

ASC Group Certification Proposal – Overview

(NOT for consultation)

Group certification is designed to reduce the cost and maintain the quality of certification for producers who are Group members. Groups are comprised of a number of producers who come together in order to get certified. The Group Certification System is designed to reduce the cost of individual audits of each production site using internal inspectors that are evaluated by independent auditors from a conformity assessment body (CAB).

Below is a brief explanation of the proposal for an ASC Group Certification System. On the next page is a graphic that shows the connections between the components of the proposed system.

How Groups Work

A group is formed when a number of producers join together in order to become certified. The group is made up of two main elements: 1) the Group Management Body and 2) Group Members.

The Group Management Body is a central organization that includes members in its decision making and is responsible for maintaining the certification. Groups that are in conformity with ASC Standards may receive a single certificate that is issued to the Group Management Body. Maintaining the certificate is the key responsibility of the Group Management Body. To do this it is responsible for ensuring Group members are in conformity with ASC requirements, training Group members about the requirements of ASC Standards, managing the relationship with the CAB, recording all sales of certified product, and conducting internal inspections of the site or sites of each Group member. The Group Management Body may add or remove members based on the findings of internal inspections.

To ensure that these functions are carried out in a consistent manner, the Group Management Body maintains a written management system that describes each function. It also maintains centralized records of its work.

The CAB conducts audits of the Group. These audits include a thorough audit of the Group Management Body that includes its management system, its activities and its records. In addition, the

The proposed ASC Group Certification system includes four elements:

1. This overview document
2. *ASC Requirements for the Certification of Producer Groups (Group Certification)*
This is a document that has been developed for producer Groups and describes all the requirements for the Group Management Body.
3. *ASC Requirements for CABs*
This document contains a number of changes to be made to the ASC CAR which contains the requirements that CABs must meet to conduct audits of Groups.
4. *ASC Audit Report Template*
This report template includes additional elements that will need to be included for reports on Group audits.

CAB conducts audits of selected members and their production sites. The CAB selects sites for audit using a risk-based formula. Site audits verify the compliance of the members and the way in which the Group Management Body conducts its internal inspection to ensure reliability and consistency.

When a non-conformity is identified, the CAB raises a non-conformity against the Group Management Body. The Group Management Body is responsible for identifying the root cause and taking corrective and preventive actions to correct the non-conformity.

It is important to note that the requirements for groups included in this package for consultation supplement the requirements in ASC Standards and the CAR. Nothing in this proposal removes or replaces requirements that currently apply to individual certificate holders.

How the ASC Requirements for Groups Work

