

## GLOBALG.A.P. EMERGENCY PROCEDURE FOR CERTIFICATE EXTENSION DUE TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Publication date: 13 March 2020

### Summary

1. GLOBALG.A.P. is continuing to monitor government and other external advice to assess the risks following the outbreak and rapid spread of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).
2. Due to movement/travel restrictions within some regions imposed by governments as a result of the coronavirus, GLOBALG.A.P. inspections/audits that become due may be postponed.
3. As already permitted under the current system, GLOBALG.A.P. certificates may be extended for up to 4 months.
4. For the COVID-19 pandemic, GLOBALG.A.P. is now introducing a temporary rule: a maximum certificate extension of 8 months, in order to allow the certification body (CB) to delay the on-site inspection/audit if necessary. The precondition for extension beyond 4 months is a completed remote inspection/audit. During the extension period, a regular on-site inspection/audit shall take place.
5. Certificates under extension are considered valid.

### Procedure for CBs for Certificate Extension due to the Coronavirus Pandemic

This procedure applies to all GLOBALG.A.P. standards and add-ons.

#### **1. Four-Month Regular Certificate Validity Extension**

1.1 As communicated on 28 February 2020, if a CB cannot conduct the inspection/audit, it may extend the certificate validity for 4 months based on the GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations v5.2 or v5.3-GFS part I, 6.7.2. ('Extension of Certificate Validity').

- a) The validity may be extended beyond the original 12 months (for a maximum period of 4 months) only if there is a valid reason, which shall be recorded. Here are the only reasons that are considered to be valid:
  - (iii) The CB was not able to conduct the on-site inspection/audit and/or the producer was not able to receive the CB inspection audit due to circumstances beyond its control (*force majeure*), e.g., natural disaster, political instability in the region, **epidemic**, or unavailability of the producer for medical reasons.

1.2 In addition to other sources, certification bodies can find information about high-risk areas [here](#).

#### **2. Four-Month Additional Certificate Validity Extension**

##### 2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 Where the 4-month certificate extension is likely to expire and the CB still cannot perform the on-site inspection/audit (see 2.2.6.4), an additional 4-month certificate extension (8 months in total) may be given.
- 2.1.2 The precondition for extension of the certification beyond 4 months is a successful *remote inspection/audit* (see 2.2).
- 2.1.3 The 8-month extension is currently not possible in the GLOBALG.A.P. database. GLOBALG.A.P. will inform all CBs when it has been implemented.
- 2.1.4 The 8-month extension may be given in two parts (i.e., 4 + 4 months) or, after database implementation, in one part (i.e., extension for up to 8 months).

## 2.2 Remote inspection/audit

2.2.1 The remote inspection/audit shall include the off-site module as defined in the general regulations v5.2 or v5.3-GFS part I, 5.1.2.1, 5.2.2.1 and part III, 5.2, 5.4.1.1.

2.2.2 The CB may replace the on-site module with other means of verification. The other means of verifications are:

- a) Interview with the producer's representative
- b) Video call in which the producer shows records
- c) Video call in which the producer streams video of the site/facility to the inspector/auditor. The full video shall not be recorded/saved, but screenshots are possible. However, all the observed evidence shall be recorded in the checklist. Video streaming of the site/facility may be done by the producer or by an assigned person the CB chooses, who need not necessarily be an inspector/auditor.
- d) Worker interviews may be replaced by phone or video call interviews.

2.2.3 The CB shall inform the producer about when, how, why, and of what to make recordings, pictures, or video footage. The producer shall give acknowledgement and send/submit/transmit the evidence to the CB within the agreed timeline.

2.2.4 The CB shall inform the producer as to what records have been saved as evidence and why, but may store these records only with the producer's consent.

### 2.2.5 Option 2 (group certification) remote inspection/audit

2.2.5.1 The QMS announced and unannounced audit may be performed off-site, followed by an interview/video conference (which replaces the on-site module). This may also include those procedures centrally managed by the QMS, but applicable at member level.

2.2.5.2 The sample size for the producer group members shall not be reduced as defined by the general regulations v5.2 or v5.3-GFS part I, 5.2.3 and part III, 5.4.2. It remains the square root (or 50% of the square root) of the number of members.

2.2.5.3 At member level, the on-site inspection module may be replaced as indicated above under 2.2.2 (other means of verification).

2.2.5.4 The surveillance inspection (of 50% of the square root of the number of sites) may also be performed remotely.

2.2.5.5 If the surveillance inspections (of 50% of the square root of the number of sites) have been performed remotely, the follow up on-site inspection may combine the surveillance and recertification inspection by inspecting the full square root of the number of the members.

### 2.2.6 Limitations for Option 1 and for Option 2

2.2.6.1 Crop extension (adding a new crop) is possible through remote inspection/audit only if the new crop belongs to the same crop grouping (in terms of harvest and handling) as has already been certified.

2.2.6.2 The CB shall use the same inspector/auditor for the remote inspection/audit who also performed the previous inspection/audit.

2.2.6.3 Before extension, a full checklist and report shall be completed as the result of the remote inspection/audit.

2.2.6.4 Official travel bans/restrictions shall be used as valid justification why the inspection/audit could not be performed, therefore this procedure applies only:

- a) If there is an official travel restriction to/from/in the country where the inspection/audit shall take place or where the inspector/auditor is located, or
- b) If the company policy of the CB or of the producer is based on an official source that prohibits travel (e.g., the company restricts travel to/from regions identified as high-risk by its country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

2.2.6.5 A self-declared travel ban of the CB or of the producer that is not based on an official local/national source is not accepted.

2.2.6.6 The CB shall keep evidence of the emergency status to justify the use of this procedure.

### 2.3 Follow-up on-site inspection/audit

2.3.1 An on-site inspection/audit shall take place during the extension period.

2.3.2 This may be an announced or an unannounced inspection/audit.

2.3.3 It is likely that the harvest and/or the handling period is already over during the inspection/audit, but relevant agronomic activities must be carried out when the follow-up on-site inspection/audit takes place.

2.3.4 The information already verified during the remote inspection/audit may be used for the follow-up on-site inspection/audit, as well.

### 2.4 Consequences

2.4.1 If the producer refuses the remote inspection/audit, the producer's certificate cannot be extended.

2.4.2 If it is not possible to carry out the follow-up on-site inspection/audit during the extension period, the certificate loses its validity.

2.4.3 For maintenance of inspector/auditor competency, exceptions to requirements for the annual minimum number of inspections/audits and the internal witnessing may be granted on a case-by-case basis. Contact [standard\\_support@globalgap.org](mailto:standard_support@globalgap.org).

2.4.4 For the rotation of inspectors/auditors, exceptions may be granted on a case-by-case basis. Contact [standard\\_support@globalgap.org](mailto:standard_support@globalgap.org).

2.4.5 For the 10% unannounced inspections/QMS audits requirement (as per general regulations v5.2 or v5.3-GFS part III., 5.5), exceptions may be granted on a case-by-case basis. Contact [standard\\_support@globalgap.org](mailto:standard_support@globalgap.org).

2.4.6 The minimum of 6 months between two inspections for re-certification does not apply (general regulations v5.2 or v5.3-GFS part I., 5.3.2 c)).

2.4.7 The procedure allowing remote inspection/audit applies only for an extension of the certificate validity, not for re-certification. The CB is not allowed to make a (re)certification decision without an on-site inspection/audit.

2.4.8 In order to avoid a gap in certificate validity, please try to avoid scheduling the on-site inspection/audit close to the end of the extension period.

2.4.9 If a producer wants to change CBs, the remote inspection/audit may be performed by the incoming new CB, despite the extension being granted by the outgoing CB. The transfer shall be finalized only when the incoming CB has completed the remote inspection/audit and the outgoing CB explicitly asks for the termination of the extension and authorizes GLOBALG.A.P. to transfer the GGN to the new CB. GLOBALG.A.P. will process the transfer requests only coming from the outgoing CB which extended the certificate validity. The certificate issued by the new CB shall be valid for 12 months minus the extension period given by the outgoing CB.

2.4.10 Correct implementation of this procedure will be checked in the framework of the GLOBALG.A.P. Certification Integrity Program.