEME OWNERS

(The following requirements are not applicable for CBs that conduct audits against benchmarked checklists that sign the GLOBALG.A.P. license and certification agreement (LCA)).

6.1 Benchmarked scheme owners shall:

- a) Have an application and approval procedure in place for CBs that conduct audits according to the scheme so that they may become formally recognized by the scheme owner. This procedure shall be in line with the one described in “GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations – Rules for certification bodies.”
- b) Ensure that they have contractual arrangements with any CB they approve to conduct audits according to their scheme and ensure that these approved CBs comply with the requirements of the normative documents of the BCSO’s scheme benchmarked to the relevant GLOBALG.A.P. certification rules. These “scheme CBs” shall sign contracts with the same and/or at least equivalent requirements as in the current GLOBALG.A.P. LCA.
- c) Additionally, oblige each provisionally or finally approved scheme CB to have appropriate professional liability insurance that covers any claims that may result from its activities.
- d) Ensure that scheme CBs are accredited within six months of benchmarking recognition to ISO/IEC 17065 issued by an AB that is signatory of the IAF MLA for product certification (or at least MLA level 4 for the benchmarked scheme) and has signed the memorandum of understanding with FoodPLUS. This period may be extended if there are justifiable reasons.
- e) Ensure that the accreditation document issued by the AB to the scheme CB clearly states:
 - (i) The extent of the accreditation scope(s), standards(s) it has been approved for
 - (ii) The normative documents of the BCSO’s scheme and its versions
 - (iii) Any applicable limitations to the certification (territorial, certification option (see 7.1 e)), etc.) to the benchmarked scheme
- f) Ensure that scheme CBs without ISO/IEC 17065 accreditation (provisionally approved) for the benchmarked scheme only certify a maximum production processes a maximum of:
 - (i) 20 producers if the scheme CB already has any other ISO/IEC 17065 accreditation
 - (ii) 5 producers if the scheme CB does not yet have any ISO/IEC 17065 accreditation
- g) Ensure, that if one a scheme CB has had its accreditation withdrawn or suspended, the scheme owner and the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat are informed of this action together with the circumstances that motivated the sanction
- h) Ensure that scheme CBs have in place an agreement with the producers that states that the scheme CB shall be informed of any prosecution relating to food safety, significant regulatory food safety non-conformity, or any product recall relating to food safety and that scheme CBs have procedures in place to ensure the integrity of certification after notification
- i) Ensure that scheme CBs notify the scheme owner and the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat of any relevant change to ownership and management in a timely manner and agree with the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat and the scheme CBs on any action necessary to guarantee impartiality and independence in the certification activities
- j) Implement the sanctions against non-compliant scheme CBs proposed by the GLOBALG.A.P. Integrity Surveillance Committee (ISC) and have a documented system in place to ensure the enforcement of sanctions by the scheme owner, which shall be in line with the CB sanctioning procedure in the GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations

6.2 Additional requirements for CBs with approval for benchmarked schemes

- a) If the scheme CB has not signed an LCA with FoodPLUS for any GLOBALG.A.P. standard, the scheme CB shall sign the GLOBALG.A.P. LCA with FoodPLUS including the appropriate limitations to the relevant scope before having access to the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems and before having the right to manage the producers whose production processes are certified to the benchmarked scheme.
- b) The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat will issue any sanctions and certificate suspensions after informing the benchmarked scheme owner. The sanctions are according to the GLOBALG.A.P. sanction catalog and/or decided by the Integrity Surveillance Committee (ISC). For GLOBALG.A.P. approved CBs, those sanctions may affect their KPI .

7 VALIDATION OF CERTIFICATES FOR BENCHMARKED SCHEMES/CHECKLISTS

7.1 Registration of producers in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems

- a) The BCSO shall ensure that all producers participating in the BCSO's certification system are registered in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems.
- b) All registered producers whose production processes are certified to a benchmarked scheme/checklist shall sign the standard GLOBALG.A.P. Sublicense and Certification Agreement (SLCA) as modified by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat for the BCSO's certification system or an equivalent agreement provided by the BCSO which is approved by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat and which includes the GLOBALG.A.P. data access rules by reference.
- c) The registration in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems of producers whose production processes are certified to benchmarked schemes/checklist shall follow the rules as described in "GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations – Registration data requirements."
- d) Certifications to benchmarked checklists shall comply with the requirements of the GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations and be registered in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems as:
 - (i) Option 1 individual producers
 - (ii) Option 2 producer groups
- e) Certifications to benchmarked schemes shall comply with the scheme's certification rules benchmarked to the GLOBALG.A.P. system for individual producer and producer group certification established in the GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations and be registered in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems as:
 - (i) Option 3 individual producers
 - (ii) Option 4 producer groups
- f) The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat reserves the right to only confirm to the public the validity and content of the certificates issued in accordance with benchmarked schemes/checklists if they have been properly entered in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems.
- g) It is not allowed to register producers whose production processes are certified in accordance with a parallel scheme/checklist which is not GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarked in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems.
- h) The schemes of scheme owners that do not want to provide all the data required for the registration of producers in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems shall not be recognized as equivalent.

- i) Production processes of producers who are not registered in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems shall not have benchmarking recognition.

7.2 Certificates and certification status for benchmarked schemes/checklists

- a) The content of the certificates issued by approved CBs for any benchmarked scheme/checklist shall be in line with the GLOBALG.A.P. online certificate.
- b) CBs shall register in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems any sanction imposed on a producer whose production processes are certified to a benchmarked scheme/checklist. If the BCSO owns its own database in which sanctions are applied to producers, those sanctions shall also be registered in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems at the same time.

7.3 Double certification

- a) Producers are not allowed to have certification for a given production process under a benchmarked scheme/checklist and its equivalent GLOBALG.A.P. standard or another benchmarked scheme/checklist (e.g., IFA v6 Smart and AMAG.A.P.) at the same time. The BCSO may apply for exceptions to this rule, and it shall be discussed with and confirmed in writing beforehand by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat.
- b) Producers are allowed to have certification for a given production process under a benchmarked scheme/checklist and a nonequivalent GLOBALG.A.P. standard (e.g., IFA v6 Smart and ExampleG.A.P. v1.0) at the same time.
- c) If the BCSO applied for and agreed to an exception to section 7.3a)
 - (i) The IFA v6 audit and the audit against the benchmarked scheme/checklist shall be conducted as a combined audit on the same day (if conducted by the same CB)
 - (ii) These audits shall, however, be considered as two audits and the checklists for both standards shall be completed by the CB auditor.
 - (iii) CBs are not allowed to create their own combined checklists.
 - (iv) The CB shall contact the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat for authorization to conduct double certification of producers' production processes.
 - (v) The CB shall follow the registration guidelines in Annex III.
 - (vi) As the producers receive two certificates, the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall charge the respective fees for both standards.
 - (vii) The cycles of both certificates shall be aligned.
- d) For producers with production processes certified under IFA v6 an exception to 7.3a) is not allowed.

7.4 Changing schemes and aligning the cycles

- a) The change from one certification system to another certification system is only possible after the expiration of the current certification period. A certification decision previous to the expiration is not allowed.
- b) If a producer that is already registered under a GLOBALG.A.P. standard applies for the certification of their production processes to a benchmarked scheme/checklist or if a producer whose production processes are already certified to a benchmarked scheme/checklist applies for certification to a GLOBALG.A.P. standard or benchmarked scheme/checklist, the producer shall communicate the previously assigned unique GLOBALG.A.P. identification number to the CB. Failure to do so shall result in a surcharge fee of €200 for the producer.

- c) If the producer changes to a new scheme/checklist, the alignment of the cycles shall be in accordance with the new scheme certification rules.
- d) Producers whose production processes are certified to a benchmarked scheme/checklist that have been sanctioned for not complying with a requirement that is equivalent in the GLOBALG.A.P. system, cannot apply to register for a GLOBALG.A.P. standard or any other benchmarked scheme/checklist until the sanction has been lifted.
- e) Producers whose production processes certified to a GLOBALG.A.P. standard that have been sanctioned by their CB, cannot apply to register for any benchmarked scheme/checklist until the sanction has been lifted.
- f) Sanctioned producers cannot change CBs until the outgoing CB closes the corresponding non-conformance.

8 GLOBALG.A.P. CERTIFICATION INTEGRITY PROGRAM

- a) Benchmarked schemes/checklists shall be subject to periodical surveillance under the GLOBALG.A.P. Certification Integrity Program (CIPRO).
- b) The BCSO shall ensure their participation and the participation of their CBs and producers in CIPRO.
- c) The activities of CIPRO may include the assessment of a producer whose production processes are certified to a benchmarked scheme/checklist by an approved CIPRO assessor using a GLOBALG.A.P. checklist. It may also include office assessments of the approved CBs.
- d) These CIPRO assessments shall focus on the maintenance of the recognized status and on the performance of approved BCSO CBs.
- e) If the CIPRO assessor detects technical or formal deviations regarding the normative documents of the BCSO's scheme/checklist, these shall be discussed with the BCSO to obtain clarification and to agree on the appropriate amendments and a timeline for their implementation.
- f) If the CIPRO assessor detects low CB performance, the ISC shall decide on sanctions for the BCSO CB and the follow-up activities; or in the case of benchmarked schemes, the scheme owner can decide to sanction the CB and follow up themselves. This decision shall be made guaranteeing independence and impartiality, shall be in line with sanctioning procedures as described in the GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations, and shall be communicated in a timely manner to the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat.
- g) The frequency and number of CIPRO assessments to be conducted shall be decided by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat.
- h) A risk assessment shall consider, among other things, the existence of the BCSO's own integrity program, the scope of the certification activities, the types of certifications (individual producer/producer group), the products originating from certified production processes, the number of CBs and the number of producers participating in the system, and the results of the benchmarking process.
- i) The BCSO shall actively cooperate with the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat if it considers it necessary to assess the certification system of the BCSO.

- j) If the BCSO does not cooperate with the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat in the implementation of CIPRO in a transparent manner, does not respect the agreed timeframes to respond to the deviations detected during the CIPRO assessments, or if the sanctions imposed by the scheme owner on its approved scheme CBs are insufficient to eliminate the risks of bringing the BCSO or the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat into disrepute, the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall follow the conciliatory process described in section 10, “Contractual Infringements.”

9 MAINTAINING BENCHMARKING RECOGNITION

9.1 Changes or updates of benchmarked schemes/checklists

- a) The BCSO shall inform the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat of any changes to the benchmarked normative documents of the BCSO’s scheme/checklist before they are implemented. If and where applicable, the proposed changes shall be communicated using the relevant benchmarking cross-reference checklist(s).
- b) The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall assign a GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking technical reviewer to review the changes and evaluate whether they affect the benchmarking recognition.
- c) Any discrepancy found by the benchmarking technical reviewer shall be communicated to the BCSO in writing, who shall clarify or propose amendments to these discrepancies within a reasonable period.
- d) The GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking technical reviewer shall prepare a written report including a recommendation to the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat on the maintenance or nonmaintenance of the benchmarking recognition. The participation of the Benchmarking Committee may also be considered, depending on the extent and nature of the changes that are introduced.
- e) The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall communicate to the BCSO in writing whether the proposed changes affect the benchmarking recognition.
- f) If the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat decides that some of the points impede the maintenance of the benchmarking recognition:
- (i) The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall communicate this to the BCSO in writing, justifying the decision.
 - (ii) The BCSO shall choose between the following options within two weeks of having received the official communication:
 - Amend or delete the conflicting changes in its normative documents
 - Appeal the decision in accordance with section 11 “Appeal procedure” of this document
 - Renounce the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking recognition in writing
 - (iii) If, after the appeal process, it is decided that the benchmarking recognition cannot be maintained:
 - The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall communicate the decision to the BCSO in writing with clear justifications
 - The benchmarking recognition shall be suspended until the BCSO proposes new clarifications or implements amendments that have the approval of the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat

- If the BCSO refuses to make any amendments or the cause of the suspension is not resolved within six months of the issuance of the suspension, the approval shall be withdrawn.
- (iv) If, after the appeal process, it is decided that the scheme/checklist may maintain its current benchmarking recognition, this shall be communicated to the BCSO in writing.
- g) If the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat is not informed before the implementation of changes to the benchmarked scheme/checklist, the benchmarking recognition shall be suspended until the process described in points 9.1b) to 9.1f) is completed

9.2 Changes or updates of the GLOBALG.A.P. standard

- a) The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall communicate all official changes to the normative documents to all BCSOs in writing.
- b) Official changes made to GLOBALG.A.P. normative documents shall be appropriately included in the benchmarked normative documents of the BCSO's scheme/checklist in a period that shall not exceed three months, unless otherwise agreed by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat and the BCSO.
- c) The BCSO is responsible for supplying the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat with written evidence demonstrating the adequate changes of the G.A.P. requirements and certification rules (where applicable). This evidence can include a completed benchmarking cross-reference checklist for the modified items.
- d) The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall decide whether a GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking technical reviewer needs to carry out an additional revision or not. If necessary, the steps described in points 9.1 b)-f) shall be followed.

10 CONTRACTUAL INFRINGEMENTS; CONCILIATORY PROCESS

- a) If a BCSO has infringed any provision of these benchmarking regulations or the BCSO agreement with FoodPLUS, the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall start the following communication and conciliatory process with the BCSO.
 - (i) **First meeting:** In the event of minor infringements within the meaning of section 10 b) below, the BCSO shall be requested to attend a meeting in the GLOBALG.A.P. offices or to participate in a telephone conference (or a conference using other means) to agree on a solution for the infringement. This meeting shall take place within two weeks of either party making its request. The outcome of this meeting shall be the definition of the extent of the corrective actions that the BCSO shall implement. Implementation of agreed corrective actions shall be proven within a maximum of 28 calendar days. Failure to do so shall lead to the calling of a second meeting to consider the withdrawal of the awarded benchmarking recognition.
 - (ii) **Second/Extraordinary meeting:** In the event of a major infringement within the meaning of section 10 b) below, or failure to implement the corrective actions agreed upon during the first meeting, the BCSO shall be requested to attend a meeting in the GLOBALG.A.P. offices or to participate in a telephone conference (or a conference using other means), which shall be moderated by a Benchmarking Committee member. This shall be done within a reasonable period, taking into account all the circumstances of the specific case and the interests of both parties and starting from either the discovery of the major infringement or the deadline for corrective actions agreed at the first meeting. The outcome of this meeting shall be an agreement on corrective actions to prove implementation within a reasonable period defined by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat and, if needed and reasonable

taking into account the interests of both the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat and the BCSO, a temporary suspension until the corrective actions are implemented and the infringements resolved.

- (iii) In the case of failure to comply with the agreement concluded in the second/extraordinary meeting to implement the corrective actions within the set period, the **GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall decide whether to** temporarily suspend or definitively withdraw the benchmarking recognition in accordance with point 10 a) (iv).
 - (iv) A temporary suspension shall end once the BCSO has proven that it has implemented the agreed corrective actions. The definitive withdrawal shall only be decided by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat if it cannot reasonably be expected of the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat to further uphold the benchmarking recognition until the agreed end or until the expiry of the ordinary termination notice period stipulated in the BCSO agreement between the BCSO and FoodPLUS, taking into account all the circumstances of the specific case and the interests of the BCSO. The decision to definitively withdraw the benchmarking recognition shall be considered good cause and as such justify an extraordinary termination of the BCSO agreement between the BCSO and FoodPLUS.
- b) Major infringements are those that, from the perspective of an objective third person and based on evidence to be provided by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat, threaten the integrity of the GLOBALG.A.P. system or may bring the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat into disrepute. Any infringements that are not major infringements shall be considered minor infringements. Several minor infringements can amount to a major infringement if the collective effects of the minor infringements have the same impact on the GLOBALG.A.P. system or the reputation of the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat as a major infringement.
 - c) In the event of the termination of the BCSO agreement between the BCSO and FoodPLUS for good cause, the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat and the BCSO shall coordinate effective measures for the withdrawal of the certificates issued for the benchmarked scheme/checklist.
 - d) To the extent necessary to uphold the integrity of the GLOBALG.A.P. system and the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat's reputation, the temporary suspension and definitive withdrawal of the BCSO's benchmarking recognition and a fact-based description of the reason that led to the suspension or withdrawal shall be published on the GLOBALG.A.P. website and communicated to all GLOBALG.A.P. Community Members and provisionally and finally approved CBs.
 - e) If benchmarking recognition has been suspended or withdrawn, certificates issued for the respective scheme/checklist shall not be displayed in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems. Concerned producers with certified production processes shall be informed accordingly by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat without undue delay.

11 APPEAL PROCEDURE

- a) The BCSO has the right to appeal decisions made in relation to the benchmarking process according to section 3 of these benchmarking regulations.
- b) If the BCSO wishes to appeal any decision made by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat:
 - (i) The BCSO shall submit a written appeal to the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat detailing the reasons for their disagreement within two weeks of the decision being communicated.
 - (ii) The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall request that the Benchmarking Committee conduct an impartial investigation of the circumstances that led to the appeal.
 - (iii) The results of the evaluation by the Benchmarking Committee shall be submitted to the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat, which shall take those results into consideration and make a final decision that shall be communicated to the BCSO in writing.
 - (iv) If the appeal is finally rejected, the BCSO shall cover the reasonable costs of the appeal process.

12 FEES

- a) A new applicant CSO shall be charged for the benchmarking process according to the most recent GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking fees for scheme and checklist owners.
- b) If language validation is required, the applicant CSO shall cover the costs of language validation.
- c) If the application process takes more than 12 months due to factors related to the applicant CSO's internal processes, an extension of the application fee shall be charged.
- d) BCSOs shall be charged with the annual benchmarking administration fee as defined in the most recent GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking fees for scheme and checklist owners, which covers the costs of the rebenchmarking process and the maintenance of the benchmarking recognition, including GLOBALG.A.P. customer support and CIPRO.
- e) Annual fees apply to producers registered in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems, whose production processes are certified to a benchmarked scheme/checklist. For benchmarked checklists, these fees are invoiced directly to the provisionally/finally approved CBs. For benchmarked schemes, these fees are invoiced to the scheme owner.
- f) The annual producer fee is calculated on a case-by-case basis according to the services booked by the BCSO.

13 ADDITIONAL RULES FOR BENCHMARKING SCOPE GLOBALG.A.P. ADD-ONS

- a) All benchmarking regulations apply to benchmarking scope add-ons. Some additional procedures are regulated in this section.
- b) It is possible to start benchmarking against a GLOBALG.A.P. add-on adapted to the IFA v6 standard on the day of its launch.
- c) Benchmarking is not possible against third-party private add-ons operated by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat, e.g., Nurture Module or GLOBALG.A.P. PLUS
- d) The BCSO may apply for benchmarking against a GLOBALG.A.P. add-on either in combination with the IFA standard or only against the GLOBALG.A.P. add-on.

- e) Add-on benchmarking cross-reference checklists include:
 - (i) GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations specifications for add-ons
 - (ii) Applicable GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations
 - (iii) GLOBALG.A.P. add-on P&Cs
 - (iv) Applicable IFA P&Cs (if specifically mentioned in the GLOBALG.A.P. add-on or if the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat has chosen to include them completely in the benchmark)
- f) Benchmarking recognition against a GLOBALG.A.P. add-on alone – i.e., without benchmarking scope GLOBALG.A.P. standard – is only possible in combination with a GLOBALG.A.P. certificate for IFA v6.
- g) Scheme CBs approved for benchmarked schemes scope GLOBALG.A.P. add-on alone shall additionally be approved for IFA v6.
- h) Certificate validation: Producers shall always have separate online certificates for the IFA v6 standard or benchmarked scheme/checklist for benchmarking scope GLOBALG.A.P. standards (if applicable) and for the benchmarked scheme/checklist scope add-on.
- i) Depending on the GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations specifications for add-ons, the implementation of the benchmarked scheme/checklist in the audit tools of the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems may become mandatory.

14 GLOBALG.A.P. FULL REMOTE

- a) GLOBALG.A.P. Full Remote is an emergency procedure that is available for IFA v6 Smart and some GLOBALG.A.P. add-ons. Regarding the emergency procedure, the BCSO may decide:
 - (i) To use GLOBALG.A.P. Full Remote as it is
 - (ii) To set up its own procedure for remote audits which will undergo an evaluation by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat to review equivalence (only equivalent procedures shall be used)
 - (iii) Not to allow remote audits
- b) The BCSO shall inform the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat of its decision during the application process or at any time if the decision made during the application process changes.

15 ABBREVIATIONS AND REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

15.1 Abbreviations

AB	Accreditation body
CB	Certification body
CIPRO	Certification Integrity Program
BCSO	Benchmarked certification system owner
BCSO CB	Certification body(ies) approved by BCSO

CSO	Certification system owner
G.A.P.	Good agricultural practices
GGN	GLOBALG.A.P. Number
IAF	International Accreditation Forum
IAF MLA	International Accreditation Forum Multilateral Recognition Arrangement
IFA	Integrated Farm Assurance
IHT	In-house trainer
ISC	Integrity Surveillance Program
KPI	Key performance indicators
LCA	License and certification agreement
MLA	Multilateral recognition agreement
P&Cs	Principles and criteria
QMS	Quality management system

15.2 Reference documents

GLOBALG.A.P. BCSO agreement in its current version

GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking cross-reference checklist in its current version

GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking fees for scheme and checklist owners in its current version

GLOBALG.A.P. data access rules in its current version

GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations version 6

GLOBALG.A.P. Integrated Farm Assurance principles and criteria version 6

GLOBALG.A.P. license and certification agreement in its current version

GLOBALG.A.P. product list in its current version

GLOBALG.A.P. sublicense and certification agreement in its current version

ANNEX I GLOBALG.A.P. BENCHMARKING TECHNICAL REVIEWER AND GLOBALG.A.P. BENCHMARKING ASSESSOR QUALIFICATIONS

GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking technical reviewers and GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking assessors are experts appointed by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat to act in the benchmarking process and shall be able to provide evidence of their qualifications and experience.

1 FORMAL QUALIFICATIONS AND WORK EXPERIENCE

- a) At least a post-high school (postsecondary education) diploma or equivalent (minimum course duration of two years) in a discipline related to the scope of the applicant CSO's scheme/checklist (plants and/or aquaculture)

AND

A minimum of five years of full-time experience in the agricultural industry gained after finishing post-high school studies. The required experience shall involve at least two years' work in the respective scope in areas such as production and/or quality assurance. Experience gained simultaneously for more than one certification scope is acceptable.

OR

- b) A post-high school (postsecondary education) diploma or equivalent (minimum course duration of two years) in a food-related discipline

AND

A minimum of six years working experience either in a practical capacity on a farm/production site or in a technical production management role in the relevant certification scope (plants and/or aquaculture)

2 TECHNICAL SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS

2.1 Lead auditor training and auditing experience

- a) Successful completion of lead auditor training based on ISO/IEC 19011 principles that shall have a minimum duration of 37 hours and shall be externally recognized by the industry. The certificate shall specify the training content and duration. Successful completion shall be indicated on the certificate. The lead auditor training shall cover applicable standards on quality auditing, auditing techniques, the focus of the audits (psychological aspects and communication), and reporting. It shall also include a practical case study.
- b) Practical auditing experience of at minimum 10 days in management systems (ISO/IEC 9000, ISO/IEC 14000, ISO/IEC 22000, OHSAS 18000, ISO/IEC 45001, BRCGS Food, IFS Food, previous GLOBALG.A.P. Option 2 or Option 4 standards, PHA, producer group audits of organic producers, etc.), not including the witnessing or observing of audits, but including being witnessed as an auditor in training

2.2 Training in food safety and G.A.P. and work experience

- a) Training in hazard analysis and critical control points (HACCP) either as part of formal qualifications or through the successful completion of formal training based on the principles of the Codex Alimentarius. Formal training may be done internally by the CB. Minimum training duration shall be eight hours. Duration and content shall be indicated on the evidence provided for this requirement (training certificate, evidence of training included in formal qualifications, etc.).

- b) Food hygiene training, either as part of formal qualifications or through the successful completion of formal training (the formal course may be an internal training). Successful completion of food hygiene training with a minimum duration of eight hours. Duration and content shall be indicated on the evidence provided for this requirement (training certificate, evidence of training included in formal qualifications, etc.). Food hygiene training shall cover site management, water, fertilizer, equipment, facilities, product handling, and site and personal hygiene, and it shall also include practical case studies.
- c) The trainings in points a) and b) can be completed together (minimum duration 16 hours).
- d) For plants scope: plant protection, soil management, fertilizer, and integrated pest management training, either as part of formal qualifications or through the successful completion of formal training
- e) For aquaculture scope: basic veterinary medicine and stockmanship training, including animal health and welfare issues
- f) For aquaculture scope: basic experience in food processing (for auditing the P&Cs on “Slaughter activities” and “Postharvest – Mass balance and traceability”) and GRASP assessor training
- g) For farm audits, the experience required shall involve work in the respective scope. Experience gained simultaneously for more than one scope is acceptable.
- h) To conduct farm audits for an additional scope, proof of formal training in production practices and scope-specific working experience (i.e., 1 year’s working experience or 10 days’ witness audits) are required.
- i) Formal training mentioned in points a), b), d), e), and f) can be part of the formal qualifications (degree/diploma) or can be separate trainings. If the qualification is part of the degree/diploma, it shall be indicated in the syllabus of the course. If it was acquired separately, there shall be a separate certificate that shows that a course that covered these issues was completed (including an exam).

2.3 Technical knowledge

- a) Knowledge of the certification scope for which the applicant CSO’s scheme/checklist is seeking benchmarking recognition
- b) Knowledge of the relevant GLOBALG.A.P. standard, product category, and/or add-on
- c) Knowledge of accreditation and certification processes and procedures

2.4 Benchmarking knowledge

The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall brief the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking technical reviewer on the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking process and the relevant normative documents, prior to the appointment to any process (if needed).

2.5 Communication skills

Good written and oral communication skills in English to facilitate effective communication with the applicant CSO, the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat, and the Benchmarking Committee members.

3 KEY TASKS OF THE GLOBALG.A.P. BENCHMARKING TECHNICAL REVIEWER AND GLOBALG.A.P. BENCHMARKING ASSESSOR

- a) The GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking technical reviewer:
 - (i) Carrying out the independent technical review consisting of the evaluation of the benchmarking cross-reference checklist(s) submitted by the CSOs to evaluate equivalence with the respective GLOBALG.A.P. normative documents
 - (ii) Evaluating changes introduced in BCSO's schemes/checklists
- b) Benchmarking assessor:
 - (i) Conducting on-site assessments of CSOs in the context of the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking process
- c) Communicating and issuing timely and accurate reports of their activities to the CSO and the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat

4 CODE OF CONDUCT/CONFIDENTIALITY

The GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking technical reviewers and benchmarking assessors shall:

- a) Keep abreast of developments, issues, and legislative changes pertaining to the benchmarking process and the relevant benchmarking scope
- b) Keep confidential all the information related to the benchmarking process and not use it in their own or their company's interests
- c) Avoid any kind of consultancy activities for the CSO and any potential conflicts of interests or lack of independence and/or impartiality with the specific applicant CSO's scheme/checklist
- d) Sign a confidentiality, impartiality, and non-conflict of interest agreement with the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat prior to being appointed to any benchmarking process and act according to it
- e) Inform the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat of any circumstance that may compromise this agreement, so that measures to guarantee the integrity of the process can be taken
- f) The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat may decide, at any time, to remove and/or substitute the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking technical reviewer or benchmarking assessor, especially if compliance with the above-mentioned requirements is jeopardized or not given.

ANNEX II BENCHMARKING COMMITTEE MEMBER QUALIFICATIONS

GLOBALG.A.P. shall appoint the Benchmarking Committee members from independent representatives of GLOBALG.A.P. Community Members who volunteer and who comply with the following requirements.

1 FORMAL QUALIFICATIONS

At least a post-high school diploma or equivalent (minimum course duration of two years) shall have been obtained in a discipline related to the scope of the applicant CSO's scheme/checklist.

2 TECHNICAL SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS

2.1 Technical knowledge

- a) Working knowledge of the scope for which the applicant CSO's scheme/checklist is seeking benchmarking recognition
- b) Knowledge of the relevant GLOBALG.A.P. certification rules and P&Cs
- c) Knowledge of accreditation and certification processes and procedures

2.2 Benchmarking knowledge

Knowledge of the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking process, which may be obtained through a direct briefing provided by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat

2.3 Experience

A minimum of five years of full-time experience in the agricultural industry gained after finishing the respective post-high school studies.

2.4 Communication skills

Good written and oral communication skills in English to facilitate effective communication with the other members of GLOBALG.A.P. Benchmarking Committee and the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat.

3 KEY TASKS

- a) Participation in the meetings called by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat.
- b) Evaluating the first drafted Benchmarking Committee report and the supporting documentation provided by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat:
 - (i) Independent technical review
 - (ii) Peer review
 - (iii) If applicable, the on-site assessment
- c) Being able to make a judgment on compliance or non-compliance with each requirement, and, if it is considered necessary, also challenge or question the judgment of the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking technical reviewer and to request more evidence of compliance.
- d) Recommending to the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat the benchmarking recognition of the applicant CSO's scheme/checklist
- e) Evaluating appeals and making recommendations to the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat in the event of an appeal

4 CODE OF CONDUCT/CONFIDENTIALITY

Benchmarking Committee members shall:

- a) Keep confidential all the information related to the benchmarking process and not use it in their own or their company's interests
- b) Sign a confidentiality, impartiality, and non-conflict of interest agreement with the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat prior to becoming a member of the Benchmarking Committee and act according to it
- c) Inform the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat of any circumstances that may compromise this agreement, so that measures to guarantee the integrity and independence of the process can be taken
- d) The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat may decide, at any time, to remove and substitute Benchmarking Committee members, especially if compliance with the above-mentioned requirements is jeopardized or not given.

ANNEX III CERTIFICATION OF PRODUCTS AGAINST THE IFA STANDARD AND BENCHMARKED SCHEMES/CHECKLIST

This annex is only applicable for BCSOs who gave written authorization for double certification.

The CB audit against the IFA standard and the audit against the benchmarked scheme/checklist may be conducted as a combined audit and on the same day (if conducted by the same CB). These audits shall, however, be considered as two audits and the checklists for both shall be completed by the CB auditor. CBs are not allowed to create their own combined checklists.

1 FEES

As the producers receive two certificates, the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall charge the respective fees for both the IFA standard and the benchmarked scheme/checklist. Producers shall be charged the [GLOBALG.A.P. system participation fee for IFA v6](#) according to the current version of the GLOBALG.A.P. fee table. Fees for the benchmarked schemes/checklists will be invoiced separately according to the rules as explained in the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking regulations and the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking fees for scheme and checklist owners.

2 PRODUCER REGISTRATION IN THE GLOBALG.A.P. IT SYSTEMS

The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat created a standard called “GLOBALG.A.P. IFA and Benchmarked Standard” in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems as well as a scheme “GLOBALG.A.P. IFA v“x.y” and Benchmarked Standard.” CBs shall only register the IFA certification under this scheme. Any certification of benchmarked schemes/checklists is not allowed to be used under this standard.

The scheme shall only be used if a producer registers for IFA certification in addition to a currently valid certificate for a benchmarked scheme/checklist (or is at least in the process of certification against the benchmarked scheme/checklist).

Before registering any IFA data under the new standard, the CB shall verify that the respective producer is in the process of achieving or has achieved valid certification for the same product(s) to one of the benchmarked schemes/checklists for which BCSOs authorized double certification.

Products originating from production processes that are only certified to IFA, without having valid certification to a benchmarked scheme/checklist at the time of certification to IFA, shall be registered as usual in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems. Those producers are not allowed to apply for certification to a benchmarked scheme/checklist at the same time.

The method of registration and certification of producers against benchmarked schemes/checklists in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems has not been changed, and the rule that each legal entity shall have only one GLOBALG.A.P. Number (GGN) applies.

3 CB REGISTRATION

This standard in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems has not been assigned to all GLOBALG.A.P. approved CBs. Those without access may apply via email to standard_support@globalgap.org as soon as they need access to the standard “GLOBALG.A.P. IFA and Benchmarked Standard”.

CB scheme managers shall first assign the CB auditors who conduct IFA audits (including the CB Committee) to the scheme version of the standard “GLOBALG.A.P. IFA v“x.y” and Benchmarked Standard” before entering any data.

If the audit against the IFA standard and the audit against the benchmarked scheme/checklist are conducted by two different CBs, these CBs shall share their O-Keys as explained in the GLOBALG.A.P. wiki.

VERSION/EDITION UPDATE REGISTER

New document	Replaced document	Date of publication	Description of modifications
221005_GG_benchmarking_regulations_v6_0_Oct22_en	200401_GG_Benchmarking_Regulations_V5_1_en	5 October 2022	New: 13, 14, Annex 3 Deleted: all points related to resembling schemes Changes: General improvements of language and structure
240515_GG_benchmarking_regulations_v6_1_May24_en	221005_GG_benchmarking_regulations_v6_0_Oct22_en	15 May 2024	New: BCSO agreement definition; 6.2 b), 7.3 c (vii) Changes: General improvements of language; 1, 1.4, 3.5.8 c) & d) (iii), 4 k), 6.1 j), 7.1 b), 10, 11

If you want to receive more information on the modifications in this document, please contact the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat: standard_support@globalgap.org.

When the changes do not introduce new requirements to the standard, the version will remain “5.0” and an edition update shall be indicated with “5.0-x”. When the changes do affect compliance with the standard, the version name will change to “5.x”. A new version e.g.: v6.0, v7., etc., will always affect the accreditation of the standard.

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