ProTerra Foundation

Approval and Operational Procedures for Certification Bodies

Scope

This procedure defines the criteria to approve Certification Bodies (CB) that will the authorized to audit against the ProTerra Standards. It also defines the operational requirements of a CB.

ProTerra aims to assure that certification bodies consistently deliver the ProTerra Certification System to the highest standards, and those economic operators wishing to become certified can choose from a number of credible and reliable Certification Bodies.

A list of the approved Certification Bodies is maintained on the ProTerra web page.

1. **Formal Approval Procedure**

    1.1.   A Certification Body can apply to become a ProTerra Standard certifier. As such, the following documents are to be sent with the application:

a) Completed application form available in Appendix 1.
b) Valid accreditation to perform certification for at least one sustainability-related standard according to ISO⁄IEC 17065:2012.
c) Quality Management System Manual.
d) Audit log of the past 3 years.
e) Documentation attesting status of the Certification Body as a legal entity.

    1.2   In submitting an application the Certification Body acknowledges to have read and agreed to the following documents (valid versions available at the ProTerra Foundation website):

- ProTerra Certification Protocol;
- ProTerra General Terms of Use;
- ProTerra General Terms of Certification;
- ProTerra Certification Procedure;
- Conflict of Interest Policy;
- Guidelines and Requirements for the Use of the ProTerra Logos and Seals;
- ProTerra Grievance and Complain Policy;
- ProTerra Privacy and Confidentiality Policy, and
- ProTerra Standards and interpretations.

1.3   The application form and the attached documentation are reviewed and verified by an assigned evaluator that will issue a recommendation to the ProTerra Standard and Certification Committee within 15 working days from the receipt of the complete application documentation (refer to 1.1). This Committee has to finalise the application procedure of a Certification Body within 15 working days and send a written recommendation to the ProTerra Board, which will make the final decision during the next board meeting, at the latest.

     1.3.1   If all requirements are met and if the Certification Body is approved by the ProTerra Board of Directors, a Cooperation Agreement is sent to the Certification Body, allowing it to offer ProTerra certification, verification and gap analysis services (please refer to the valid version of the Certification Protocol for details) and the use of the ProTerra Logo (please refer to the valid version of the Guidelines and Requirements for the Use of the ProTerra Logos and Seals).

1.4   ProTerra will monitor and evaluate the performance of the Certification Body in line with the Certification Protocol. It may include shadow audits and surveillance audits. Please refer to the ProTerra methodological approach for oversight of certification bodies in section 5.

1.5   Individuals cannot be approved as a Certification Body.

1.6   Subcontracting by the approved Certification Body of free-lance auditors or lead auditors is allowed. The subcontracted auditor must have a contract with the Certification Body and must meet the qualification requirements under 4.

2. Certification Body Organizational Structure

2.1.   The Certification Body is required to meet specific procedures for the management of safeguarding impartiality evidence including liability and financing, and non-discriminatory conditions. This includes having documents identifying the management (group or persons) that has overall responsibility for the functioning of the Certification Body, including its finance, and having quality control and assurance procedures.

2.2   The Certification Body shall ensure that all personnel contributing to the certification process, including the decision of certification, disclose in writing to the Certification Body any interests which could possibly be perceived as, constituting and/or resulting in a conflict of interest as soon as they become evident. Individuals with conflicts of interest are not to take part in ProTerra certification verification or gap analysis audits or in the certification decision. All Certification Body personnel must operate at high levels of professional integrity, be free from commercial, financial, or other pressures that might affect their judgment, and are expressly forbidden from promoting any goods or services during evaluation activities.

2.3   Information relating to the applicant producer including details of products and processes, evaluation reports and associated documentation shall be treated as confidential (please refer to ProTerra Privacy and Confidentiality Policy).

2.4   The Certification Body shall establish documented procedures for determining timely and appropriate responses to declarations of interests under 2.2 as they arise, to ensure that the declared interests neither influence nor are perceived to influence, the certification process and/or certification decision making.

3. Certification Body Operations

3.1   The Certification Body must be accredited in ISO/IEC 17065:2012 by an Accreditation Body that is a member of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) or European Co-operation for Accreditation (EA) or in compliance with ISO 17011. The Certification Body has to operate at least one accredited scheme under ISO/IEC 17065:2012 which is relevant to the sustainability criteria as required by ProTerra Standard.

3.2   The Certification Body shall demonstrate that it has developed all of the required, documented procedures as specified in ISO/IEC 17065:2012 and in this document.

3.3   The Certification Body shall make the documentation of its management systems available to the personnel involved in the Certification Body operation and to ProTerra Foundation upon request.

3.4   The Certification Body shall conduct its certification operations in full conformity with its documented systems.

3.5   The Certification Body shall ensure that documents and records related to ProTerra Certification System are compiled and maintained accurately, complete, up-to-date and legible for at least 5 years.
Records, among others, include:

a) Certification Body's personnel (staff, auditors, peer reviewers and committee members) records such as CVs, relevant certificates, confidentiality agreements, training records, performance appraisals and declarations of conflicts of interest;
b) List of and contracts with persons subcontracted for work related to certification;
c) Applications for certification services, certification evaluations and certification contracts;
d) Internal audits and management reviews;
e) ProTerra certificates, audit reports and contracts with auditees.

3.7   The internal audits on the ProTerra Certification system and critical review of the certification process must be carried out at least annually. A copy of the report of the internal audit and critical review should be made available to the ProTerra Certification and Standard Committee upon request.

3.8   The critical review process shall include the evaluation of subcontractors, complaints, appeals, disputes, comments from ProTerra Foundation, stakeholders and governments on the functioning of certification bodies, their auditors and technical management. As applicable, improvements shall be implemented based on the result of the internal critical review.

4. Qualifications of Scheme Manager, Auditors and Lead Auditor

In this section are described the minimum qualification requirements in terms of training and experience to ensure that auditors and scheme managers working for Certification Bodies recognized by ProTerra consistently possess the knowledge, skills and experience to consistently, comprehensively, and transparently implement the ProTerra Certification System. ProTerra has several different standards and therefore Certification Bodies must verify and confirm if specific qualification requirement additionally applies.

All team members of a CB must be approved by ProTerra Foundation before they assume roles within the ProTerra System.

4.1   Scheme Manager

The Scheme Manager is the person within the Certification Body that is responsible for:
   a)   Implementing the ProTerra requirements specified in the ProTerra Certification Protocol and relevant documentation as indicated under 1.2;
   b)   Ensuring that all auditors meet the qualification requirements of ProTerra and conduct the audits as specified in the ProTerra Certification Protocol;
   c)   Making the final certification decision and ensuring that the final certification decision, the certificate and the audit report are handled according to the requirements as specified in the Protocol;
   d)   Attending ProTerra training when necessary and remaining up-to-date with ProTerra Certification System procedures, requirements, and documentation.
   e)   Acting as a key point of contact with ProTerra Foundation on all topics related to the ProTerra Certification System.

The Scheme Manager has to be competent in the auditing process of the ProTerra Standards. This includes the following minimum qualification requirements:
   a)   Advanced post-high school education degree in the area of agriculture, engineering, chemical technology, or food-related background;
   b)   Successful completion of an ISO 9001/14001 lead auditor course or other training deemed equivalent and acceptable by the ProTerra Foundation or equivalent experience in the field;
   c)   Demonstrable knowledge and experience of production and processing systems similar to the ProTerra Certification System;
   d)   Successful completion of the official ProTerra training;
   e)   Working language skills in English for verbal and written communication with ProTerra, and working language skills suitable for verbal and written communication with the auditee and the auditee´s relevant stakeholder groups;
   f)   The Scheme Manager shall have audit skills and audit experience in agricultural, forestry and/or industrial areas covering the following issues:
      •   Labour Conditions and social aspects
      •   Health and Safety
      •   Environmental
      •   Non-GMO production, if applicable
      •   Legal framework for the production of the commodity being certified
      •   Traceability / Chain of Custody systems
      •   Food/feed safety requirements: Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) and good hygiene practices (if ProTerra Insecta is included in the scope of the Certification Body).

The proof of the qualification requirements for scheme managers needs to be handled as part of the Certification Body approval process. Exceptions to any of these requirements must be approved and registered in advance by the ProTerra Certification and Standard Committee.

4.2   Auditor

The Auditor is the person within the Certification Body that performs the on-site audit. As such the Auditor is responsible for:
   a) Performing audits of producers and/or producer groups, processors, traders or dealers in compliance with the ProTerra Standard;
   b) Producing accurate and timely audit reports as specified in the ProTerra Protocol;
   c) Staying up to date with the ProTerra Certification System procedures, requirements, and documentation.

The auditor has to be competent in the audit of the ProTerra Standards. This includes the following minimum qualification requirements:
   a) Post high school education degree in the area of agriculture, chemical technology, engineering, or food-related background;
   b) Proof of participation and completion of the ProTerra auditor training on the practical application of the ProTerra Standards and Certification Protocol;
   c) Working language skills in English for verbal and written communication to ProTerra, and working language skills suitable for verbal and written communication with the auditee and the auditee´s relevant stakeholder groups;
   d) Demonstrable knowledge and experience of production and processing systems similar to the ProTerra Certification System;
   e) Contract with a ProTerra approved Certification Body.

In understanding that not all of the above qualifications may be covered by one auditor, an audit team can be created with multi-disciplinary members composed under the responsibility of the Scheme Manager and coordinated, during the audit, by a Lead Auditor. The team as a whole needs to be qualified in each of the individual fields of experience as specified below.

The audit team shall have audit skills and audit experience with certification in agricultural, forestry and/or industrial areas covering the following issues:
   •   Labour Conditions and social aspects.
   •   Health and Safety.
   •   Environmental protection and management.
   •   Non-GMO production, if applicable.
   •   Legal Frame for production of the commodity being certified.
   •   Traceability / Chain of Custody systems.
   •   Food/feed safety requirements including Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) and good hygiene practices (if ProTerra Insecta is included in the scope of the Certification Body).

Exceptions to any of these requirements must be approved in advance by the ProTerra Certification and Standard Committee.

4.3   Lead Auditor

The Lead Auditor is the person within the Certification Body that coordinates the audit team during the audit, including its planning and completion of the audit report.

The Lead Auditor has to be competent in the audit of the ProTerra Standards and ProTerra Certification Protocol. In addition to the required qualification of an auditor (see Auditor section above), the lead auditor fulfills the following extra requirements and qualifications:

a) Demonstrable experience in the auditing processes operating with Mass Balance Tracking and Tracing;
b) Successful completion of an ISO 9001 or ISO14001 lead auditor course;
c) The lead auditor should have performed a minimum of 5 audits associated with environmental, social or health and safety schemes/ standards and is witnessed in his position as a team leader by the Scheme Manager or another Lead Auditor of the Certification Body during one ProTerra audit before qualification as lead auditor in the ProTerra scheme.

4.4 Audit team internal qualification review

4.4.1. In order to maintain auditor's qualifications and achieve consistency, all auditors and lead auditors shall be subject to a review of their performance by the Certification Body. The Certification Body will conduct this by combining a number of activities:
- Updating the auditor training record and/or experience record;
- Regular reviews of the audit reports;
- Annual appraisal;
- Reviewing of any complaints or compliments;
- Annual witnessed audit; and
- Definition of an improvement plan as applicable.

4.4.2. A report on these internal appraisal activities and potentially necessary corrective actions shall be provided to the ProTerra Certification and Standard Committee upon request.

4.5 Access to Information

4.5.1 Information to ProTerra Foundation

4.5.1.1 The Certification Body shall provide ProTerra Foundation permanent access to the following information:
- Copy of ProTerra certificates.
- Copy of TCCs (Traceability Certificate of Compliances), if relevant.
- Copy of the completed audit reports.
- Overview of the ProTerra Standards audits[1]
- Overview of gap assessments and verification audits that were conducted using the ProTerra Standards.
- ProTerra Certification customer details: contact, contracted volumes and commodities, contract content.

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[1] Including year of audit, reference number, organisation, contact details, type of audit (certified or gap), the scope of certification, estimated number of suppliers and core suppliers, number of performed supplier audits (in the given calendar year), number of performed logistic audits, number of industry audits, the date on certificate and validity, volume fee system.

- Access to the customer portal, if existing.
- Communication with customers and auditees upon request.
- Consolidated information per country on a yearly basis.
- Project-based information, if relevant.
- Further information, if relevant.

4.5.2 Publicly available information

4.5.2.1 The Certification Body shall provide access to information to ensure confidence in the integrity and credibility of its certification. In this regard, the Certification shall make public the following information:
- o Information on procedures for handling complaints and appeals.
- o Information on specific audit procedures applied for evaluating economic operator compliance with ProTerra requirements.

4.5.2.2 Program changes, including regular updates in procedures and Standards, should be timely communicated to those organizations certified by the Certification Body.

5. Approach for Oversight of Certification Bodies

ProTerra´s approach to overseeing the activities of Certification Bodies is based on the **ProTerra Integrity Program** which establishes the procedures and processes provided in order to ensure the integrity and quality of the CB´s services based on the ProTerra Standards. For this purpose, integrity assessments are performed.

An Integrity Assessment is an audit performed by ProTerra Foundation or by independent auditors commissioned by the ProTerra Foundation at a System Users and/or of the CB´s in the form of a shadow audit, surveillance audit, or administrative audit at the CB´s head office.

Please also refer to the ProTerra General Terms of Use for the rights and duties of System users and to the ProTerra General Terms of Certifications for details on the **ProTerra Integrity Program**.

Appendix 1- Application Form for New Certification Body

1) Name of the Certification Body:

2) Main address:

3) Countries where the organisation operates:

4) Website:

5) Focal point contact details (name; address; phone and email):

6) Describe the main activity of the organization:

7) Indicated the legal status of the organization (select as applicable):

   a) Private limited company
   b) Public company
   c) Academic institution
   d) Non-profit Institution
   e) Other (please explain)

8) Is the organisation part of a Group? If yes, please indicate the name of the group or corporation.

9) Please detail the ProTerra standards the organisation is applying for:

10) Provide details, if applicable of any professional network and or associations the applicant participates in:

Please send this Application Form to info@proterrafoundation.org

Together with it send:
   a) Valid accreditation to perform certification for at least one sustainability-related standard according to *ISO/IEC 17065:2012.*
   b) Quality Management System Manual.
   c) Audit log of the past 3 years;
   d) Documentation attesting status of the Certification Body as a legal entity.

In submitting an application, the applicant acknowledges to have read and agreed to the following documents (valid versions available on the ProTerra Foundation website):

- ProTerra Certification Protocol;
- ProTerra General Terms of Use;
- ProTerra General Terms of Certification;
- ProTerra Certification Procedure;
- Conflict of Interest Policy;
- Guidelines and Requirements for the Use of the ProTerra Logos and Seals,
- ProTerra Grievance and Complain Policy;
- ProTerra Privacy and Confidentiality Policy. and
- ProTerra Standards and interpretations.

Signed:_____

Name: _____

Position:_____

Date:_____