

QP2: APPLICATION AND AUDIT REQUIREMENT FOR THE BIM CQA FARM STANDARD

Introduction

The BIM Certified Quality Aquaculture (CQA) Programme is a third party, independent and accredited Certification Programme owned by BIM and operated by the BIM Aquaculture Development unit. The Programme certifies Salmon, Freshwater Finfish and Mussels.

The Programme’s central document is the BIM CQA Farm Standard, separated into different modules, each one covering different areas of activity on a farmed fish production site. These are grouped as follows:

Scope: Certified Quality Aquaculture Farm Standard

Certified Quality Aquaculture; Certification Requirements. This core section of the standard covers the production process from inputs through to outputs and covers the assessment of the applicant’s food safety system and operation practices, traceability system, facility hygiene, product quality, sustainable management and nature conservation and environmental performance. This core section covers the practices that are required to be in place for maintaining good environmental status and also specific product criteria describing our superior quality Irish aquaculture products including Atlantic Salmon, Freshwater Salmonids and Mussels. This scope is available for Atlantic Salmon, Freshwater Finfish and Mussels.

Additional CQA Sub-scope: Eco Production

Certified Quality Aquaculture; Additional Eco Requirements. This section of the standard aims to assist the applicant in the implementation of an environmental management systems approach to demonstrate and prove their commitment to environmentally sustainable development during the production process. The subscope covers the additional eco requirements that are to be in place together with the CQA Certification requirements in order to achieve eco certification. This sub-scope is available for Salmon, Freshwater Finfish and Mussels.

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1. PURPOSE

This document describes the requirements necessary for Certification Bodies (CBs) to apply for and audit and certify Applicants to the BIM CQA Standard components of the Programme. This document defines the method by which new / renewal applications for certification to the BIM CQA Programmes are carried out using the following standard:

Certified Quality Aquaculture (CQA) Farm Standard- Issue 2 Revision 0 January 2022 to be effective no later than the first audit preceding January 1, 2023 and superseding Certified Quality Aquaculture (CQA) Farm Standard - Issue 1 Revision 1 November 2018.

New Applicants shall adopt V2 from January 2022 and existing certified Applicants to the CQA Programme can elect to adopt the new Issue from January 1, 2022.

Sub-scope:

- Eco Production

Previous Scope for Organic Production is now superseded by the Organic Food & Farming Standards for Ireland Ed. 2. CQA Programme no longer presides over the Organic application to certification of CQA Clients but recognises that applicants to CQA will continue to be offered organic certification in parallel with the CQA Programme. As such CQA Standards remain paired to the new OFFSI Ed. 2. CQA Programme will continue to offer guidance to the implementation of the OFFSI Ed. 2 for CQA clients.

Reference to organic hereafter is provided as guidance.

2. SCOPE

This procedure covers applications and methodology for certification to the CQA Farm Standard as listed, including of audit, certification and notification of results to relevant parties.

3. METHOD

3.1 Enquiries and Applications

On receipt of an enquiry for certification to an approved certification body (CB), the CB Manager /Administrator will contact the Applicant directly to discuss full details of the audit including:

- The species part of the audit: Atlantic Salmon, Freshwater Salmonids and Mussels.
- Scope: Quality, Sub-scope: Eco

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The type of site:

- Fresh Water, Salt Water.
- Fees and audit timeframe.
- Audit Frequency.
- Guidance if application to be paired with OFFSI Ed. 2 Standard – Organic Certification – refer to BIM Organic Aquaculture Advisory Document

The CB shall forward an Information Pack to the Applicant containing:

- Application form (that may be specific to Quality and/or Eco sub-scope)
- CB Regulations and Procedure about the BIM CQA Programme
- Up to date CQA Farm Standard.
- Application to the paired OFFSI Ed. 2 Standard Certification

Only applications received on the application form for the appropriate Scope and/or Sub-scope and accompanied with the appropriate application fee will be processed.

In the case of application to the OFFSI Ed. 2 Standard, the CB should also advise on the requirement for a separate Organic Conversion Plan (where applicable).

On receipt of an initial application, the CB will apply the next sequential membership number and the Applicant’s details will be entered in the relevant database.

Certified Quality Aquaculture Programme – Audit Requirements

Those Applicants who wish to become a member of one of the Certified Quality Aquaculture Programmes are required to have an audit relevant to the Certified Quality Aquaculture Standard.

Certified Quality Aquaculture Eco Programme – Audit Requirements

Those Applicants who wish to become a member of the Certified Quality Eco Programme are required to have an audit to both the relevant Certified Quality Aquaculture Standard and the relevant Certified Eco Standard sub-scope.

Organic Certification to OFFSI Ed.2 – Audit Requirements

Those Applicants who wish to become certified to the OFFSI Ed. 2 the CB should advise on the requirement to have an audit to both the relevant Certified Quality Aquaculture Standard and the OFFSI Ed. 2. The CB may also refer applicants to the link in the CQA Standards where further guidance to applicants applying for Organic Certification can be found.

Audit Frequency:

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Applicants applying for certification are required to have an **annual** inspection.

3.2 Arranging Audits

The CB will be responsible for conducting the pre-audit check by contacting the Applicant directly to determine readiness for initial audit and agreeing a mutually convenient date for the audit. The audit date shall be confirmed along with a Site Audit Schedule.

All audits arranged by the CB’s Programme Manager/Administrator shall have been allocated to an experienced approved Assessor with relevant industry knowledge and expertise for the given scope and sub-scope of the CQA Farm Standard. The CB shall select the Assessor from its Approved Assessor List.

Written confirmation of the audit schedule shall be sent to the Applicant. If the outcome of the pre-audit check is un-satisfactory the CB shall enter the information in the Applicant’s file and the Applicant shall be contacted at an agreed time.

The CB shall forward an authorisation to conduct an audit to the nominated Assessor accompanied by the Applicant’s Site Audit Schedule together with a copy of the Applicant’s (renewal Applicants only) non-conformances from their last audit.

The CB’s Assessor shall bring said authorisation (where applicable), Site Audit Schedule, copy of previous non-conformances (where applicable) and relevant Audit Report Form to the audit site.

Organic Application

The CB shall inform the Applicant, if involved in a staged approach to organic production, or if applying for their first organic audit of the requirement to submit details of their Organic Conversion Plan to enable a pre-evaluation of the Applicant’s Organic system by the Assessor before the day of audit (As per OFFIS Ed. 2) and The CB may also refer applicants to BIM for additional guidance on organic implementation.

The CB’s Assessor is responsible for conducting the pre-audit check by contacting the Applicant directly to determine readiness for initial audit and agreeing a mutually convenient date for the audit. The audit date along with a Site Audit Schedule, (developed in conjunction with the Assessor if applicable) shall be confirmed with the Applicant.

The CB shall allocate the arranged audit to an experienced and approved Assessor with relevant industry knowledge and where relevant, Organic expertise where a paired audit is planned for the given Standard sub-scope, selected from the Approved Assessor’s List for the Programme to carry out the audit. Once finalised, the written audit schedule confirmation shall be forwarded to the Applicant.

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The CB’s Assessor shall bring said authorisation (where applicable), Site Audit Schedule, copy of previous non-conformances (where applicable) and relevant Audit Report Form to the audit site.

3.3 Programme Standard

Each section of the Standard begins with a section title in bold text, followed by the specific clauses. The CB’s Assessor shall ensure that the Applicant complies with these clauses in order to gain a Certificate of Approval.

Note: In all cases, legal requirements take precedence over any requirements of the Standard.

3.4 Audit Procedures

Audit of most types of operation are conducted in English and typically take 1 day. The length of the audit will have been determined by the CB’s Programme Manager/ Administrator based on factors examined in the Application stage and resulting from input from both the Applicant and the selected Assessor. These factors will include:

- Product/Process
- Scope and sub-scope to be audited against (e.g., Eco audit may require more time than a regular Quality audit)
- Company Size
- Production Area
- Employees
- Turnover
- Prior Company Knowledge
- Audits that are paired with OFFSI Ed. 2 for CQA Aquaculture applicants

The CB shall ensure that the Audit covers the following areas:

- an opening meeting.
- a review of the documented and Quality/Environmental Management Systems.
- production facility inspection – to review practical implementation of the systems and interview personnel.

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- review of production facility inspection- to verify and conduct further document checks.
- final review of findings - preparation for the closing meeting.
- a closing meeting.
- And include the requirements for organic audit where these are paired with audits to the CQA Standards.

The CB’s Assessor shall:

- conduct the audit on the agreed date.
- verify that appropriate corrective action is taken to close off all non-conformances raised during the previous audit (where applicable).
- during the audit, record detailed notes of the Applicant’s ability to comply with the Standard, and should a clause not be met, the nature and significance of the non-conformance against the Standard.

Audit Reports shall include:

- audit date, auditor name and report author (usually the auditor).
- audit scope and site audited details
- non-conformities identified;
- the result of at least one mass balance assessment for each product covered by the traceability requirements; and
- facility’s conformity level regarding traceability requirements.

There are **three** levels of non-conformity: –Where there is a Critical failure to comply with a clause of the assessment to the degree of there being a risk to the integrity of the CQA Programme.

In this event the critical non-conformance shall be recorded, and the Assessor shall inform the Quality Systems Manager and/or Chairperson of the relevant Committees/Boards. Immediate temporary suspension may ensue pending clarifications.

Major - Where there is a substantial failure to meet the requirements of a statement of intent and any mandatory clause of the CQA Farm Standard but there is no immediate risk to the Integrity of the CQA Programme.

Also, if a subsequent audit discloses that a specific minor non-conformance has not been closed out, this will be classified as a **Major** non-conformance.

The CB’s Assessor will record the non-conformance and communicate the details to the relevant Programme Manager.

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Minor- Where absolute compliance to the CQA Farm Standard statement of intent and a mandatory clause is not fully met. As in the other cases, the CB’s Assessor shall record the non-conformance.

At the closing meeting, the CB’s Assessor shall present their findings and discuss any non-conformances that have been identified with the Client. The Applicant shall be asked to acknowledge the non-conformances and will be informed by the Assessor that they have 28 days to close out all non-conformances. A copy of the non-conformances shall be left with the Applicant’s technical representative.

The CB’s Programme Manager/Administrator shall send a follow-up letter to the Applicant detailing the non-conformances raised during the audit.

3.5 Non-conformance Follow-up

The Applicant is required to write to the CB’s Programme Manager/Administrator to confirm that action has been taken with respect to all critical, major and minor non-conformances identified during the Audit date, within 28 days from the date of the audit closing meeting. Depending upon the nature of the non-conformance, either documentary evidence or a re-visit may be required to fully assess conformance, before a Certificate of Approval can be awarded by the certifying body.

The CB’s Programme Manager/Administrator shall check the Applicant’s file after 20 days from the Audit to evaluate the progress of the corrective actions and if necessary, contact the Applicant to remind them of their obligation.

The CB’s Programme Manager/Administrator is responsible for ensuring that the Assessor has received and reviewed the corrective actions from the Applicant before the Certification Committee Meeting.

Failure to respond with corrective actions within the specified 28-day period shall result in the Applicant being deferred from the programme. If the Applicant requests longer than 28 days to address corrective actions, they should apply in writing. This request shall be presented to the Quality Systems Manager for approval. Approval or deferral is dependent on the quality of the request.

3.6 Preparation for Certification

Before presentation of the report for Certification, the CB’s Programme Manager/Administrator shall carry out a review of the report ensuring that:

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- The Assessor’s notes are reviewed to fully substantiate the non-conformances raised in the final report and (if held in a separate notebook) are submitted to be kept on the Applicant’s file;
- The Assessor’s report of non-conformance is not recorded as a statement of corrective action or direction;
- There is evidence of corrective action timescales being agreed and authorised by Applicant and Assessor at the time of the inspection;
- All evidence of subsequent corrective action by the Applicant since the inspection is available, presentable and clearly identifiable.

The report shall be presented for consideration at the next Certification Committee Meeting which the Assessor may be required to attend to present the findings or to answer any questions in relation the audits. However, they will not form part of the certification decision-making process in relation to any of the audit reports.

Authority to conduct future audits will be by means of a schedule of audits approved by the CB’s Programme Manager.

3.7 Note on Organic - Review of the CQA Audit Reports

For applicants that receive a paired audit combining CQA Standards with OFFSI Ed. 2, The CB Certification Committee should ensure the correct procedures are followed specific to the requirements of Organic Certification.

3.8 Certification Outcome

The outcome of the review of audit reports shall result in one of the following outcomes:

- The issue of a notice of Certification of Approval and confirmation of future audit frequency.
- Deferral of Certification pending verification of outstanding corrective actions to be taken by the Applicant.
- Suspension. Refusal to issue/withdrawal of a Certificate of Approval until a full re-audit has been carried out following completion of an agreed corrective action programme by the Applicant.

Issue of Certificate

The Certificate remains the property of Certification Body and is issued subject to the Applicant complying with the CB’s Programme Regulations and the requirements of the relevant Standard.

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In the event that there are substantial changes to the premises, products or personnel, these must be notified in writing to the CB. The documented submission will then be reviewed at the next relevant Certification Meeting. The Certificate of Approval may be withdrawn in the event that changes occur which will affect the Applicant's ability to meet the relevant Standard.

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Surveillance Audits

Certified Applicants are required to re-apply each year to the Programme and are then treated as if new Applicants. Certified Applicants who do not re-apply shall have their Certificates withdrawn on the basis of Voluntary Withdrawal and will be required to desist from making any claims or statements with reference to their tatus under Certification by the CB.

The review of continuing audit reports by the CB will result in the maintenance or withdrawal of certification with notification of non-compliances, proposed corrective actions and changes to audit frequency advised to the Applicant. Records/Minutes of the Certification meetings shall clearly record the Certification Decision following consideration of each report submitted.

3.9 Notification of Results

All decisions on certification status will be advised in writing by the CB’s Programme Manager/ Administrator to the respective Applicants within ten working days of the Certification Decision. In the case of deferral, the communication will include notification of any non-compliance requiring additional evidence of corrective action. A copy of this correspondence will be held in the Client’s file.

3.10 Notifications required under OFFSI Ed. 2

As applicable to applicants for OFFSI Ed.2 certification:

The CB should ensure that it fulfils the requirements under OFFSI Ed. 2 including notifying applicants of their obligations for reporting and notifying to the CB.

3.11 EU Organic Farming Logo

The CB should inform certified applicants on rules and requirements for EU Organic Logo use and ensure it is correctly administered.

4. Records

The CB Programme Manager/Administrator shall review the Applicant’s file 30 days after the relevant Certification Committee meeting to ensure that all records, minutes and Certificates are in place.

The Client’s file will be reviewed according to an internal review programme scheduled and conducted by the CB’s Internal Auditor.

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AMENDMENT LOG

DATE	ISSUE	AMENDMENT	AMENDED BY
April 2018	1.1	Clarification made on species name certified under the CQA Programme	Vera Flynn
April 2018	1.1	Update of Organic catalogue of infringements	Vera Flynn
July 2020	1.2	Update to account for new standard	Vera Flynn
July 2020	1.2	Update of Organic catalogue of infringements	Vera Flynn
Oct 2022	2.0	Amend the QP 2 to reflect the change in scope of the Programme. The Organic Sub-scope will be superseded by the Organic Food & Farming Standards for Ireland Edition 2 from January 1, 2022, which will be the only recognised Organic Standard in Ireland	Vera Flynn

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