

1 Background

This document provides guidance on increased flexibility in certification audit requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic, for certification bodies (CBs) providing SBP certification. This includes audits of Biomass Producers (BP)), Traders and End Users and associated Chain of Custody (CoC) systems. The approach taken includes remote auditing and extension of time periods.

SBP will continue to monitor the situation and revise the guidance, including extending timeframes, as required.

2 Reference documents

SBP Framework Standard 3: Certification Systems. Requirements for Certification Bodies Version 1.0

IAF Informative Document on the Management of Extraordinary Events or Circumstances Affecting ABs, CABs and Certified Organisations (IAF ID 3: 2011 - Issue 1)

ISO 19011:2018 Guidelines for auditing management systems

3 Guidance

3.1 General requirements for surveillance audits scheduled for period 13 March to 31 May

3.1.1 These audits may be undertaken in two parts.

Part 1 – A remote audit requiring the client to confirm:

- a) Any significant changes since the last audit;
- b) Any systematic failures since the last audit; and
- c) Receipt of any complaints or stakeholder comments since the last audit.

Part 2 – On-site audit (where required under SBP Framework Standard 3) by 30 June.

3.1.2 SBP Framework Standard 3 applies to the findings from both parts of these audits.

3.2 General requirements for main assessment audits scheduled for period 13 March to 31 May

3.2.1 An on-site audit is required as part of a main assessment prior to issuing a new certificate.

3.3 General requirements for reassessment audits scheduled for period 13 March to 31 May

3.3.1 Certificate validity may be extended for up to three months upon request by the CB to SBP where a reassessment audit is scheduled before 31 May.

3.4 Requirements for CBs conducting any audits scheduled for the period to 31 May

3.4.1 The CB should establish a documented policy and process, outlining the steps it intends to take where:

- a certified organisation is affected by the COVID-19 event; or

- the COVID-19 event affects the ability of the CB to undertake certification activities.
- 3.4.2 This documented policy and process should include an assessment of the risks of continuing certification.
- 3.4.3 The guidance in IAF ID 3: 2011 - Issue 1 section 3. “*Extraordinary event or circumstance affecting a certified organisation*” shall be applied.
- 3.4.4 Corrective actions for open non-conformities can be verified by audit techniques other than on-site verification in cases where the CB has assurance that these other techniques show sufficiently clear evidence to conduct the verification.
- 3.4.5 For valid certificates that have corrective actions pending verification, the verification deadline may be extended by a period of no more than three months, which should then be reviewed as the three-month period comes to an end, based on the current travel and medical advice.
- 3.4.6 The CB shall immediately inform SBP of any changes affecting a certificate.
- 3.4.7 CBs shall cooperate with ASI in the implementation of the guidance under IAF ID 3: 2011 - Issue 1 section 4. “*Extraordinary event or circumstance affecting the CAB.*”

3.5 Requirements for retaining records

- 3.5.1 The CB shall retain appropriate records of the decisions taken on this topic, and their justification. Examples are security warnings for cases where an audit was undertaken in two parts as described in 3.1, extension of certificate validity, evidence of risks mentioned in 3.4.2, evaluation of corrective actions, etc.