One of the central goals of GLOBALG.A.P.'s work is harmonising the requirements of different schemes and checklists to reduce the complexity of certification in the global market.
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GLOBALG.A.P.'s IFA v6 driving a smarter future for responsible farming

By GLOBALG.A.P Team

FOR 25 years, GLOBALG.A.P. has been collaborating with the agricultural sector to support the implementation of responsible farming practices worldwide. The internationally recognised standards for primary production and supply chains are the result of years of intensive collaboration with industry experts, producers and retailers around the globe.

The latest version of GLOBALG.A.P.'s flagship standard, Integrated Farm Assurance (IFA) version 6, was launched on April 26, 2022. Applicable for fruit and vegetables, flowers and ornamentals and hops as well as aquaculture, it spearheads the company's new smart approach that places streamlined, impact-driven and connected farm assurance solutions at your fingertips.

Simplification of audit process gives time back to producers.

One of the core driving factors behind the standard revision was the desire for simplification, reducing the audit burden and giving time back to producers. In increasingly complex and demanding international supply chains, IFA v6 streamlines the audit process for producers and provides flexibility to choose the solution that is best suited to their unique needs.

A key aspect of this approach is shorter, customized checklists that feature simplified language. This means that irrelevant or duplicated principles and criteria are removed and checklists are adapted to

the specific farm conditions of the producer. Complementing this development, the criteria focus has been shifted to an outcome-oriented approach over prescriptive measures, acknowledging the diverse daily realities of producers and giving flexibility in demonstrating compliance.

Available in two parallel editions with the option of GFSI recognition for producers who require it, IFA v6 also introduces a continuous improvement plan at farm-level for the first time. This supports the holistic improvement of farming practices in areas such as environmental sustainability and biodiversity and aids the identification of target areas to remain one step ahead of new market requirements.

IFA v6 has introduced a continuous improvement plan at farm level for the first time.
Photo Credit: GLOBALG.A.P.

Robust integrity within a streamlined system for certification bodies GLOBALG.A.P. standards are audited by accredited and independent third-party certification bodies. Their work is monitored by the GLOBALG.A.P. Integrity Program – active since 2008 and the first of its kind in food certification – ensuring consistent delivery and implementation of the standards worldwide.

IFA v6 also features streamlined processes for certification bodies, with certificates issued at scope level that include listed product categories, rather than multiple certificates. The accreditation and qualification for auditors has also been simplified, with an expanded initial training and exam without product category limitation later.

GLOBALG.A.P.'s IT systems are continually updated and improved, with an improved user experience a priority in IFA v6. The standard requires certification bodies to use Audit Online Hub to upload audit data and generate reports, with the potential to both save time and improve the integrity of the system. Uniform certificates are issued digitally through Validation Service,

reducing the environmental impact from paper use and forming a closed reporting loop, as certificates can only be generated if the data has been uploaded to Audit Online Hub.

Targeted criteria allows supply chain to respond to market demands IFA v6 represents the most widely consulted standard in GLOBALG.A.P. history, with the two-year long World Consultation Tour featuring input from the entire stakeholder community. Regarding supply chain stakeholders, the standard contains an enhanced focus on rising consumer demands with new and updated criteria on environmental sustainability through topics such as plastics, waste, carbon neutrality, deforestation prevention and more. Stronger animal welfare criteria has also been integrated in the aquaculture scope, for example, through the introduction of stricter humane slaughter practices and the environmental enrichment concept.

One of the central goals of GLOBALG.A.P.'s work is harmonising the requirements of different schemes and checklists to reduce the complexity of certification in the

global market. IFA v6 therefore features simplified, transparent benchmarking through benchmarked schemes and benchmarked checklists. This upholds the 'one auditor through the farm gate' principle, reducing costs, administration and time, with producers, suppliers and retailers all profiting from the benefits.

Smarter and stronger reporting systems with uniform, electronic certificates validated in real time   mean supply chain stakeholders can be surer than ever that a GLOBALG.A.P. certificate is legitimate and harmonised audit reports are available for sharing with retailers if permitted by the producer.

A smarter standard fit for the future IFA v6 paves the way for a new, smarter portfolio of digital solutions which can be developed according to industry needs in the future. Tailored add-ons, designed for specific aspects of production and the supply chain, can also be combined with IFA to extend the certification scope, providing customized, flexible solutions for all farm assurance needs.

More information on IFA v6 can be found at www.globalgap.org/IFAv6.