GFSI Assessment Report

Application information

Assessment team and date

Certification programme Name(s)	**GlobalG.A.P. IFA v6 GFS** - Integrated Farm Assurance GFS Plants -Principles and Criteria for Fruit and Vegetables- VERSION 6.0 - Integrated Farm Assurance SMART/GFS Acquaculture- Principles and Criteria for Aquaculture – Finfish, Crustaceans, Molluscs, Seaweed- VERSION 6.0
Certification programme owner name and address	FoodPLUS GmbH, Spichernstraße 55, 50672 Cologne, Germany
Certification programme owner name, email, contact number	FoodPLUS GmbH, +49 221 57776 – 0 customer_support@GLOBALG.A.P..org
Date of application	28/08/2023
Benchmark Leader name and contact details	Moreno Giordani mgiordani@blu.it
GFSI Technical Manager name	Lalaina Randriamanantsoa
Observers name	N/A
Interpreter's name (if applicable)	N/A
Date of this office visit assessment	27-29/09/2023
Language (e.g. English or other)	English

Scopes including in this application

GFSI Scopes		Scopes applied For
AI	Farming of Animals for Meat/ Milk/ Eggs/ Honey	
AII	Farming of Fish and Seafood	X
BI	Farming of Plants (other than grains and pulses)	X
BII	Farming of Grains and Pulses	
BIII	Pre-process Handling of plant products	X
C0	Animal Conversion	
CI	Processing of perishable animal products	
CII	Processing of Plant Perishable Products	
CIII	Processing of Animal and Plant Perishable Products (Mixed Products)	
CIV	Processing of Ambient Stable Products	

D	Production of Feed	
E	Catering	
FI	Retail / Wholesale	
FII	Food Broker / Agent	
H	Provision of Food Safety Services	
G	Provision of Storage and Distribution Services	
I	Production of Food Packaging	
JI	Hygienic Design of Food Buildings and Processing Equipment (for building constructors and equipment manufacturers)	
JII	Hygienic Design of Food Buildings and Processing Equipment (for building and equipment users)	
K	Production of (Bio) Chemicals (Additives, Vitamins, Minerals, Bio-cultures, Flavourings, Enzymes and Processing aids)	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION TO THE STEERING COMMITTEE

Executive summary

The purpose of the GFSI assessment was to evaluate the "GlobalG.A.P. Integrated Farm Assurance (IFA-GFS) V6 programme" against the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements 2020.1 version.
The standards applied to evaluate are:
1) Plants scope: Integrated Farm Assurance GFS Principles and Criteria for Fruit and Vegetables- VERSION 6.0_SEP22; (220929_IFA_GFS_P&Cs_FV_v6_0_Sep22_en).
2) Aquaculture scope: Integrated Farm Assurance SMART/GFS Principles and Criteria for Aquaculture – Finfish, Crustaceans, Molluscs, Seaweed- VERSION 6.0_MAR23; (230307_IFA_Smart_GFS_P&Cs_AQ_v6_0_Mar23_en).

The assessment consisted of a preliminary Desk Review completed remotely by the BL (Benchmark Leader) under the supervision of the GFSI STM (Senior Technical Manager) in September 2023. The activity was based on the review of the self-assessment Excel files provided by the certification programme owner, covering the GFSI part II and III scope of recognition applied (AII, BI and BIII).

The findings raised have been communicated in writing and discussed with the CPO during the review call on 25th September 2023.

Despite some findings being highlighted, no critical or other impeding factors were raised at this step, and the office assessment was scheduled by a specific agenda.

The office assessment was carried out on-site on 27, 28, and 29th September 2023 by the GFSI BL and achieved the main purpose, which was to check, through sample record reviews, the development and implementation of the new programme (IFA-GFS V.6) and the monitoring of continuous alignment of the previous recognised certification programmes, including the Integrity Programme.

The findings which emerged during the overall assessment have been discussed and summed up in a report (List of Findings) signed by the Certification Programme Owner and the Benchmark Leader.

The CPO sent a corrective action plan on 6th October 2023 with some further integration on 13th October 2023.

The corrective actions proposed, the acceptance and the state of implementation are reported in the following section (see table "List of issues raised").

Recommendation to the GFSI Steering Committee

(To be completed after public consultation)

RESULTS OF ASSESSMENT AND OFFICE VISIT

Time and location details

	Location	People present GFSI, consultant, CPO. Names and roles	Date and time
Self-assessment review	Remote	Moreno Giordani/ GFSI Benchmark Leader	September 2023 (2,5 days)
Review calls	Remote	- Moreno Giordani/ GFSI Benchmark Leader - Lalaina Randriamanantsoa/ GFSI Senior Technical Manager - Brian Windsor/ Senior Technical Expert - Product Development - Andras Fekete/ Chief Integrity Officer / Vice President – Integrity - Cornelia Wenhold/ Technical Expert - Customer Support - Valeska Weymann/ Senior Technical Expert Aquaculture	25 September 2023 (0,25 days)
Office visit	Cologne-Germany (on-site)	- Moreno Giordani/ GFSI Benchmark Leader - Brian Windsor/ Senior Technical Expert - Product Development - Andras Fekete/Chief Integrity Officer / Vice President - Integrity - Oshin Abrami/ Reporting Analyst - Data Intelligence and IT Business Solutions - Otso Tolonen/ Team Leader Assurance Data Services / FAX Project Coordinator - IT - Valentin Pazachev/ Certification Body Administrator - Integrity	27-29/09/2023 (2,5 days)
	(Remote)	- Derya Dinc/ Translations & Document Quality Project Manager - Business Services - Kliment Petrov/ Integrity Assessments & Training/Technical Expert - Integrity - Rawad Akkad/ Lead IT - IT department - Serafeim Papadimitriou / Complaint Management Assessor -/ Integrity Department / CIPRO Team - Simone Herb/ Translations & Document Quality Project Manager - Business Services - Ute Terheggen/ Team Leader CB Administration & Benchmarking - Integrity - Valeska Weymann/ Senior Technical Expert Aquaculture - Viet Anh /TKAM Vietnam - Sales & Stakeholder Relations - Cornelia Wenhold/Technical Expert - Customer Support	

| | | - Kim Bresler/ Translations & Document Quality Project Manager - Business Services
- Lukas Kellermann/ Team Leader IT Validation Solutions - IT Department
- Yisleydy del Carmen Romero/ Assurance Data Services - IT Department | |

Overview

GLOBALG.A.P. is a trademark and a set of standards for good agricultural practices (G.A.P.) managed by FoodPLUS GmbH.

FoodPLUS GmbH manages all activities worldwide from standard setting, marketing, integrity certification management and serves as legal entity to hold the international GLOBALG.A.P. and GGN copyrights.

An elected Advisory Board, consisting of a balanced number of representatives from retail/foodservice and producer/supplier organizations, provides strategic guidance to the FoodPLUS GmbH /GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat.

Financial and legal ownership of FoodPLUS GmbH is held by the EHI Retail Institute e.V. through its 100% subsidiary EHI-Verwaltungsgesellschaft mbH.

The GLOBALG.A.P. programme began in 1997 as EUREPGAP, an initiative by retailers belonging to the Euro-Retailer Produce Working Group.

The EUREPGAP standards allowed producers to demonstrate compliance with the European criteria for food safety, sustainable production methods, worker and animal welfare, responsible use of water, compound feed and plant propagation materials.

Over the next ten years the programme spread beyond the European continent, changing its name to GLOBALG.A.P. in 2007.

GLOBALG.A.P. today is the world's leading farm assurance program, present in more than 130 countries.

The GLOBALG.A.P Certification Programme actually recognised by GFSI are:
- IFA Fruit and Vegetables Standard version 5.4.1-GFS
- IFA Aquaculture Standard version 5.4-1-GFS
- HPSS (Harmonised Produce Safety Standard) version 1.2
- Produce Handling Assurance (PHA) V1.2-1

The GLOBALG.A.P. GFSI recognised programme certificates are now more than 18,000.

For the previous versions of the GFSI recognised programme IFA 5.4.1-GFS there are 89 approved Certification bodies for Crops and 14 approved for Aquaculture.

The new certification programme assessed is limited to the IFA-GFS v.6 certification programme applicable for sites producing and handling fresh fruits and vegetables (BI and BIII) and aquaculture farming (AII).

The certification programme is designed to operate under product/process certification according to ISO 17065 accreditation and involves third party audit and certification of single and multisite farms and firms (group certification).

The evaluation activity is based on the audit of the effective practices/processes of the organisation by review of the procedural documentation, records, and site inspections at the time of the audit.

The audit may be announced or unannounced according to the CB schedule (unannounced minimum 10% of the certified organization per year).

The GLOBALG.A.P. IFA-GFS standards differ from the other GLOBALG.A.P. standards (not GFSI recognised, as the "SMART" version 6.0) for some strict requirements such as: unannounced audit without short notice, no sampling for producer group members/multisite/PHU classified as high-risk, full remote audit not admitted, higher number of "major must" requirements (118 IFA-GFS F&V vs 113 IFA-Smart F&V), and an additional food safety requirement for post-harvesting concerning the air and compressed gases monitoring for F&V etc. For the aquaculture scope, the "Principles and Criteria" version 6 are the same for the GFS and SMART standard, but the applicable General Regulation requirements are different as mentioned above.

The CPO is currently (Sept.23) working on the new version IFA-GFS v.6 with 3 Certification Bodies in Turkey, Mexico and Australia, accredited by the respective national Accreditation Bodies, IAF member and signatory of the Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA).

On 29th September 2023, 20 organizations have been certified according to the new IFA-GFS v.6 certification programme (11 certificates for the scope Plants IFA-GFS Fruits and Vegetables v.6 and 9 certificates for the scope Aquaculture IFA-GFS Aquaculture – Finfish, Crustaceans, Molluscs, Seaweed v.6).

About 177 F&V and 30 Aquaculture auditors have been approved to audit the IFA-GFS V.6.0 of the standards until now.

GLOBALG.A.P. has implemented an Advisory Board to ensure stakeholder consultation. It is composed of an equal number of representatives from the producer/supplier and retail/food service categories, with GLOBALG.A.P. Community Members electing candidates for four-year terms (16 members in total, representative of the main scopes as aquaculture and fruit and vegetables etc.) and for at least three of the four regions in which GLOBALG.A.P. standards are implemented: Europe, Africa, Asia/Pacific, and Americas.

The Advisory Board also appoints technical committee members and makes the final decision on adopting new versions of GLOBALG.A.P. standards.

Technical Committees consist of representatives from GLOBALG.A.P. Community Member organizations in the categories of producer/supplier and retail/food service. The committees primary focus is the maintenance, interpretation, and revision of GLOBALG.A.P. standards, rules, and regulations.

The main TCs involved in the development and definition of the IFA-GFS V.6 are:
-   Fruit and Vegetables Technical Committee (9 Retail and Food Service Community Members, 9 Producer and Supplier Community Members);

- Aquaculture Technical Committee (6 Retail and Food Service Community Members, 6 Producer and Supplier Community Members);
- Systems and Rules Technical Committee (5 Retail and Food Service Community Members, 5 Producer and Supplier Community Members, 3 certification body representatives).

The programme documents were submitted for several public consultation from 2020 to 2022 for the different scopes (e.g. 4 public consultations for F&V and 3 for Aquaculture, 2 for Systems and Rules).

Subsequent activities were carried out to answer the public consultation comments (about 2600 comments).

The final programme documents have been reviewed by the Board of Directors and approved by the GLOBALG.A.P./Food Plus management in September 2022. The IFA-GFS standards and regulations are available on the web site as a free download and will be obligatory 3 months after the GFSI recognition date.

The CPO Integrity Programme (CIPRO) is based on the CB Office Visit, certified site post-audit, and a six-month review of the performance of the Certification Body through some Integrity and Operational key performance indicators (KPI):
The nine key performance indicators (KPI) are:
Integrity (60%)   :
- Head-office performance (1)
- Auditing quality (2)
- Reporting quality (3)

Operational (40%)
- Audit Processing Time (4)
- Inspection timing rules (5)
- Database management (6)
- Complaint management (7)
- Administrative management (8)
- Commitment (9)

The GG Integrity Team audits the offices of certification bodies. Also, it undertakes independent visits to the certified sites to ensure that products/processes are being maintained in line with the certification status and that the audit and reporting process is to the expected standard. The frequency of these activities is based on the non-compliance risk and is carried out every three years on average (from 2 to 4 years frequency).

General compliance, strengths and weaknesses

The documental review was carried out by the Benchmark Leader during the months of September 2023. All the documental concerns have been discussed and clarified before the office visit on 27-29th September 2023.
During the office visit, carried out in Cologne, the Benchmark Leader interviewed the GLOBALG.A.P. certification programme managers, at the same time has reviewed documents, performance data and other management data.

Specifically, the Benchmark Leader has examined the CPO management processes in relation to the main requirements described in GFSI Benchmarking Requirements Part II. Furthermore, 5 certification files IFA-GFS version 6 for Fruit and Vegetables and Aquaculture were sampled to check the GFSI BR part III.
During the office assessment, the Integrity programme process was evaluated. In particular, the suspension of a certification body in December 2022, the KPI and the office visit of two certification bodies active in the IFA-GFS version 6 certification.

A total of five "partial" findings against part II and one "partial" finding against part III (AII, BI, BIII) were raised during the whole assessment (documental and office review).
The main findings regard:
-    The definition and writing of the requirements concerning maintenance of the auditor competence (only GFSI audits shall be considered).
-    The provision of the "whole" audit report to the certified Organization.
-    The definition of the considerations when organisations switch from another GFSI-recognised Certification Programme.
-    The definition of the corrective action concerning food safety non-conforming product.
-    The evidence of sites random sampling in the case of group/multisite certification.

The main points of strength on the management of the Certification Programme are:
-        Adequate resources and a well-structured organisation.
-        Long experience in the development and management of farm assurance certification programmes.
-        Strong and advanced integrity programme (CIPRO).
-        Transparent communication with certification bodies, stakeholders and interested parties (by web site, technical news etc.).
-        Auditor competence enhanced programme (training, webinar and exams).
-        Data management information available to the interested parties (GLOBALG.A.P. Data base).

No particular points of weakness have been recognised on the management of the Certification Programme.
Some deficiencies raised regarding the GFSI requirements have been highlighted such as partial non-conformities, and promptly addressed by the CPO.

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Changes made to the certification programme / Standard* following the GFSI assessment

The CPO, following the GFSI assessment, has supplied the CA Plan containing the draft versions of the revised requirements.

The first corrective action plan was received on October 6th, 2023, and, upon request of some integration, the final on October 13th, 2023.

The final CA plan was considered adequate to address the findings.

The "General Rules" and "Principles & Criteria" requirements (draft version) were amended according to the GFSI benchmarking requirements, and the final change has been published in the Technical News for Certification Bodies – Issue 03/2023 on December 1st, 2023.

According to the type of findings (partial) and the prescriptive value of the Technical News, a new version of the programme is not considered necessary.

The findings, the proposed corrective actions, the acceptance and state of implementation are reported in table 'List of Issues Raised'.

List of findings

Element reference	Non-conformity	Partly / no	Corrective action	Recommendation from Benchmark leader	Decision from GFSI technical manager
GFSI BR PartII 4.14- Maintenance of Auditor Skills and Competence	The "General Regulation for CBs V.6" requirements do not clarify that the auditor, to maintain sector and CP knowledge, at least five audits shall be carried out against any of the relevant GLOBALG.A.P. GFSI-recognised certification programmes only.	**partly**	General rules will be amended and rule change will be published in the next Technical News in December 2023. It will read: About maintenance of competency for auditors approved for GFSI recognized standards Amended GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulations – Rules for Certification Bodies 14 ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR IFA V6 GFS 12.3.5 i) and 13.3.5 i) are to be replaced by: The CB shall have in place a procedure to ensure that annually every auditor conducts at least five on-site audits, at a number of different producers. In the case of a CB farm auditor approved for GFSI recognized GLOBALG.A.P. standards, the five on-site CB audits required for maintenance of competency shall	The proposed corrective action on 2023/10/06 is adequate, and it will address the issue. Evidence of implementation will be reviewed within December 2023 to close. Closed: Published Technical News for Certification Bodies – Issue 03/2023 on December 1st 2023.	

			be against any GLOBALG.A.P. GFSI benchmarked GLOBALG.A.P. standards. If this requirement cannot be met, the CB auditors shall carry out 5 on-site audits against any GFSI-approved Certification Programmes (see list here) and at least one annual on-site audit against the respective GFSI recognized GLOBALG.A.P. standard. For example, a CB auditor may conduct 4 audits to any GFSI-approved Certification Programme and only one audit to IFA v6 GFS to maintain competency for IFA v6 GFS.		
GFSI BR PartII 4.15-Maintenance of Auditor Skills and Competence	The "General Regulation for CBs V.6" requirements do not clarify that in specific situations where GFSI part II requirement 4.14 cannot be met, the audits different from the relevant GLOBALG.A.P. GFSI-recognised programme shall be GFSI-approved.	partly	General rules will be amended and rule change will be published in the next Technical News in December 2023. It will read: About maintenance of competency for auditors approved for GFSI recognized standards Amended GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulations – Rules for Certification Bodies 14 ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR IFA V6 GFS 12.3.5 i) and 13.3.5 i) are to be	The proposed corrective action on 2023/10/06 is adequate, and it will address the issue. Evidence of implementation will be reviewed within December 2023 to close. Closed: Published Technical News for Certification Bodies – Issue 03/2023 on 1st December 2023..	

| | | | replaced by:

The CB shall have in place a procedure to ensure that annually every auditor conducts at least five on-site audits, at a number of different producers.
In the case of a CB farm auditor approved for GFSI recognized GLOBALG.A.P. standards, the five on-site CB audits required for maintenance of competency shall be against any GLOBALG.A.P. GFSI benchmarked GLOBALG.A.P. standards.

If this requirement cannot be met, the CB auditors shall carry out 5 on-site audits against any GFSI-approved Certification Programmes (see list here) and at least one annual on-site audit against the respective GFSI recognized GLOBALG.A.P. standard.
For example, a CB auditor may conduct 4 audits to any GFSI-approved Certification Programme and only one audit to IFA v6 GFS to maintain competency for IFA v6 GFS. | | |

| GFSI BR PartII 5.13 - Audit Reporting | Except for certified organizations with the USA and Canada as the destination country, the full CB audit report (including checklist) is provided to the audited organization only on request. | partly | General rules will be amended and rule change will be published in the next Technical News in December 2023. It will read:
About Audit Reporting for GFSI recognized standards

Amended GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulations – Rules for Certification Bodies
Point 8.1.p and GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulations – Rules for QMS point 7.1.d and GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulations – Rules for Individual Producers point 7.1.d:

Rules for CBs v6 8.1.p/Rules for QMS point 7.1.d and Rules for IP point 7.1.d currently read:
"Where the country of destination (as registered in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems) includes the USA and/or Canada, the CB shall provide the final CB audit report including the completed audit checklist to the producer, at the latest by the time of the certification decision. "

Here we would like to inform you that the text is amended for IFA v6 GFS as following: | The proposed corrective action on 2023/10/06 is adequate, and it will address the issue. Evidence of implementation will be reviewed within December 2023 to close.

Closed:
Published Technical News for Certification Bodies – Issue 03/2023 on 1st December 2023.
(For QMS and IP rules ref. 7.1.3.d) | |

			"CBs shall provide the final CB audit report including the completed audit checklist to producers registered for any GLOBALG.A.P. GFSI benchmarked standard, at the latest by the time of the certification decision. "		
GFSI BR PartII 5.27 - Management of Certification	The minimum requirements for Certification Bodies' considerations when organisations switch from another GFSI-recognised Certification Programmes are not clearly defined.	**partly**	General rules will be amended and rule change will be published in the next Technical News in December 2023. It will read: Producers moving between Certification Programmes Amended GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulations – Rules for QMS and GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulations – Rules for Individual Producers New Rules for QMS point 5.2.4 under 9.1 Additional Requirements for IFA V6 GFS and rules for IP point 5.2.4 under 8.2 Additional Requirements for IFA V6 GFS Certification Bodies shall complete a risk assessment on producers that switch between any GFSI-approved Certification Programmes to any GLOBALG.A.P. GFSI benchmarked standard. This risk assessment shall consider, but shall not be limited to,	The proposed corrective action on 2023/10/06 is adequate, and it will address the issue. Evidence of implementation will be reviewed within December 2023 to close. Closed: Published Technical News for Certification Bodies – Issue 03/2023 on 1st December 2023.	

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			such aspects as: • unannounced audits, • suspensions, • withdrawals, • cancellations etc by the previous Certification Programme. In all cases, audits of producers moving from another GFSI benchmarked Certification Programme to a GLOBALG.A.P. GFSI benchmarked standard shall always be considered as an initial audit and not a subsequent (recertification) audit.		
GFSI BR partIII AII, BI and BIII FSM25-Corrective Action	Complete requirement concerning the CA procedure relating to food safety non-conforming product is not defined (e.g. for non-conforming products, the standards Fruits and Vegetable V6-GFS P&C 11.01 and Aquaculture P&C AQ17.02 requirements are focused on NC correction and not on corrective actions, as defined by the GFSI Part IV Glossary of terms).	**partly**	Clarification will be published in the next Technical News on in December 2023. It will read: Corrective actions on non-conforming products Clarification for the non-conforming product procedure in FV-GFS 11.01 Principals and Criteria will be amended to include the text and will be published in the next Technical News in December 2023. It will read: IFA v6 P&C AQ-GFS 17.02 and IFA v6	Although the revision and publishing modalities are acceptable, the draft proposal does not include the clarification for the aquaculture standard requirements (P&C AQ17.02). Furthermore, the wording for integrating FV-GFS 11.01 must align more with the GFSI requirement FSM25 and glossary V.2020.1. e.g. reference to a CA "procedure" (not limited to a CA plan but including it), reference to a CA to eliminate the "cause", etc.	

			P&C FV-GFS 11.01 will be amended to include the text: Where the root cause is related to significant food safety reasons, the procedure in place shall be implemented and maintained for the determination and implementation of corrective actions. Such actions shall aim to eliminate the cause of a nonconformity to prevent reoccurrence.	Integration is required. **2023/10/13:** The proposed corrective action is adequate, and it will address the issue. Evidence of implementation will be reviewed within December 2023 to close. Closed: Published Technical News for Certification Bodies – Issue 03/2023 on 1st December 2023.	
GFSI BR partII 6.24- Site Audit Sampling	In some cases, the "option 2" CB audit records concerning group certification do not give clear evidence of which farm site is audited randomly (at least 25%) (e.g., files review GGN405XXXXXXX031 V6 GFS, GGN405xxxxxxxx322 V5.4.1 GFS).	**partly**	Correction has already been completed in the GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems with a drop down to the question: Is the site/member selected at random? Answer options are Yes or No Clarification will be published in the next Technical News on in December 2023 About 25% random selection of the sample in Option 2/Option 1 multisite producer with QMS (New) As it reads in Rules for QMS point	Correction accepted. Evidence of the correction implementation and a clarification of how the correction is communicated/explained to the CBs is requested. Integration is required. **2023/10/13:** The proposed corrective action is adequate, and it will address the issue. Evidence of implementation will be reviewed within December 2023 to close.	

			6.1.2.1.e for v6 GFS "at least 25% of the sample shall be randomly selected from the actual number of producer group members/production sites." We would like to remind CBs to record in GLOBALG.A.P. IT systems (AOH) the producer group members/production sites randomly selected.	Closed: Published Technical News for Certification Bodies – Issue 03/2023 on 1st December 2023.	

RESULTS OF THE PUBLIC STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

(To be completed after public consultation)

List of findings – public stakeholder consultation

			Answer	Recommendation from Benchmark leader	Decision from GFSI technical manager