SSCI Benchmarking Requirements
Version 2.0

# SCHEME MANAGEMENT CRITERIA

# Introduction

This section is the second part (Part II) of the SSCI Benchmarking Requirements, which has been developed and published by the Sustainable Supply Chain Initiative (SSCI) at The Consumer Goods Forum (CGF) to specify the requirements for the recognition of third-party auditing, monitoring and certification schemes.

The Part II – Requirements for the Management of Schemes covers all benchmarking requirements regarding the management and ownership of a Scheme Owner wishing to be benchmarked by the SSCI for recognition.

In 2022, the SSCI aligned all elements of Part II across its three sectoral scopes (Processing & Manufacturing, Primary Production, and At-Sea Operations) into one condensed set of criteria.

Therefore, all elements of this document are part of the benchmarking process for the current version of the SSCI Benchmarking Requirements and will be checked in conjunction with Part III of the scope(s) under which a Scheme Owner seeks recognition (with the exception of Chapters C and D that are only applicable in conjunction with Part III – Social Criteria – Primary Production).

The Documentation relating to the benchmarking process can be found in Part I. A glossary of relevant terms can be found in Part IV.

Under each benchmarking scope, the requirements in Part II – Requirements for the Management of Schemes must be met in order to receive SSCI Recognition.

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

# CHAPTER A: Internal Elements

The criteria listed under Part II – Chapter A are applicable under all scopes of benchmarking.

# CHAPTER A1.
# Scheme Governance

| NUMBER | SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS | |
|---|---|---|
| A1.01 | The Scheme Owner shall be an organisation that is a legal entity, which could be held legally responsible for the schemes' operations. | |
| A1.02 | The Scheme Owner shall have adequate policies and procedures to ensure impartiality between the scheme management and auditing activities. If the scheme is managed in part or in whole by an audit firm or a group of audit firms, the scheme owner shall require that the audit firm(s) are accredited to ISO/IEC 17065 or ISO/IEC 17021-1 related to the scope of certification, and only allow accredited audit firms to operate their schemes, to ensure impartiality between the scheme management and auditing activities. | |
| A1.03 | The Scheme Owner shall have adequate arrangements to cover liabilities arising from its operations. | |
| A1.04 | The Scheme Owner operates to a documented set of governance policies and procedures specifying at least the following:<br>● Board or governance body election or appointment process,<br>● Board or governance body representation and Terms of Reference,<br>● Member categories (where applicable),<br>● Income generation or funding processes,<br>● An organisational structure,<br>● The decision-making processes of each governance body,<br>● Key personnel roles (responsibility and authority),<br>● Managing conflict of interest, and<br>● Assurance process | |
| A1.05 | The Scheme Owner shall have in place a publicly available appeals and complaints resolution procedure and shall require this from approved audit firms and accreditation bodies. Each procedure shall require the respective body to: | |

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| | • investigate and take appropriate action regarding relevant complaints, within defined timelines;<br>• review and take any necessary corrective actions; and<br>• keep a record of all complaints and resulting actions. | |

# CHAPTER A2.
# Scope and Objectives

| NUMBER | SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS |
|---|---|
| A2.01 | The Scheme Owner shall have a defined scope for auditing under its scheme. |
| A2.02 | If the Scheme's auditing scope includes smallholders/family farms, the Scheme owner shall have clear rules for the classification of producers as "smallholder/family farm" producers. |

# CHAPTER A3.
# Integrity Programme

| NUMBER | SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS |
|---|---|
| A3.01 | The Scheme Owner shall have in place a clearly defined system for the approval, suspension and withdrawal of audit services by audit firms for the scope of their scheme. |
| A3.02 | The Scheme Owner shall define procedures to monitor the performance of audit firms. The procedures shall, at a minimum, include:<br>• the review of complaints<br>• the review of audit reports<br>• a risk-based programme of office audits and witness audits of audit firms that are approved to operate under the scheme<br>The monitoring of the performance may take the form of a risk-based programme, based on the region they operate, past complaints, number, size and complexity of assessments carried out by an audit firm. |

# CHAPTER A4.
# Logo Use and Claims

| NUMBER | SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS |
|---|---|
| A4.01 | The Scheme Owner shall have a publicly available policy governing the use of symbols, logos and claims.<br><br>The policy shall, at a minimum, include that symbols, logos and claims<br>● are only applied to activities that are within the scope of certification/auditing;<br>● do not overstate or mislead users relative to the defined scope or the status of the auditee;<br>● are relevant to that scope; and<br>● the policy shall address copyright protection. |
| A4.02 | In the case of certification schemes, the Scheme Owner or its delegated authority issues written and enforceable authorisations and/or licenses to use the scheme's mark/claim/logo only when the facility and/or product has been audited as being in conformity with the relevant standard. |

# CHAPTER A5.
# Standard Setting and Maintenance

| NUMBER | SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS |
|---|---|
| A5.01 | The Scheme Owner shall have a document control procedure in place to ensure that all of the scheme's normative documents are appropriately controlled and publicly available. |
| A5.02 | The Scheme Owner shall have publicly available procedures for the process under which each standard is developed, approved and revised. |
| A5.03 | The Scheme Owner shall ensure participation of technical experts and encourages balanced participation by stakeholders in the standard development, revision and approval process. |
| A5.04 | The Scheme Owner shall ensure that the standard, during its development or for major revisions,<br>(a) has been subject to public stakeholder consultation and<br>(b) due consideration has been given to comments received from stakeholders during the consultation. |
| A5.05 | The Scheme Owner allows a period of at least 60 days for the submission of comments on the draft standard during the public consultation phase. |
| A5.06 | The Scheme Owner reviews standards at least every five years for continued relevance and for effectiveness in meeting their stated objectives and, if necessary, revises them in a timely manner. |
| A5.07 | The Scheme Owner shall prepare sufficient guidance on the standard to support consistent interpretation of its requirements. |

# CHAPTER B: Elements Pertaining to Audit Firms Used by Schemes

The criteria listed under Part II – Chapter B are applicable under all scopes of benchmarking.

## CHAPTER B1. Accreditation

| NUMBER | SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS |
|---|---|
| B1.01 | If the scheme is written to issue certificates of compliance, the Scheme Owner shall require that audit firms achieve and maintain accreditation against the current version of ISO/IEC 17021-1 or ISO/IEC 17065 for the scope of the respective standard of the scheme. Requirements B1.02 to B1.09 apply to the scheme.<br><br>If the scheme does not enable the issuing of certificates of compliance, the scheme must include:<br>● (a) a designated person/persons in charge of the programme and a defined procedure and requirements for auditor selection, training and qualification;<br>● (b) procedures for sampling methodology, audit days calculation and multisite audits<br>● (c) any additional objective measures to ensure that the audit firm is able to conduct audits in accordance with the policies and procedures established by the scheme owner. Requirements B1.02 to B1.09 do not apply to the scheme. |
| B1.02 | In the event that an audit firm is not yet accredited to ISO/IEC 17021 or ISO/IEC 17065, the Scheme Owner may put procedures in place for a clearly defined transition period to allow audit firms to achieve ISO accreditation. If a transition period is granted, it shall not exceed two years. |
| B1.03 | The Scheme Owner has a contractual, enforceable arrangement or formal understanding that requires accreditation bodies to be compliant with the requirements of the current version of ISO/IEC 17011. |
| B1.04 | The Scheme Owner specifies the requirements for audit firms that the accreditation body is required to verify. |
| B1.05 | The Scheme Owner only works with accreditation bodies that have personnel with the necessary education, training, technical knowledge and experience for performing accreditation functions in social/environmental compliance. |

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| B1.06 | The Scheme Owner shall ensure that assessment staff within the accreditation body have knowledge of the standard and its intent, and of the schemes' assurance requirements. |
| B1.07 | The Scheme Owner ensures that the accreditation process includes an on-site audit of the audit firm. |
| B1.08 | The Scheme Owner shall have an agreement in place with the accreditation body to ensure that, in the event that an audit firm has its accreditation withdrawn or suspended by the accreditation body, the Scheme Owner is informed of this action. |
| B1.09 | If more than one accreditation body is used, the Scheme Owner shall ensure that the accreditation is implemented in a consistent manner. |

# CHAPTER B2.
# Relationship with Audit Firms

| NUMBER | SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS |
|---|---|
| B2.01 | The Scheme Owner shall ensure that audit firms that are approved to operate their scheme are legal entities. |
| B2.02 | The Scheme Owner shall ensure that it has contractual and enforceable arrangements with all audit firms that are approved to operate their scheme. |
| B2.03 | The Scheme Owner shall have in place a system to ensure an audit firm notifies them of all executed audit activities under their scheme, as well as any withdrawal or suspension. |
| B2.04 | The Scheme Owner shall ensure that the audit firm operates an effective and fully implemented quality system. The quality system shall be fully documented and used by all relevant audit firm staff. |

# CHAPTER B3.
# Auditor Competence

| NUMBER | SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS |
|---|---|
| B3.01 | The Scheme Owner shall define the qualifications and competence criteria required of auditors. |
| B3.02 | The Scheme Owner shall require that Lead auditors or audit teams performing audits for the audit firm:<br><br>-Possess language skills suitable for verbal and written communication with the client and the client's relevant stakeholder groups. This can be supplemented by an interpreter.<br>-Have sufficient knowledge and experience of current international, national and local/regional laws and the industry's relevant (social and/or environmental) best practices in the sector<br><br>Lead auditors performing audits for the audit firm shall have at least:<br><br>- Successful completion of an accredited lead auditor training on relevant standards (e.g ISO 14001 for environmental and SA 8000 for social).<br>- Participated as an observer auditor under training at different organisations, of which at least three (3) assessments shall be as the acting lead auditor under supervision (shadow audit)<br><br>For Environmental Standards: auditor experience for relevant standards for at least two (2) audits as the Lead Auditor<br><br>For Social Standards: participation in a minimum of 20 social compliance audit days.<br><br>5 years of related work experience in the scheme's field or a total of 5 years of a combination of:<br>- Related work experience in the scheme sector or<br>-For environmental: environmental management (at least 2 years), relevant post-secondary or higher education<br>-For Social: Social Compliance Audits, relevant post-secondary or higher education. |
| B3.03 | In the event that an audit firm is not yet meeting the requirements of B3.02, the Scheme Owner may put procedures in place for a clearly defined transition period to allow audit firms to meet these requirements. |

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| B3.04 | The Scheme Owner shall require audit firms that auditor competence is demonstrated on a recurring basis. The competence assessment of lead auditors and audit team members shall include the following:<br>● an assessment of knowledge of local and national labour and human rights/environmental issues and legislation;<br>● an assessment of skills in interviewing workers on human and labour rights issues,<br>● an assessment of knowledge of the relevant sector;<br>● an assessment of the personal attributes of the auditor, to ensure they conduct themselves in a professional manner;<br>● a period of supervision (witnessed audits) to cover specific audit techniques and specific category knowledge;<br>● a documented sign off by the audit firm of the satisfactory completion of assessment requirements. |
| B3.05 | The Scheme Owner shall require audit firms that their auditors have successfully completed approved training in the respective scheme to the satisfaction of the scheme owner. Training shall be repeated regularly and following major revisions of the scheme. |
| B3.06 | The Scheme Owner shall ensure that audit firms have a structure in place that assures that auditors shall keep up to date with industry best practice. |
| B3.07 | The Scheme Owner shall require audit firms to provide specific training to auditors on a regular basis, based on the most pertinent social compliance/environmental risks in the regions they operate in and individual performance reviews. Scheme owners shall require audit firms to document training attendance |
| B3.08 | The Scheme Owner shall require that if an audit firm sub-contracts any work to another party, a legally enforceable agreement between the audit firm and the sub-contracted party is in place to ensure the sub-contracted party adheres to the same policies, procedures and competence requirements when auditing against the scheme. |
| B3.09 | The Scheme Owner shall require all approved audit firms to implement an ongoing programme for auditor calibration. |

# CHAPTER B4.
# Audit Protocol

| NUMBER | SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS |
|---|---|
| B4.01 | The Scheme Owner shall define the methodology to assess compliance with the standard and require audit firms to apply this methodology consistently. |
| B4.02 | The Scheme Owner shall require that the scope of the audit includes an on-site assessment of the main site and all other pertinent off-site locations, including surroundings and/or waste disposal and wastewater treatment plants under the control of the organisation and accommodation facilities, where provided or mandated. |
| B4.03 | The Scheme Owner shall define a procedure for audit firms to determine the number and selection of pertinent locations. |
| B4.04 | The Scheme Owner shall have a clearly defined and documented audit frequency programme. The maximum validity of an audit or certificate shall not exceed 3 years.<br><br>The Scheme Owner shall require audit firms to carry out periodic surveillance audits at sufficiently close intervals to verify compliance with the standards' requirements. The rationale behind these intervals shall be clearly defined and transparent. |
| B4.05 | The Scheme Owner shall ensure that, irrespective of the defined minimum audit frequency, the audit firm shall undertake additional surveillance audits in the event that there is evidence or suspicion of non-conformity within an organisation. |
| B4.06 | The audit shall take place during a period:<br><br>- For **At-Sea Operations:** when on-site observation can take place, evidence can be collected, and interviews can occur.<br><br>- For **all other scopes:** when the employment site is in formal operation. Resulting variations to audit frequency shall be clearly defined and documented. |
| B4.07 | The Scheme Owner shall have in place auditing procedures and guidance for group/multi-site auditing and requires audit firms to apply the methodology consistently, if allowed under the scheme. |
| B4.08 | The Scheme Owner shall clearly define the expected duration of audits and the rationale for the determination of the duration of the audit that audit firms are required to follow during the audit. The rationale shall at a minimum include the size of the workforce/level of environmental risk and should include additional criteria that will ensure the effectiveness of the audit such as the physical size/geographical location of the location to audit, number of locations, nationalities of the workforce, product lines and product categories, etc. |

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| B4.09 | The Scheme Owner shall require that audits include worker and management interviews, the observation of processes and activities and the review of relevant documentation and records. |
| B4.10 | The Scheme Owner shall define the methodology for defining the number of workers to be interviewed. Interviewed workers shall reflect a wide range of workers and include potentially vulnerable workers and those in less skilled positions/workers with responsibilities in the EMS. |
| B4.11 | The Scheme Owner shall define requirements for the execution of worker interviews that audit firms are required to implement. The requirements include at a minimum that:<br>● Workers shall be interviewed both individually and in groups<br>● Workers shall be interviewed in a confidential setting without any supervision or management personnel present<br>● Information provided by workers shall be processed in a non-attributable manner<br>● Workers shall be interviewed in their own language<br>● The selection of workers shall consider that they are representative of the factory, by characteristics such as gender, age, length of service and origin<br>● In any event, management, supervisors or their representatives shall not act as interpreters |
| B4.12 | The Scheme Owner shall define requirements for the appointment of translators that audit firms are required to implement and make available. In cases where translators are utilised for audits, the Scheme Owner shall establish provisions to ensure that translators are independent, impartial and maintain confidentiality. |
| B4.13 | The Scheme Owner shall require audit firms to have policies and procedures in place to ensure the safety, protection and security of their auditors. |

# CHAPTER B5.
# Audit Reporting

| NUMBER | SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS |
|---|---|
| B5.01 | The Scheme Owner shall require certificates/audit reports to include, at a minimum:<br>● the name and address of the Scheme Owner;<br>● the name and address of the audit firm;<br>● the name and address of the audited site;<br>● the effective date of issue of the certificate/audit report;<br>● the substance (scope of audit) of the certificate/audit report;<br>● in case of certification schemes: the term for which the certification is valid;<br>● signature of the issuing officer. |
| B5.02 | Reports and grading systems shall clearly identify whether audits are announced, semi-announced or unannounced. |
| B5.03 | The Scheme Owner shall require that audit reports shall contain evidence that all the relevant criteria have been checked during the audit. In the case where a non-conformity is identified by the auditor, clear and concise details of the non-conformity shall be provided in the audit report. |
| B5.04 | The Scheme Owner shall require audit firms to ensure that audit reports of full audits are given a thorough technical review. Surveillance audits shall, at a minimum, be reviewed according to a risk-based approach.<br>For the review process to be effective it shall be ensured that:<br>● reviewers are impartial and technically capable of understanding the content of reports;<br>● all applicable requirements of the standard have been fully covered, using any supporting notes made during the assessment by a suitably qualified auditor,<br>● all areas of non-conformity have been identified and supported with clear evidence,<br>● in the case of certification schemes, effective corrective action has been taken to resolve these non-conformities. |
| B5.05 | The Scheme Owner shall define clear procedures in case non-compliances are found that pose an imminent danger to workers. |

# CHAPTER B6.
# Follow-Up Action

| NUMBER | SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS |
|---|---|
| B6.01 | The Scheme Owner shall have a system for the classification of non-conformities that clearly specifies the definition of the different types of non-conformities. |
| B6.02 | The Scheme Owner shall require the auditee to perform a root cause analysis of the non-conformities found. |
| B6.03 | If one or more non-conformities are found, the Scheme Owner shall require the auditee to prepare a corrective action plan, including details on the corrective actions and the time frame in which corrective actions shall be undertaken. |
| B6.04 | Verification of the implementation of the corrective action plan by an audit firm shall take the form of further on-site assessment OR the review of submitted documentation assessed by a technically competent member or group within the audit firm.<br><br>Follow-up audits shall be performed for critical or major non-compliances or when corrective actions can be evaluated only through an on-site visit. |
| B6.05 | The Scheme Owner shall define clear procedures regarding the follow-up action when non-conformities are found. In the case of certification schemes, all evidence of corrective action shall be submitted, completed and verified by the audit firm, within a timescale defined by the Scheme Owner. |
| B6.06 | In case of certification schemes, the Scheme Owner shall provide audit firms with consistent documented procedure(s) that specify the conditions under which certification may be suspended or withdrawn, partially or in total, for all or part of the scope of certification. |
| B6.07 | The Scheme Owner shall require that the audit firm has in place a clearly defined and publicly available appeals procedure. |

# CHAPTER B7.
# Data Management

| NUMBER | SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS |
|---|---|
| B7.01 | The Scheme Owner shall have in place a clearly defined data management system, which will hold and maintain data for the effective management and operation of the scheme. |
| B7.02 | The Scheme Owner shall ensure that the data management system incorporates as a minimum:<br>● Number of approved audit firms,<br>● Number of audit reports/certificates issued<br>● In case of certification schemes: number of delisted sites |

# CHAPTER C: Smallholders (Applicable Only to CI – Primary Production Scope)

The criteria listed under Part II – Chapter C are applicable **only** under the CI – Primary Production Scope.

# CHAPTER C1. Smallholders (Overview)

| NUMBER | SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS |
|---|---|
| C1.01 | The Scheme Owner shall indicate whether or not it provides any specific requirements, exemptions, rules and definitions for smallholders in its assessment process |
| C1.02 | The Scheme Owner shall indicate in the audit or assessment report whether smallholders were covered during any particular assessments or certification process |
| C1.03 | The Scheme Owner shall disclose their complete list of exemptions for smallholders |
| C1.04 | The Scheme Owner shall not allow performance exemptions for:<br>● Child labour<br>● Forced labour<br>● Minimum wage for hired workers / contracted workers<br>● Fair treatment of workers<br>● Operational health and safety<br>● Business Ethics<br>Documentation exemptions may be permitted for the above topics. |

# CHAPTER D: Group Certification (Applicable Only to CI – Primary Production Scope)

The criteria listed under Part II – Chapter D are applicable **only** under the CI – Primary Production Scope.

## CHAPTER D1. Group Certification (Overview)

*Note: IMS is an Internal Management System.*

| NUMBER | APPLICABILITY | SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS |
|---|---|---|
| D1.01 | Applicable to schemes with or without IMS | The Scheme Owner shall indicate whether or not it provides any specific requirements, exemptions, rules and definitions for group or multi-site certifications/auditing |
| D1.02 | Applicable to schemes with or without IMS | The Scheme Owner shall indicate in the audit or assessment report whether multiple producers or sites were covered during any particular assessment or certification process |
| D1.03 | Applicable to schemes with or without IMS | If group or multi-site certification is allowed, the standard shall disclose its sampling methodology |
| D1.04 | Applicable to schemes with or without IMS | The Scheme Owner shall indicate whether internal management systems are reviewed during the group or multi-site certification process. In the absence of an IMS, the standard shall disclose its assessment methodology. |
| D1.05 | Applicable to schemes with or without IMS | The Scheme Owner shall define clear rules for the operation of producer groups. |

# CHAPTER D2.
# Group Certification (Central Function)

*Note: IMS is an Internal Management System.*

| NUMBER | APPLICABILITY | SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS |
|---|---|---|
| D2.01 | Applicable to schemes with or without IMS | The Scheme Owner shall require that producer groups and multi-site organisations have a clearly defined central function who acts on behalf of the group members or sites and it is responsible to ensure management commitment and compliance to the scheme requirements. |
| D2.02 | Applicable to schemes with or without IMS | The Scheme Owner shall require that there is an established, legal or contractual link between the group members or sites and the central function. |
| D2.03 | Applicable to schemes with or without IMS | The Scheme Owner shall require that the central function maintains an up-to-date list of group members and sites, and has a procedure in place to inform any new group member applicants or new sites about the requirements of the scheme. |
| D2.04 | Applicable to schemes with or without IMS | The Scheme Owner shall require that the central function ensures that acceptance of new group members or sites happens only after an internal inspection has been performed and an improvement plan to ensure compliance has been agreed, if necessary. |
| D2.05 | Applicable to schemes with IMS | The Scheme Owner shall indicate whether a central function is responsible for implementing an Internal Management System (IMS) describing the roles and responsibilities of management, internal auditors and other members of the organisation related to scheme compliance.<br><br>In the absence of an IMS, the Scheme Owner shall establish the rules for certification/audit ensuring that the audit firm conducts annual audits on:<br>● All accepted products and production processes<br>● All registered group members or sites<br>● The administrative sites, where relevant |
| D2.06 | Applicable to schemes with IMS | The Scheme Owner shall require that the central function has in place sufficient management and technical capacity to implement and maintain an internal audit programme. |

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| D2.07 | Applicable to schemes with IMS | The Scheme Owner shall require that the central function maintains and retains a copy of all relevant IMS documents related to the group members or sites under the scheme. |
| D2.08 | Applicable to schemes with IMS | The Scheme Owner shall require that the central function performs a yearly management review of the IMS to ensure its effectiveness |
| D2.09 | Applicable to schemes with IMS | The Scheme Owner shall require that the central function has an effective grievance mechanism. The mechanism can be used by all internal and external stakeholders |

# CHAPTER D3.
# Group Certification (Internal Audit System)

| NUMBER | APPLICABILITY | SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS |
|---|---|---|
| D3.01 | Applicable to schemes with IMS | The Scheme Owner shall require that an internal audit programme be in place and undertaken by the central function. This programme shall ensure an annual audit of all group members or sites, the central function and the internal management system. |
| D3.02 | Applicable to schemes with IMS | The Scheme Owner shall require that the internal audit programme of the central function be described in documented procedures and be both practical and feasible in operative terms. |
| D3.03 | Applicable to schemes with IMS | The Scheme Owner shall require that clear requirements for internal auditors and technical reviewers be defined and documented by the central function and reviewed by the audit firm.<br>Internal auditors must meet similar or comparable requirements to those for external auditors, as set out within each scheme owner's rules. This shall include, at a minimum, requirements related to internal auditor education, training, work experience or other qualifications. |
| D3.04 | Applicable to schemes with IMS | The Scheme Owner shall require that internal auditors be regularly evaluated, calibrated and monitored. Records of the evaluation, calibration and monitoring activities shall be maintained by the central function. |
| D3.05 | Applicable to schemes with IMS | The Scheme Owner shall require that internal audit reports be reviewed by the central function and include corrective measures to address the non-conformances resulting from the internal audit, as well as evidence that non-conformances are closed. |

# CHAPTER D4.
# Group Certification (Audit Protocol)

| NUMBER | APPLICABILITY | SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS |
|---|---|---|
| D4.01 | Applicable to schemes with IMS | The Scheme Owner shall require that the central function requests group or multi-site certification in their application. The central function, not the individual group members or sites, shall be contracted to the audit firm. |
| D4.02 | Applicable to schemes with IMS | The Scheme Owner shall require that the central function be included in the scope of the certification/audit report. |
| D4.03 | Applicable to schemes with IMS | The Scheme Owner shall require that the central function be audited by the audit firm at least annually and before the audit firm undertakes the auditing of sample group members or sites. If necessary, a small number of the sample group members or sites may be audited prior to the audit to the central function. |

# CHAPTER D5.
# Group Certification (Site-Audit Sampling)

| NUMBER | APPLICABILITY | SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS |
|---|---|---|
| D5.01 | Applicable to schemes with IMS | The Scheme Owner shall establish the rules for a risk-based sampling programme including a minimum sample size.<br><br>The sampling program shall include provisions to increase sample size based on various risk factors (e.g., audit scope, types of activities on-site, findings of the central management system audit, findings at sampled group members or sites, customer requirements, etc.), size of the group or multi-site, and the internal structure. |
| D5.02 | Applicable to schemes with IMS | The Scheme Owner shall ensure that the audit firm audits a sample of the group members or sites every year. |
| D5.03 | Applicable to schemes with IMS | The Scheme Owner shall require that the square root of the total number of registered group members or sites be audited.<br><br>The sampling plan can be adjusted based on the use of monitoring technologies. |
| D5.04 | Applicable to schemes with IMS | The Scheme Owner shall require that the sampling programme be partly selective and partly non-selective, but at least 25% of the sample shall be randomly selected from the total number of group members or sites. In relation to the selected sites, these shall be identified based on the organisation's internal audit program findings and the individual group member or site risk profiles. |
| D5.05 | Applicable to schemes with or without IMS | The Scheme Owner shall require that a proportion of the audits be unannounced.<br><br>The unannounced audit sample size shall be determined by the social compliance risk but be at a minimum of 20% of the sample size. |
| D5.06 | Applicable to schemes with IMS | In the case of certification schemes, if non-conformities are found which may not jeopardise certification but may raise concerns on conformity of the organisation, the Scheme Owner shall require that the audit firm increase the sample size to ensure adequate confidence in the conformity of the organisation. |

# CHAPTER D6.
# Group Certification (Follow-Up Action)

| NUMBER | APPLICABILITY | SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS |
|---|---|---|
| D6.01 | Applicable to schemes with IMS | The Scheme Owner shall require that non-conformities found on group members or sites be assessed to ascertain if these indicate an overall internal management system deficiency and therefore may be applicable to all or other group members or sites. If non-conformities relate to all or other group members or sites, corrective action shall be undertaken and verified both by the central function and by the audit firm. |
| D6.02 | Applicable to schemes with or without IMS | In the case of certification schemes, if the central function or any group member or site fails to meet the critical scheme requirements, the Scheme Owner shall require that the whole organisation will fail to gain certification. Where certification has previously been in place, this shall initiate the audit firm process to suspend or withdraw its certification. |
| D6.03 | Applicable to schemes with or without IMS | The Scheme owner shall determine the methodology for issuing certificates/audit reports to the central function and the group member or sites.<br><br>Either:<br>• certificate/audit reports are issued to the central function of the producer group or multi-site organisation; or<br>• separate certificates/audit reports are issued to group members or sites of the group or multisite organisation that were audited as part of the sample plan.<br><br>Those certificates/audit reports must be clearly distinguishable from certificates/audit reports that are issued to individually audited companies.<br><br>The certificate/audit report must state explicitly that the recipient is part of a producer group or multi-site organisation, and any limitations to the scope of certification/audit report must be transparent to customers. |
| D6.04 | Applicable to schemes with or without IMS | If a group member or site is allowed to sell their product outside of the producer group or multi-site organisation, the Scheme Owner shall require that the group member or site be transparent about the source and scope of the audit, by providing customers with a copy of the certificate/audit report when requested. |

# Annex

## I. List of sources/mapping

The SSCI Benchmarking Requirements – Part II – Requirements for the Management of Schemes are mapped with various international references. The list of references can be found below.

| REFERENCES OF THE SSCI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS – PART II - REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF SCHEMES |
|---|
| **APSCA Competency Framework** |
| **APSCA Qualification Levels** |
| **GFSI Benchmarking Requirements** |
| **GSCP Audit Process and Methodology tool** |
| **GSCP Auditor Competence tool** |
| **GSSI Global Benchmark Tool** |
| **ISEAL Assurance Code** |
| **ISEAL Standard-Setting Code** |
| **ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015** |
| **ISO/IEC 17065:2012** |