



SA-GAP Certification Programme for Smallholder Producers of Fresh Produce



agriculture,
forestry & fisheries

Department:
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
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SA-GAP Certification Programme for Smallholder Producers of Fresh Produce

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Acronyms

DAFF	: Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
FBO	: Food business operator
GAP	: Good agricultural practices
GLOBAL GAP	: Global Good Agricultural Practices
GMO	: Genetically modified organism
HAACP	: Hazard analysis and critical control points
MRL	: Maximum residue limits
PDA	: Provincial department of agriculture
PPECB	: Perishable Products Export Control Board
SA GAP	: South African Good Agricultural Practices

Definition of key concepts

For the purpose of this programme the following concepts are defined as follows:

Audit	Process where an auditor conducts assessments on quality, safety and hygiene standards in all aspects of the food handling procedures carried out and production processes undertaken at the food handling facility or site and to ensure that all relevant corrective actions are carried out and documented.
Auditor	Professionally trained and qualified individual(s) appointed by the certification agency to conduct food safety audits for Food Business Operators (FBOs).
Certification	A process undertaken by producers through qualified auditors in assuring that produce meets stipulated minimum food quality and safety regulations.
Certification agency	Professionally recognised and accredited body appointed by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) to conduct food safety certification for Food Business Operators (FBOs) in the agricultural sector.
Food Business Operator (FBO)	Any undertaking, whether private or public, for profit or not, carrying out any of the activities related to any stage of production, processing, packaging, storage, transportation, distribution of food, imports and including food services, sale of food or food ingredients.
Food safety	The assurance that food will not cause any harm to the consumer when it is prepared and consumed according to its intended use.
Hazard	A biological, chemical, physical or any other agent that may cause a product to be unsafe for consumption.
Industry stakeholder	A person, agency or company interested in providing support to a specific producer or producers' groups. This support can be in a form of finance, infrastructure support, training, mentorship and market access (e.g. government and private development entities and retailers).
Producer	A person (individual) or business (individual or producer group) involved in the production of the products, relevant to the scope (crops, livestock, fishing or aquaculture), who has the legal responsibility for the products sold by that farming business.
Records	Documents that contain objective evidence, which show how well activities are being performed or what kind of results are being achieved.
Traceability	The ability to track the history, use or location of a product (that is the origin of materials and parts, the history of processes applied to the product or the distribution and placement of the product after delivery) by means of recorded identification.

1. INTRODUCTION

Commercial markets in South Africa and globally are currently undergoing rapid evolution with modern retailers and consumers placing emphasis on stringent food safety and quality standards. This development is partially driven by changing consumer preferences, induced by rising living standards and growing concerns about food safety. As such, smallholder producers are also expected to produce good quality products that meet minimum food safety requirements. The inability to meet the required minimum market requirements is one of the major constraints limiting smallholder producers to access the commercial markets.

The main goal of the SA-GAP Certification Programme is to assist smallholder producers of fresh produce to access both local and international markets by producing good quality products that comply with food safety and quality standards as required by the market. Moreover, the certification programme ensures health and safety to consumers and helps producers to gain gradual recognition and acceptance from mainstream commercial markets.

The certification programme is a key milestone in implementing the pillar on product safety and quality standards as captured in the approved "Integrated marketing strategy for agricultural, forestry and fisheries products for the Republic of South Africa".

What is the SA-GAP Certification Programme

The SA-GAP Certification Programme is a set of practices that address environmental, economic and social sustainability for on-farm processes and result in safe and quality food and non-food agricultural products. In simple language, SA-GAP Certification Programme stands on four pillars (economic viability, environmental sustainability, social acceptability and food safety and quality).

The SA-GAP certification further addresses basic food safety requirements, including: traceability of fresh produce from the point of production to the retailer until it reaches the final consumer and record keeping of all activities undertaken during the production of fresh produce, hygiene and responsible use of agro-chemicals (pesticides, fungicides and fertilisers).

Benefits of the SA-GAP Certification Programme

Among others, producers, retailers and consumers will realise the following benefits from the programme:

PRODUCERS:

- Improve participation of smallholder producers in the mainstream agricultural economy by ensuring compliance to minimum food safety and quality standards required by commercial mainstream markets
- Enhance competitiveness and increased participation by the smallholder producers in local markets and ultimately enhance their participation in international markets
- Equip smallholder producers with efficient farm management practices
- Assist smallholder producers to comply with legislation on food safety, environmental protection and animal and workers' welfare
- Facilitate and build necessary technical and managerial capabilities among producers and producers' groups
- Assist in mobilising the financial means for realising necessary infrastructural and other related investments in the agricultural value chain.

RETAILERS:

- Source and provide safe, high-quality and hygienic food
- Increase consumer confidence in the produce supplied by retailers

- Reduce non-compliance to food safety regulations at retail level
- Develop a network with reliable producers
- Ensure traceability of products should any food safety hazard be detected.

CONSUMERS:

- Assurance of high-quality and safe food at retail and farm level
- Minimum risk of diseases associated with improper food production and handling techniques (minimised chemical, microbial and physical hazards on food).

2. Basic Requirements for Participation in the SA-GAP Certification Programme

For the producer to be considered for participation in the certification programme, the following basic conditions should be met. **The producer must:**

- Understand the need, requirements and advantages of being certified
- Be fully committed to participate in the programme
- Be willing to implement the recommendations from the auditor
- Be in production and utilise available production facilities to their utmost best (if the produce produced is out of season, the producer must be willing to continue with production in the new production season/cycle)
- Have access to irrigation water, land and other basic production infrastructure
- Have production infrastructure which is in reasonably good condition (i.e. the programme is not designed for dilapidated business entities).

3. Process for obtaining SA-GAP Certification

If the producers are to obtain SA-GAP certification, the following steps/phases will be undertaken:

Step (i): Application phase

- Commodity Organisations, Provincial Departments of Agriculture (PDA) or other industry stakeholders identify and nominate the potential producers to participate in the programme (willing producers are also allowed to initiate contact with commodity organisations or PDAs should they realise the need for certification).
- DAFF, PDA or other industry stakeholder officials visit the producer, explain the process and fill out the readiness assessment template and, where possible, photos of the production site and other facilities need to be taken (**As there are costs associated with the programme, producers must fully understand the process and indicate full commitment**).
- PDA or industry stakeholder officials send the completed assessment template and photos to DAFF for further assessments
- If all stakeholders agree that the producer can be considered for the programme, DAFF will then capture the information and send it to the certification agency to commence with the certification process (e.g. PPECB).

Step (ii): Pre-audit phase

- The certification agency contacts the PDA or industry stakeholder (supporting the producer) and the producer to make arrangements for a pre-audit

- An auditor from certification agency, accompanied by a PDA or industry stakeholder official(s), visit the producer to conduct a pre-audit using pre-audits templates and control points checklists (**This is where the auditor will identify any non-conformances at the production sites and/or facilities – the duration for each pre-audit is approximately 3 hours or more, depending on the size of the farming operations and non-conformances encountered**).
- After completion of the pre-audit, the auditor will then send the audit report to the administrator appointed by the certification agency for capturing. This audit report will also be sent to the other stakeholders (Producer, PDA or industry official and DAFF) (**It is highly recommended that all stakeholders scrutinise the report and familiarise themselves with the pre-audit findings**).

Step (iii): Workshops

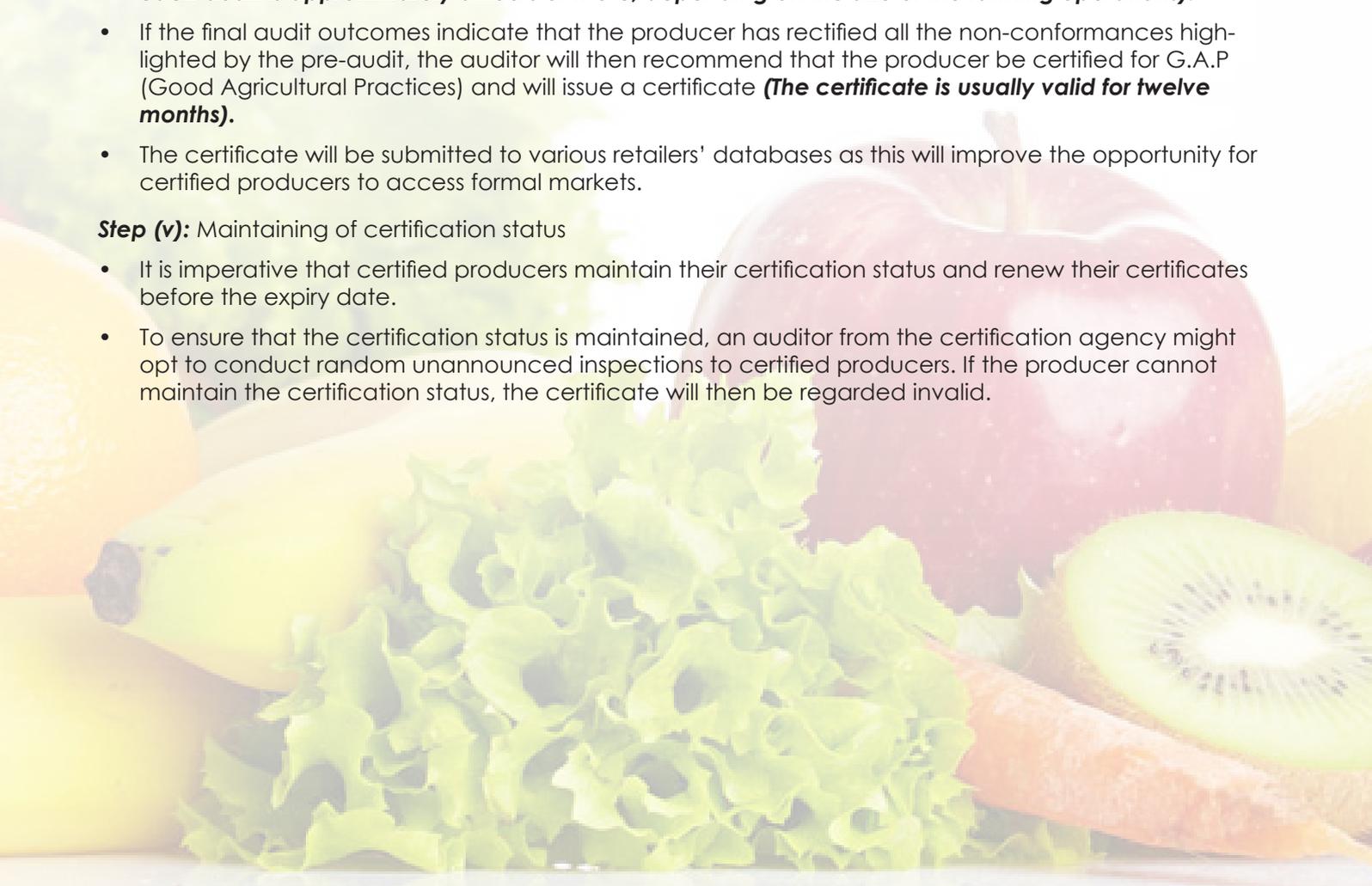
- The certification agency contacts the PDA or industry stakeholder (supporting the producer) and the producer to make arrangements for certification workshop (**Maximum support from PDAs and/or industry stakeholders is highly required in arranging for the workshop venue and other logistics**).
- The facilitator from the certification agency facilitates the workshop addressing non-conformances or findings from the pre-audit and provide recommendations to address such non-conformances (**PDA officials and/or other industry stakeholders supporting the producer should attend the workshop as well**).
- The facilitator will further indicate the period to be provided to allow the producer to address identified non-conformances before the final audit can be conducted.

Step (iv): Final audit and certification

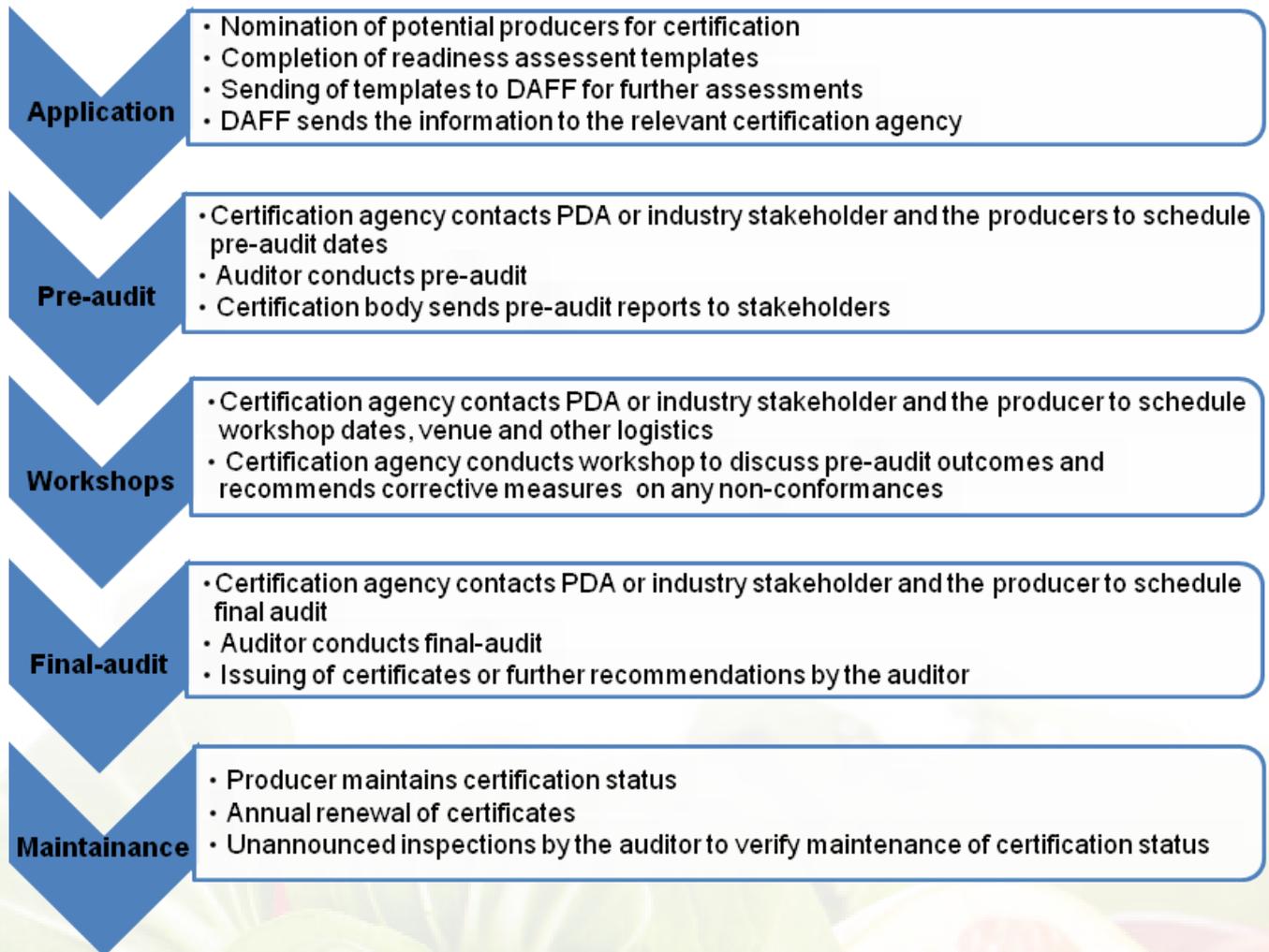
- After the period stipulated and agreed upon by the certification agency, the producer, other supporting stakeholders and the auditor from the certification agency will conduct the final audit guided by the certification standards (**This is where the auditor will verify whether non-conformances identified by the pre-audit at the production sites and/or facilities have been addressed – the duration for each audit is approximately 3 hours or more, depending on the size of the farming operations**).
- If the final audit outcomes indicate that the producer has rectified all the non-conformances highlighted by the pre-audit, the auditor will then recommend that the producer be certified for G.A.P (Good Agricultural Practices) and will issue a certificate (**The certificate is usually valid for twelve months**).
- The certificate will be submitted to various retailers' databases as this will improve the opportunity for certified producers to access formal markets.

Step (v): Maintaining of certification status

- It is imperative that certified producers maintain their certification status and renew their certificates before the expiry date.
- To ensure that the certification status is maintained, an auditor from the certification agency might opt to conduct random unannounced inspections to certified producers. If the producer cannot maintain the certification status, the certificate will then be regarded invalid.



Process flow for the SA-GAP Certification Programme



4. Key stakeholders and their roles

4.1 DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FORESTRY AND FISHERIES (DAFF)

As a National Department, DAFF plays a coordination role for the certification programmes by:

- Receiving applications regarding nominated producers to participate in the programme from the Provincial Departments of Agriculture (PDAs), Commodity Organisations and other industry stakeholders
- Playing a critical role in nominating producers to participate in the programme by conducting site visits to the producers where necessary
- Sourcing funding for the programme
- Interacting with certification agencies regarding the progress on the programmes, including the costs incurred
- Ensuring that all stakeholders receive audit reports and familiarise themselves with the auditors' recommendations
- Ensuring that certified producers receive their certificates

- Providing regular updates regarding the programme to all stakeholders
- Monitoring and evaluating the envisioned impact of the programme.

4.2 PROVINCIAL DEPARTMENTS OF AGRICULTURE (PDAS)

As the key link between the other stakeholders (certification agencies, DAFF and industry stakeholders), PDAs play the following roles in ensuring that the programme is successful:

- Publicise the certification programme to the producers located in their provinces
- Nominate producers to be considered to participate in the programme
- Assist in conducting readiness assessments for identified producers
- Support the auditor by being part of the pre-audit, workshops and final audit sessions
- Assist in arranging for workshops' venues and other related logistics
- Assist producers with addressing non-conformances identified by the audit
- Update DAFF and the certification agencies on progress made by producers in implementing the recommendations by the certification agency
- Assist in linking certified producers with markets
- Assist certified producers in maintaining their certification status.

4.3 INDUSTRY STAKEHOLDERS

Other industry stakeholders also have a significant role to play in ensuring the success of the certification programme. Among other interventions, industry stakeholders provide the following:

- Publicise the programme to the producers falling within their support programmes
- Nominate producers to be considered to participate in the programme
- Assist in conducting readiness assessments for identified producers
- Support the auditor by being part of the pre-audits, workshops and final audits
- Assist in arranging for workshops' venues and other related logistics
- Assist producers with addressing non-conformances identified by the audit
- Update DAFF and the certification agencies on progress made by producers in implementing the recommendations by the certification agency
- Source some of their produce from producers who are certified for SA-GAP
- Assist certified producers in maintaining their certification status.

4.4 PRODUCERS AND PRODUCER ORGANISATIONS

Even though the programme is designed to benefit smallholder producers, these producers also have a significant role in ensuring the success of this programme. Selected producers are expected to ensure the following:

- Provide any required information concerning the programme to the provincial departments' officials, DAFF, industry stakeholders and the certification agency
- Fully participate during pre-audits, workshops and final audits and show their maximum commitment to the programmes
- Fully implement recommendations by the certification agency
- Ensure that they maintain their certification status.

5. Contacts

For additional information and enquiries on the certification programme, please contact:

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