



Sustainable Supply
Chain Initiative

SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS
Version 1.0

PART III

PRIMARY PRODUCTION SCOPE (ENVIRONMENTAL)

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Introduction

This document is Part III of the SSCI Environmental Benchmarking Requirements, which has been developed by the Sustainable Supply Chain Initiative (SSCI) at The Consumer Goods Forum (CGF) to specify the requirements for the recognition of third-party environmental auditing, monitoring, and certification standards (Scheme Owners).

The SSCI presently carries out a social benchmark and has been working since 2022 to expand its scope to environmental sustainability.

Part III, also known as Environmental Benchmark, specifies all the requirements for benchmarking the environmental compliance of a Scheme Owner who seeks recognition by the SSCI.

After member and strategic partner development and Public Consultation, this document presents the final requirements.

For more information about the benchmarking process, please refer to Part I, and for a glossary of relevant terms, please refer to Part IV.

For more information or inquiries, please contact: ssci@theconsumergoodsforum.com.



CHAPTER 1: Environmental Management System

NUMBER	SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS
1.1	<p>The standard shall require that top management demonstrates its commitment to environmental sustainability.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: an environmental policy, public statements, training and implementation plan and programs, organisation charts, environmental management system, etc.</i></p>
1.2	<p>The standard shall require that the organisation's environmental commitments, including goals and objectives, are publicly available.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: web site information, public environmental reports, etc.</i></p>
1.3	<p>The standard shall require that the organisation's environmental commitments are communicated internally as appropriate.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: intranet information, posters, informative letters and emails, employee handbook, induction programs, training materials, etc.</i></p>
1.4	<p>The standard shall require that the responsibility for the implementation of the standard's requirements is assigned to top management.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: organisations chart, job descriptions, environmental policy, letter of assignment, etc.</i></p>
1.5	<p>The standard shall require that personnel in relevant business functions receive training on the standard's requirements, appropriate for their roles and responsibilities.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: assessment of training needs, training plans and programs, training content, attendance records, etc.</i></p>
1.6	<p>The standard shall require that contractors under its control, doing work that affects its environmental performance and its ability to fulfil its compliance obligations, are competent on the basis of appropriate education, training or experience.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: contracting procedures, contractor monitoring and/or evaluation program, contractor's professional licences, certifications and/or accreditations. etc.</i></p>
1.7	<p>If applicable, the standard shall require that suppliers of animal feed and crop substrates comply with the standard's requirements.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: procedure for approval of suppliers, supplier certifications, etc.</i></p>
1.8	<p>The standard shall require that records on the amounts produced and their respective certification claim(s) are maintained and available to stakeholders for chain of custody and certification of finished products.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: record keeping procedures, record storage systems, etc.</i></p>

1.9	<p>The standard shall require that records and documentation (e.g., measurements, training records...) are maintained and accessible for a defined period of time to demonstrate compliance with the standards' requirements.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: record-keeping procedures, record storage systems, etc.</i></p>
1.10	<p>The standard shall require that significant environmental aspects and impacts (negative and positive) are identified and that risks and opportunities related to its environmental aspects are determined.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: risk assessment procedure and results, list of significant aspects, list with risk and opportunities, etc.</i></p>
1.11	<p>The standard shall require that a management plan is implemented, including environmental goals, objectives and actions to achieve the objectives.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: documented management plan, measurable objectives and targets, environmental management system, environmental management certifications, etc.</i></p>
1.12	<p>The standard shall require that the environmental performance of the organisation is monitored, the progress periodically reviewed and the results of this monitoring and evaluation fed back into the planning process to ensure continuous improvement.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: a description of monitoring systems of environmental performance, monitoring records, management review process and/or minutes of meeting, review and update of the management plan, etc.</i></p>

CHAPTER 2: Compliance, Transparency and Complaints

NUMBER	SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS
2.1	<p>The standard shall require that the organisation fulfils its compliance obligations.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: legal register, legal compliance audit records, permits and licences, etc.</i></p>
2.2	<p>The standard shall require that the organisation makes adequate information on its sustainability performance available to stakeholders.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: publication of environmental reporting, information shared on the webpage, sustainability performance communications to stakeholders, etc.</i></p>
2.3	<p>The standard shall require that a mechanism to address complaints or concerns, regarding the organisation's environmental performance or its compliance obligations, is established. The mechanism shall be accessible and understandable to all workers and external parties.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: grievance or complaint procedures, hotline contract, records of received complaints, complaint investigation reports, etc.</i></p>
2.4	<p>The standard shall require that the confidentiality of any complaint raised is provided, and information is revealed only as necessary to investigate and handle the complaint.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: grievance or complaint procedures, hotline contract, records of received complaints, complaint investigation reports, emails and communications concerning complaints, etc.</i></p>
2.5	<p>The standard shall require that no worker or external party that lodged a complaint in good faith is retaliated against.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: grievance or complaint procedures, hotline contract, records of received complaints, complaint investigation reports, emails and communications concerning complaints, etc.</i></p>

CHAPTER 3: Pollution Prevention

NUMBER	SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS
3.1	<p>The standard shall require that systems and processes shall be implemented for pollution prevention and to minimise the risk of pollution incidents.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: procedures for management, storage, handling and disposal of all hazardous substances, training materials and records, employee licences, adequate storage facilities, adequate washing facilities, waste disposal SOPs, availability of SDSs, inspection checklists and reports, etc.</i></p>
3.2	<p>The standard shall require that systems and processes shall be implemented to prevent the drift or run-off of pollutants to neighbouring areas.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: drift and runoff prevention plan, justification for the use of aerial applications, records of aerial applications, maintenance and calibration records of application equipment, pesticide-free spatial and vegetative buffers, trapping practices (e.g., terraces, grassed waterways, buffer strips, cover crops) etc.</i></p>
3.3	<p>The standard shall require that systems and processes are in place to contain and mitigate the contamination of air, soil and/or surface and groundwater.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: pollution prevention guidance documents, standard operating procedures (SOPs), training materials and records; appropriate materials and supplies necessary to manage spills, machinery maintenance logs and inspection records, etc.</i></p>
3.4	<p>The standard shall require that pollution incidents are communicated to affected stakeholders, as appropriate.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: register of incidents, communications to stakeholders, emergency plan including communication requirements, training materials on emergency procedures, etc.</i></p>
3.5	<p>The standard shall require that an emergency response plan is in place, detailing roles and responsibilities, training requirements and response guidelines for the prevention and management of major incidents, including environmental incidents, as needed according to the risks of the activities undertaken on the production or processing sites.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: documented emergency plan, training materials and records on emergency procedures, drill plan and reports, emergency information in the premises, job descriptions, etc.</i></p>
3.6	<p>The standard shall require that major incidents shall be investigated and the results of the investigation communicated to the affected stakeholders.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: Incident investigation process description and reports, communication notice of investigation results, etc.</i></p>

CHAPTER 4: Management of Potentially Hazardous Substances

NUMBER	SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS
4.1	<p>The standard shall require that an inventory of hazardous substances used and stored is maintained.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: procedures for management, storage, handling and disposal of all hazardous substances, list of hazardous substances used and stored on the production site, etc.</i></p>
4.2	<p>The standard shall require that only officially registered products are used. Where no official registration exists, the standard shall require that guidance is provided on health, physical and environmental hazards in accordance with applicable national legal requirements.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: procedures for management, storage, handling and disposal of hazardous substances, list of hazardous substances used and stored on the production site, safety data sheets (SDSs), training materials or guidance to help workers who handle hazardous chemicals to become familiar with the format and understand the contents of the SDSs, etc.</i></p>
4.3	<p>The standard shall forbid the use of hazardous chemicals listed by WHO (1A and B) and the Stockholm convention (A and B) and Rotterdam convention (Annex III).</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: list of prohibited chemicals, training materials and records concerning training about prohibited chemicals, chemical products purchase specifications etc.</i></p>
4.4	<p>The standard shall require that systems and processes shall be implemented for the safe handling, storage, use, transportation and disposal of all hazardous substances, in order to minimise the potential for negative impacts on human health.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: procedures for management, storage, handling and disposal of all hazardous substances, training materials and records, employee licences, H&S manual, PPE use guidance and instructions, records of PPE provision and inspection, adequate storage facilities, adequate washing facilities, waste disposal procedures, availability of SDSs, inspection procedures and reports, etc.</i></p>

CHAPTER 5: Integrated Pest Management

NUMBER	SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS
5.1	<p>The standard shall require that the organisation optimises the use of pesticides by practising Integrated Pest Management or an IPM equivalent method.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: pest/disease scouting and monitoring protocol, pest monitoring records, training and guidance documents for pest monitoring, guidance and training to select the most selective crop protection treatment options, list of approved preventive non-chemical pest management strategies (e.g. crop rotation, cover crops, mulching...) and/or biological controls (e.g., owl nesting boxes, bio-pesticides, matting disruptor materials...), assessment reports to justify pesticide applications, pesticide risk assessment, etc.</i></p>
5.2	<p>The standard shall require that the pest management practices include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - systematic pest monitoring (insects, weeds, diseases...) - use of non-chemical pest management strategies (cultural, physical/mechanical, biological) - monitoring the effectiveness of non-chemical control methods used - assessing pesticide risks and prioritising lower-risk options when using chemicals <p><i>Implementation examples: pest/disease scouting and monitoring protocol, pest monitoring records, training and guidance documents for pest monitoring, guidance and training to select the most selective crop protection treatment options, list of approved preventive non-chemical pest management strategies (e.g. crop rotation, cover crops, mulching...) and/or biological controls (e.g., owl nesting boxes, bio-pesticides, matting disruptor materials...), assessment reports to justify pesticide applications, pesticide risk assessment, list of prohibited pesticides, etc.</i></p>
5.3	<p>The standard shall require that the use of pesticides is recorded, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the product/trade name and active ingredients used, - the location treated, - the application rate (amount per Ha) and date, - the target pest and - the applicator's name. <p><i>Implementation examples: pesticide application records, training materials on pesticide application, etc.</i></p>

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CHAPTER 6: Soil Health

NUMBER	SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS
6.1	<p>The standard shall require that areas at risk of erosion are identified and that measures for soil erosion prevention and mitigation shall be implemented.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: testing records on pH, NPK, organic matter, aggregate stability, compaction, infiltration rate, measures of the microbial community, etc.</i></p>
6.2	<p>The standard shall require that measures to maintain soil health and promote soil health recovery shall be implemented.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: mapping of sensitive soils and erosion-prone areas, soil management plans, application of best practices such as tillage systems, cover cropping and addition of soil amendments, etc.</i></p>
6.3	<p>The standard shall require that soil health is measured and monitored on a regular basis, as appropriate.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: testing records on pH, NPK, organic matter, aggregate stability, compaction, infiltration rate, measures of the microbial community, etc.</i></p>
6.4	<p>The standard shall require that fertiliser use is based on the crop needs and available nutrients in the soil.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: testing records on pH, NPK, organic matter, etc.</i></p>
6.5	<p>The standard shall require that the use of fertilisers is recorded.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: fertiliser application records, training materials on fertiliser application, etc.</i></p>

CHAPTER 7: Energy Use and GHG Emissions

NUMBER	SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS
7.1	<p>The standard shall require that the energy consumption is measured and monitored, and that types of energy sources used for production, processing and transport are quantified and documented.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: records of energy measurements, energy purchase contracts and bills, etc.</i></p>
7.2	<p>The standard shall require that energy efficiency measures shall be implemented to reduce the use of energy per unit of product.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: energy management plan, energy efficiency certificates, energy analysis data and reports, etc.</i></p>
7.3	<p>The standard shall require that measures shall be implemented to optimise the use of renewable energy.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: energy management plan, energy efficiency certificates, energy analysis data and reports, energy optimisation software, green energy certifications, etc.</i></p>
7.4	<p>The standard shall require that scope 1 and 2 GHG (Greenhouse Gas) emissions are measured and monitored.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: records and calculations of GHG emission measurements, energy purchase contracts and energy bills, GHG reporting documents, etc.</i></p>
7.5	<p>The standard shall require that measures shall be implemented to reduce GHG emissions in line with applicable protocols.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: GHG Reduction Programs & Strategies, GHG emission analysis data and reports, energy certifications, software tools, etc.</i></p>

CHAPTER 8: Water Protection

NUMBER	SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS
8.1	<p>The standard shall require that sources of water used for production and processing, if any, are identified.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: water source map/list, water protection policy, acquisition due diligence reports on water resources, etc.</i></p>
8.2	<p>The standard shall require water consumption for production and processing is measured and monitored.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: water consumption measurement and analysis records, etc.</i></p>
8.3	<p>The standard shall require that measures shall be implemented to reduce the use of production and processing water.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: water management program, water protection policy and strategy, soil moisture measurement records, etc.</i></p>
8.4	<p>The standard shall require that measures shall be implemented to avoid the depletion of groundwater resources beyond its recharge capacity.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: water management program, water protection policy and strategy, groundwater removal permits and reports, acquisition due diligence reports on water resources, etc.</i></p>
8.5	<p>The standard shall require that measures shall be implemented to ensure that irrigation is tailored to the crop needs.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: irrigation management plans and schedules, water protection policy and strategy, crop irrigation needs assessment, precision irrigation methods, soil or plant moisture measurement records, etc.</i></p>
8.6	<p>The standard shall require that measures shall be implemented to improve the quality and reduce the volume of wastewater effluents from production and processing operations.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: wastewater quantity and quality measurement records, wastewater management program, wastewater objectives and targets, etc.</i></p>

CHAPTER 9: Waste

NUMBER	SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS
9.1	<p>The standard shall require that systems and processes are implemented for the safe handling, storage, transportation and disposal of waste.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: procedures for handling, storage, transport and disposal of waste, vendor agreements with waste management services, training materials and records, availability of SDSs, waste adequate management facilities, etc.</i></p>
9.2	<p>The standard shall require that systems and processes shall be implemented for resource recovery, including repurpose, reuse, compost or recycle of residues and waste.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: waste segregation guidelines and training materials, waste reduction training reports, resource valuation reports, composting facilities and training materials, resource delivery notes, etc.</i></p>
9.3	<p>The standard shall require that systems and processes shall be implemented to prevent the excessive loss of food crops and other agricultural products during harvest and on-farm storage.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: training and guidance materials on food loss prevention, processes and measures to avoid mould and vermin, crop loss monitoring records, crop storage inspection reports, etc.</i></p>
9.4	<p>The standard shall require that open-air burning of residues, wastes or by-products is avoided and, where possible, eliminated.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: procedures for disposal of waste and by-products, vendor agreements with waste management services, training materials and records, etc.</i></p>
9.5	<p>The standard shall require that the waste generated and diverted from the landfill is measured and monitored.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: records of total waste produced and waste sent to landfills, delivery notes from landfills, etc</i></p>

CHAPTER 10: Land Use and Biodiversity

NUMBER	SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS
10.1	<p>The standard shall require that areas within or close to the production or processing sites that fall under the definition of high conservation value (HCV), ecologically important, special sites or protected areas are identified.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: map and catalogue of HVC, ecologically important, special sites or protected areas, communications with experts, etc.</i></p>
10.2	<p>The standard shall require that production or processing does not occur in areas that fall under the definition of high conservation value (HCV), ecologically important, special sites or protected areas, or their officially designated buffer zones.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: map, catalogue and management plans of HVC, ecologically important, special sites or protected areas, employee training materials, due diligence protocol for the acquisition of land, etc.</i></p>
10.3	<p>The standard shall require a written deforestation/conversion policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identifying the regions of application and relevant natural forest and ecosystems types, - committing to prevent the conversion of natural forests, or other natural ecosystems, to agriculture, plantation forestry or other land uses and - defining deforestation cut-off dates(s) in line with applicable deforestation protocols. <p><i>Implementation examples: written deforestation/conversion policy, policy publication at the company website, employee training on the policy, etc</i></p>
10.4	<p>The standard shall require that the organisation avoids, remedies or mitigates negative environmental impacts, which may arise from the production or processing activities, on biodiversity values and the quality of areas that fall under the definition of high conservation value (HCV), ecologically important, special sites or protected areas.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: map, catalogue and management plans of HVC, ecologically important, special sites or protected areas, employee training materials, due diligence protocol for the acquisition of land, risk assessment with prevention measures, remediation and mitigation reports, etc.</i></p>
10.5	<p>The standard shall require that fire is not used for preparing or cleaning fields, except when specifically justified in the integrated pest management (IPM) plan.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: procedures and employee training materials for preparing and cleaning fields, etc.</i></p>
10.6	<p>The standard shall require native habitats and natural communities within or close to the production or processing sites are protected.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: assessment report of native habitats and natural communities to determine their presence, due diligence for farmland acquisition, policies and practices for managing native habitats and natural communities; employee training materials for identifying and managing for native habitats and natural communities, etc.</i></p>

10.7	<p>The standard shall require that endemic rare, threatened or endangered species permanently or temporary present on the production or processing sites are protected. Hunting or collecting of these species shall not be allowed.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: analysis on the presence of rare, threatened or endangered species on site, due diligence before land acquisition, employee training on rare, threatened or endangered species identification and management, etc</i></p>
10.8	<p>The standard shall require that measures are implemented to prevent alien invasive species from invading areas outside the production or processing sites.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: information and guidance materials on alien invasive species on site, employee training materials on management of alien invasive species, etc</i></p>

CHAPTER 11: Animal welfare

The criteria listed under Part III – Chapter 11 are only applicable to schemes including livestock farming in their scope.

NUMBER	SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS
11.1	<p>The standard shall require that adequate measures for good animal welfare are implemented.</p> <p><i>Implementation examples: animal welfare policy and principles, documents about animal welfare protection including guidance on disease prevention and veterinary treatment, appropriate shelter, management, nutrition, humane handling, and humane slaughter; animal welfare assessment protocols and reports, employee training materials on animal welfare, etc.</i></p>

Annex 1

The SSCI Benchmarking Requirements – Part III – Primary Production are based on international references and widely adopted sustainability schemes. The list of references used for informative purposes can be found below.

REFERENCES OF THE SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS – PART III - Primary Production (Environmental)

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2. UN Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (2001)
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33. SFG Sustainability Standard V1.5, November 24, 2021
34. SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard
35. SIZA Environmental Standard - 2020
36. SMETA Version 6.1 May 2019
37. Sustainably Grown Version 2-2, March 4, 2020
38. UN Convention on Biological Diversity (1992)
39. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (2015).
40. USDA certified organic Code of Federal Regulations
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