

# MPS-Quality

## Certification criteria

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*If there are any doubts or lack of clarity, the Dutch version of the certification standard prevails.*

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The MPS-Quality Certification Standard consists of the following documents:

**MPS-Quality Certification criteria**

MPS-Quality Terms and Definitions

MPS Governance

Instructions for use of the uniform MPS-Vignette

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## 0. GENERAL PROVISIONS

### 0.1 Area of application

- a. The certification standard applies to ornamental and tree nursery products. The requirements relate to the quality of the products, the quality of the production process, information exchange with suppliers and customers and the internal organisation of the company, including quality policy, training and improvement management.
- b. The certificate holder is a grower of ornamental products and/or tree nursery products. In order to guarantee that production processes, products and services can satisfy the requirements mentioned in the certification standard, the certificate holder operates a quality system. The certificate holder must be able to demonstrate that the quality system being operated, and the application of that system, satisfy the conditions of the certification standard. The certificate holder cannot exclude any applicable sections of the company that fall within the direct sphere of influence of the MPS-Quality certification standard. All relevant company sections must be included in the assessment carried out by the certification body.
- c. Certification is carried out per legal entity.

### 0.2 Purpose

- a. The purpose of the certification standard is:
  1. to promote a recognisable market position of producers within the ornamental and tree nursery sector who manage the quality of ornamental products and the post-harvest processes involved in supplying these products in an effective and efficient manner;
  2. to stimulate improvements in quality management by growers of ornamental and/or tree nursery products;
  3. to reinforce the (high quality) image of the ornamental/tree nursery sector;
  4. to contribute to the improvement of quality control throughout the chain of production and sales of ornamental/tree nursery products.
- b. The certification standard contributes to the achievement of this objective by means of:
  1. setting the criteria for good quality and environmental management for producers of ornamental/tree nursery products in the form of specific conditions.
  2. including conditions in the certification standard that help reinforce good collaboration and harmonisation between suppliers and buyers within the chain of production and sales of ornamental and tree nursery products.
  3. issuing a collective quality mark and promoting recognition of the certification standard and this quality mark.
  4. stimulating improvements in the certification standard with the aim of further reinforcing the quality management of the participating companies and the ornamental/tree nursery sector as a whole.

### 0.3 Certification bodies

- a. Audits regarding the fulfilment of MPS-Quality and certification conditions are carried out by MPS or a certification body that has entered into a licence agreement with MPS in this regard.
- b. The certification bodies must employ the services of qualified auditors to carry out these audits. These auditors must:
  - have demonstrable knowledge of and experience in the ornamental/**tree nursery** sector. This must be supported by evidence from a completed horticultural training programme of at least MBO/HBO level (intermediate or higher vocational education) or equivalent, supplemented by at least two years of relevant work experience;
  - have knowledge relating to quality care;
  - have followed several days of training on the implementation of audits;
  - have carried out at least ten certification audits for product and/or system certification, or at least one initial certification audit or two follow-up audits for MPS-Quality as a trainee under the supervision of a qualified MPS-Quality auditor;
  - have a thorough knowledge of the MPS-Quality certification standard and who maintain that knowledge through participation in auditor meetings organised by MPS and through carrying out at least one initial certification audit or two follow-up audits for MPS-Quality each year.
  - have guaranteed neutrality.

### 0.4 Certification audit

- a. Before a certification audit is applied for, the applicant must have worked for at least three months in accordance with the requirements of MPS-Quality. The applicant must also have carried out internal audits (1.1), a customer satisfaction survey (2.2) and a supplier evaluation (3.1) before the certification audit takes place, all of which should be carried out in accordance with the certification standard. If it is observed at the beginning of the certification audit that one or more of these requirements have not been met, the audit will be halted. The financial consequences of halting the audit will be for the account of the applicant.
- b. During the initial assessment (certification audit), the certification body investigates whether the quality system of the certification applicant and the applicant's product satisfy the requirements set, as laid out in the certification standard.
- c. The initial assessment takes at least six hours. In cases of more than one location, the amount of extra time needed to visit and assess the entire company is determined in consultation with the inspection body.
- d. The combination of the follow-up audit for MPS-Quality with an audit for another certification scheme is permitted.
- e. The assessments take place by means of interviews with the management and/or employees of the company of the applicant, observations made at the company sites, the assessment of records and administrative data, and the assessment of products.
- f. The certification body will provide MPS with the following details within a week of the certificate being awarded:
  - the name of the company of the certificate holder as well as the trading name under which the company operates, if different;
  - the name of the person legally representing the company;

- the full address and place of business of the company of the certificate holder and any additional places of business of the company;
- the date on which the certificate holder was first registered as such.
- Scope

## 0.5 Follow-up audits

- a. The certificate holder undertakes to allow regular follow-up audits to be carried out by a certification body in order to assess whether the quality system and the products of the certificate holder still meet the requirements set in this certification standard, and whether the MPS-Quality logo is being used in accordance with the provisions of the scheme.
- b. The audit frequency is set at once every twelve months. MPS may at some point decide to increase this frequency should this appear necessary.
- c. An agreement is entered into between the certification body and the certificate holder regarding the implementation of follow-up audits.
- d. The follow-up audits take at least four hours each. In cases of more than one location, the amount of extra time needed to visit and assess the entire company is determined in consultation with the inspection body.
- e. The combination of the follow-up audit for MPS-Quality with an audit for another certification scheme is permitted.
- f. The certification body may decide that an additional follow-up audit is necessary, for example in response to observed shortcomings, or upon receipt of complaints about the certificate holder (see also 2.3, handling complaints).
- g. The audits take place by means of interviews with the management and/or employees of the company of the certificate holder, observations made at the company sites, the assessment of records and administrative data, and the assessment of products.

## 0.6 Thematic audits

- a. MPS may organise regular thematic audits as part of the follow-up audits, which serve to assess the operation of the elements of the certification standard. The audit themes will be determined by the Council of Experts.
- b. The certification body carries out these audits as part of the follow-up audits at no additional charge. The certificate holder must cooperate with these audits. The results of these thematic audits are reported to MPS by the certification body.

# 1. MANAGEMENT PROCESSES

## 1.1 Improvement management

### 1.1.1 Requirements for improvement management

#### A. *Preparing an improvement plan*

The participant should carry out internal audits before the certification audit takes place. After this, the company carries out internal audits at least once a year. The results can be used to check whether the current working methods and process descriptions are adequate. One can also check whether the requirements are adhered to. The outcomes of this audit are recorded using a checklist. These records are used for an improvement plan, to be drawn up annually.

In preparing the improvement plan, use is also made of information stemming from for example the customer satisfaction survey (see 2.2), the handling of complaints (see 2.3), and the procedure for harvesting, sorting and packing (see 3.2) **or the procedure for sorting, packing and delivering (see 4.9).**

The improvement management procedure is made up of at least the following elements:

1. A list of who evaluates which processes, and when (N.B. the evaluation may not be carried out by the person who is responsible for the process by virtue of his job)
2. Registration of the results of the internal audits;
3. The improvement plan consists of the following elements:
  - a. a description of modifications or points for attention for the coming year with regard to the MPS-Quality processes;
  - b. a plan of action describing the modifications that will be carried out and the points for attention that will be dealt with;
  - c. the person responsible for implementing the modifications or checking up on the points for attention.
  - d. Indicating the desired shelf life standard, for example following the VBN target value table (see appendix).

#### B. *Implementing the improvement plan*

Once a company has described all the processes in accordance with the MPS-Quality certification standard, these must then be carried out in the correct manner. The management ensures that the descriptions of the operating processes within the grower's company are communicated to the staff, understood and implemented. Operating processes are subject to change. It is therefore necessary to evaluate these processes regularly and modify them where appropriate. In this way, the company can learn from its experiences. This allows it to attain higher levels of quality. The evaluation and the resulting activities are recorded in the annual improvement plan.

When modifications have been made, they are included in the quality manual. During preparation of the improvement plan, a check is also made to see whether the modifications/points for attention from the previous year have actually been implemented or dealt with. Modified procedures must be signed for approval by the management.

## 1.2 Personnel & organisation

### 1.2.1 Requirements for personnel & organisation

#### A. *Preparing an personnel plan*

The personnel plan contains at least the following elements:

1. A table and/or organisation diagram, depicting the organisation and the various functions.
2. The tasks and responsibilities of staff members;
  - a. The grower has described in writing the responsible position for all processes for which MPS-Quality has set requirements
  - b. The tasks and responsibilities for each process have been made known within the organisation.
  - c. The training and experience required for each task is recording in writing.
3. Replacements in the event of absence;
  - a. The grower has set down in writing the function of replacements for each staff member in the event of absence.
4. Meeting structure. The following details are given for each type of meeting:
  - a. the purpose;
  - b. the participants;
  - c. the number of times per year / meeting frequency (daily, weekly, monthly, etc.)
  - d. where appropriate, the person responsible for the agenda and the minutes.
5. Performance appraisal interviews;
  - a. The grower will hold performance appraisal interviews at least once a year for those staff members with permanent employment contracts.
  - b. The interviews are conducted using a standard checklist.
  - c. The conclusions drawn from the last interview form the basis for the next interview.
  - d. The need for training is assessed during the performance appraisal interviews.

#### B. *Implementing the personnel plan*

The personnel plan is implemented in line with the prescribed procedures. The grower ensures that the staff members are familiar with job descriptions, tasks and responsibilities. The replacement procedure in the event of absence is described and regulated. The internal meeting structure is clear. The company applies this effectively. Performance appraisal interviews with all staff members with a permanent contract of employment form an important part of improving the company's performance.



## 2. SUPPORT PROCEDURES

### 2.1 Document management

#### 2.1.1 Requirements for document management

##### A. *Document management procedure*

The grower specifies procedures for document management.

This specification must include at least:

1. The operating process to which the document applies;
2. The length of time for which the document and records must be stored;
3. The place where the document and records are stored;
4. The document and record codes (see manual);
5. The place where the latest version of the document is kept for perusal by staff members;
6. The person responsible for managing the document;
7. The procedure followed for distributing modified procedures and documents.

##### B. *Implementing document management*

Document management is carried out in accordance with the specified procedure. The purpose, the procedure and the improvement plans are described and communicated.

### 2.2 Customer satisfaction

#### 2.2.1 Requirements for customer satisfaction

##### A. *Customer satisfaction survey procedures*

Every year, the grower prepares a plan for carrying out a customer satisfaction survey.

This plan must describe at least the following:

1. The information that the grower hopes to gain, including at least the satisfaction of the client regarding the product (and its quality), the service provision and the handling of complaints;
2. The target group of the survey (at least the five most important customers/contacts, unless it can be demonstrated that you have fewer than five customers);
3. The survey procedure;
4. The person responsible for the survey;
5. The period during which the survey takes place;

##### B. *Carrying out a customer satisfaction survey*

The participant should carry out a customer satisfaction survey before the certification audit takes place. After this, the company collects information in a structured manner at least once a year (if possible) from at least the five most important contacts/customers regarding their satisfaction with the quality of the product, the service provision and the handling of complaints (see also 2.3: Dealing with complaints)

To this end, the grower carries out a customer satisfaction survey in accordance with the specified procedure. The data gained from the customer satisfaction survey is recorded. The grower assesses the results of the customer satisfaction survey and discusses them with the members of staff concerned.

The improvement measures to be taken are implemented. The resulting modifications in working methods and operating processes are recorded and included in the improvement plan.

## 2.3 Dealing with complaints

### 2.3.1 Requirements for handling complaints

#### A. *Procedure for handling complaints*

The grower has prepared a written working method for the handling of complaints.

This working method must describe at least the following:

1. The names of customers/contacts who have lodged complaints;
2. The manner in which the complaints were recorded;
3. The manner in which the correction of the nonconformity was relayed to the contact;
4. The manner in which feedback was provided to the staff members concerned;
5. The analysis of the complaints, the sources of the nonconformities, the corrections and the corrective measures that are implemented at least once a year;
6. The person responsible for handling the complaint.

#### B. *Implementation of procedure for handling complaints*

The grower implements the complaints procedure in accordance with the specified procedure, taking the following points into account:

- a. Received complaints:
  - a. speedy handling of complaints;
  - b. initial contact must be made with the complaining party within one working day;
  - c. in this contact, the complaining party must be informed of the possibility to submit a complaint to the Central Reporting Point for Complaints, as well as of the applicable conditions.
- b. The corrective measures and any changes to processes or working methods are implemented on the basis of the complaints received or the analysis of the complaints. These can also be cultivation-technical measures that influence the shelf life. The members of staff concerned are kept informed of these changes.

### 3. ORNAMENTALS

Requirements from this chapter apply to companies with ornamentals.

#### 3.1 Purchasing

##### 3.1.1 Requirements for purchasing

###### A. *Purchasing procedures*

Critical cultivation material is purchased from suppliers who conform to the requirements specified by the grower. Own parental material is also subject to the purchasing procedures, only the administrative handling differs (entry control is carried out during the production of the parental material).

This working method must describe at least the following:

1. The critical cultivation material (bought-in parental material is always critical);
2. The requirements with which parental material and critical cultivation material must comply. This must at least describe the requirements for:
  - a. product quality;
  - b. traceability;
  - c. timely and correct delivery.
3. The product requirements to be defined must at least describe:
  - a. product specifications;
  - b. plant passport;
  - c. volume/quantity;
  - d. delivery date;
  - e. delivery conditions.
4. The assessment of the incoming batches and the recording method. In the case of nonconformities, a complaint will be lodged with the supplier. The registered complaints will be used in assessing the suppliers.
5. The supplier performance assessment (at least once a year).
6. The person responsible for assessments, monitoring and recording of suppliers and supplied products and services. Any steps taken in response to the assessment;
7. A list of suppliers preferred on the basis of their performance.

###### B. *Implementing the supplier performance assessment*

The grower works in accordance with the prescribed procedures.

The participant should carry out a supplier performance assessment before the certification audit takes place. After this, the company carries out a supplier performance assessment at least once a year. This should be carried out by the grower in line with the prescribed procedures.

The results of the supplier performance assessment and any (concluding) measures should be recorded.

The purchasing procedure specified by the grower should be adjusted on the basis of the results.

#### 3.2 Harvesting, sorting, packaging

##### 3.2.1 Requirements for harvesting, sorting and packaging

###### A. *Procedure for harvesting, sorting and packaging*

The grower prepares a working method for harvesting, sorting and packaging, and implements this working method.

This working method must describe at least the following:

1. all work involved in these processes;
2. the critical control points;
3. the manner in which order information is supplied;

4. product specifications;
5. quality control points; at least the following must be described:
  - a. how checks are made for each batch that the batch fulfils the set product specifications, that the supply information corresponds with the supplied product and that the information is reliable (complete, accurate and available in good time)
  - b. how this check is made demonstrable
  - c. which (demonstrable) corrective measures are taken in the event that nonconformities are detected
  - d. how these nonconformities are included in improvement management (see also 1.1 Improvement management).
6. the person responsible for the execution and monitoring of the work;
7. the place where the written working method is kept.

*B. Monitoring and cleaning plan*

Every year, the grower prepares:

1. A monitoring and maintenance plan for harvesting, sorting and packaging machinery.
2. A cleaning plan for cleaning all harvesting and sorting materials that come into contact with the product (e.g. barrels, pails etc.) and for the processing areas.

The monitoring and cleaning plan must at least describe the following:

1. the required work;
2. the frequency with which the work is carried out;
3. the person responsible for the execution and monitoring of the work;
4. how the work is recorded;
5. The place where the monitoring and cleaning plan is stored;

*C. Implementing the harvesting, sorting and packaging procedures and the monitoring and cleaning plan*

1. Information concerning orders, batches and specifications is provided verbally and/or in writing to the responsible staff members. The monitoring plan and the cleaning plan are provided in writing.
2. When harvested, sorted and packaged, the product complies with:
  - the applicable VBN specifications, unless otherwise agreed with the customer (in the case of trading through VBN auctions), or
  - the specific agreements such as those reached between the grower and his customer.
3. If it becomes apparent during the harvesting, sorting and packaging process that the product does not comply with the specifications agreed with the customer and the fault will be impossible to correct, you should contact the customer.
4. The applicable VBN specifications must be present on the grower's premises if the grower supplies to a VBN-affiliated auction. These specifications must be stored in a generally known and accessible place.
5. The grower must keep a record of the number of complaints relating to the supply information (for clock supply, this is the RI). The number of complaints must be reduced in conformity with the improvement plan (see 1.1, Improvement management).
6. The grower works in line with the prescribed procedures, the monitoring plan and cleaning plan.

## 3.3 Storage

### 3.3.1 Requirements for storage

#### A. *Storage procedure*

The grower prepares a working method for the storage of products. This working method must describe at least the following:

1. the storage conditions;
2. the maximum time between harvesting the products and their storage in the conditioned storage area;
3. the maximum storage period per product;
4. in the case of conditioned storage, a storage area monitoring plan must be available. The grower monitors the conditions and makes random checks in all the areas used for product storage.
5. the person responsible for storage and monitoring the storage areas.

#### B. *Implementing the storage procedure*

The grower stores the products in accordance with the specified procedure.

## 3.4 Sales

### 3.4.1 Requirements for sales

#### A. *Sales procedure*

The grower prepares a working method for the sales process.

This must describe at least the following:

1. registration of the sales orders;  
When issuing a quotation, accepting an order or signing a contract, the grower will record at least the following specification in the quotation, order confirmation or contract:
  - a. customer details;
  - b. numbers;
  - c. quality;
  - d. sorting specifications;
  - e. price;
  - f. delivery period;
  - g. packaging;
  - h. other specific delivery conditions.
2. the method by which the feasibility of the order is assessed;
3. if during the period between sale and delivery it becomes evident that it will be impossible to meet the agreed deadlines, the customer should be contacted with a view to reaching a new agreement.
4. deciding which orders must be confirmed in writing;
5. the person responsible for order registration, registration of specifications, order confirmations, response to nonconformities and internal transfers;

Within the sales process, the grower will apply the applicable VBN specifications unless otherwise agreed with the customer.

#### B. *Implementing the sales procedure*

The grower works in line with the prescribed procedures.

Customer orders are always registered along with full details of their specifications for internal administration purposes. Interim changes to the delivery agreements are dealt with in accordance with the sales procedure.

## 3.5 Delivery

### 3.5.1 Requirements for delivery

#### A. *Delivery procedure*

The grower prepares a working method for the delivery process.

This must describe at least the following:

1. The activities to be carried out:
  - a. preparing the batch for dispatch in accordance with the customer's specifications;
  - b. the preparation of a delivery note/delivery document to accompany the batch;
  - c. the addition of other documents (~~e.g. GP cards~~) to the batch as appropriate;
  - d. carrying out random checks on each batch to monitor adherence to product specifications, presentation and numbers;
  - e. checking the delivery note/delivery document;
  - f. instructing responsible personnel;
  - g. correcting nonconformities;
  - h. contacting the person responsible for sales if the nonconformity cannot be corrected;
  - i. supplying the correct EAB;
  - j. storing a copy of the EAB for at least one year in the interests of traceability;
  - k. protecting the products during transport to assure their quality;
  - l. using modes of transport that prevent possible reductions in the quality of the product.
  - m. providing the logistics provider with the necessary documentation;
  - n. providing any necessary instructions concerning delivery of the products.
2. The person responsible for deliveries.

#### B. *Implementing the delivery procedure*

The grower works in line with the prescribed working method and carries out the specified checks.

These checks involve:

- checking the batch ready for delivery against the order;
- checking the delivery note against the batch ready for delivery.

## 3.6 Vase/shelf life test

### 3.6.1 Requirements for the vase/shelf life test

#### A. *Procedure for carrying out vase/shelf life tests*

Four times a year, the grower/producer is obliged to carry out a vase/shelf life test if there is year-round end product availability, whereby all seasons are represented in the test pattern (i.e., 1 test every 3 months). For seasonal crops, a minimum of 2 tests need to be carried out during each harvest season. The grower prepares a working method for the execution of the vase/shelf life test (see appendix Guidelines on shelf life tests, or [www.vbn.nl](http://www.vbn.nl)).

This specification must describe at least the following:

1. The products/mixed/arrangements that have been subjected to vase/shelf life tests. If several cultivars are involved, there is no obligation to carry out vase/shelf life tests on all products and varieties. The grower must use his expectations and experience to select products or varieties for vase/shelf life tests. He or she explains this selection in the quality manual.
2. The minimum expected value in terms of case/shelf life (use can be made of the target value for vase life and shelf life for house plants (see appendix));
3. The test conditions (preferably using the VBN test protocols) giving details of at least: the test phases, lighting values, air humidity and temperature.

4. The evaluation criteria that determine the ornamental value (preferably based on the VBN vase/shelf life chart);
5. The test audit;
6. The test record;
7. The size of the random sample, the frequency and the duration of the vase/shelf life test;

<b>Product group</b>	<b>Sample size</b>
Cut flowers	at least 2 x 5 stems
Small plants (< 17 cm)	at least 6 plants
Large plants (≥ 17 cm)	at least 3 plants

8. At least once a year, a reference vase/shelf life test will be carried out by an independent agency with demonstrable experience with carrying out vase/shelf life tests in accordance with VBN test protocols.
9. The person responsible for carrying out the vase/shelf life tests;
10. The person responsible for improvements if the test results prove unsatisfactory;

**B. Carrying out a vase/shelf life test**

The grower carries out the vase/shelf life test in accordance with the specified procedure.

The following points of departure apply:

1. The company will increase the frequency of the vase/shelf life tests in the event of problems relating to the vase/shelf life during cultivation and/or storage of the products.
2. If the vase/shelf life is shorter than the expected value (a negative result), the company will investigate the reason for this and implement improvement measures.
3. The company indicates how the results of the vase/shelf life tests will be communicated. The company will also indicate how the results will be made available to the customers. The results will in any case be made available to customers upon request.

## 4. TREE NURSERY

Requirements from this chapter apply to companies with tree nursery crops.

### 4.1 Purchasing

#### 4.1.1 Requirements for purchasing

##### A. *Drawing up the purchasing working method*

Critical cultivation material is purchased from acceptable suppliers. Own parent material is also subject to the purchasing procedures; only the administrative handling process differs (entry control is carried out during the production of the parent material). The certificate holder (buyer) makes arrangements with the supplier (vendor) about how and under which conditions the product will be supplied. These arrangements are set out in writing in a purchase agreement. Trading companies have a purchasing procedure.

The working method adopted must describe at least the following:

1. The critical cultivation material (bought-in parent material is always critical);
2. The requirements the bought-in product must meet and what is being checked by the certificate holder in the entry control. Product requirements are as follows:
  - a. The supplied product complies with the most recent quality descriptions of the Raad voor de Boomkwekerij (Tree Nursery Council) for the culture group in question, the most recent VVFN terms and conditions, the most recent VBN regulations, the most recent HBN terms and conditions or any supplementary requirements agreed in writing;
  - b. The supplied product complies with the purchase agreement requirements;
  - c. The product is true to species and true to variety;
  - d. The product has a good root system;
  - e. Visibly, the product is virtually free of pests and diseases;
  - f. Upon delivery, the product is 100% visibly free of root weeds and virtually free of other weeds. Product origin is known and can be traced to the supplier up to 1 year after delivery (verifying presence of supplier document/delivery note and in so far as applicable a Naktuinbouw certificate or a document from an inspection body accepted by the Naktuinbouw such as in Denmark or France);
  - g. The product satisfies the agreed length and thickness sizes;
  - h. The product is accompanied by a supplier document/delivery note or packing note and/or where applicable a plant passport. Furthermore, the product is correctly labelled or includes some other means of identification;
  - i. Packaging is sound and where applicable information is enclosed with the product;
  - j. Batches are uniform.
3. The purchasing data that has to be recorded.

The purchase agreement shall contain the following:

  - a. date of purchase agreement;
  - b. name and address of buyer;
  - c. name of vendor;
  - d. if the buyer and vendor have agreed terms and conditions other than the most recent version of the HBN terms and conditions, the purchase agreement must specify which ones are in force;
  - e. number of plants to be supplied;
  - f. description of the product (name of species and variety, quality and size);
  - g. price, including certification costs;
  - h. whether it concerns direct delivery or supply on demand;
  - i. license fees (if applicable);
  - j. lifting date (if applicable);



- k. exporting country (if applicable);
  - l. specific requirements of the buyer.
4. Evaluation of the batches received and registration method. In case of nonconformities, a complaint is submitted to the supplier. Complaints logged are used in the evaluation of the suppliers.
  5. Performance appraisal of suppliers (supplier evaluation) (minimum of once a year).
  6. The person responsible for evaluation, monitoring and registration of suppliers and supplied products and services. Any action following on from the evaluation;
  7. A list of preferred suppliers based on their performance.

*B. Rules for the purchase of plants for direct sales by MPS-Quality certificate holders*

(These rules do not apply to plants that have been grown on at an MPS-Quality company for one growing season.)

1. All suppliers of plants to an MPS-Quality certificate holder are either themselves MPS-Quality certificate holder or registered with the participating company as an acceptable supplier.
2. When purchasing from new domestic suppliers, the certificate holder verifies this supplier in relation to the following criteria: whether this supplier complies with the most recent quality descriptions of the Raad voor de Boomkwekerij for the culture group in question, the most recent VVFN terms and conditions, the most recent VBN regulations, the most recent HBN terms and conditions or any supplementary requirements agreed in writing and if they are affiliated to Naktuinbouw (if applicable). A visit to this supplier must also be scheduled.
3. For "acceptable suppliers trade" the following applies: acceptable suppliers must be on a list of acceptable suppliers, visits must be scheduled and demonstrably conducted within 3 years (per year min. 30%).
4. For "acceptable suppliers of plant material (for cultivation)" the following applies: acceptable suppliers must be on a list of acceptable suppliers, suppliers must demonstrably be assessed but do not have to be visited.
5. The MPS-Quality certificate holder assesses suppliers who account for 80% of the total procurement costs. The MPS-Quality certificate holder creates a ranking from the biggest supplier in terms of purchase amount the smallest supplier. Based on this list, the MPS-Quality certificate holder assesses their suppliers in descending order from big to small until 80% have been assessed. The small suppliers who constitute 20% of the procurement costs are, therefore, not assessed.
6. An acceptable supplier complies with the following requirements:
  - a. the supplier is registered with the Naktuinbouw (where applicable);
  - b. for plots of land not liable for inspection, the supplier has an PCN-free certificate;
  - c. the supplier complies with the most recent quality descriptions of the Raad voor de Boomkwekerij for the culture group in question, the most recent VVFN terms and conditions, the most recent VBN regulations, the most recent HBN terms and conditions or any supplementary requirements agreed in writing, unless otherwise agreed (set out in writing in the purchase agreement);
  - d. Health and Safety and environmental issues are addressed during a visit;
  - e. the product is traceable from purchasing through to delivery;
  - f. the supplier carries out final inspections;
  - g. lifting, storage and delivery, including transport, carried out in a controlled manner;
  - h. the supplier offers a high degree of delivery reliability, i.e., delivery according to specifications;

- i. if the supplier is unable to deliver according to the specifications, the supplier will contact the customer in advance;
  - j. further aspects to be assessed: delivery period, quality, service and possibly the price.
- 7. Acceptable suppliers are themselves not entitled to use the MPS-Quality mark.
- 8. If the product comes from abroad (outside the Netherlands), a supplier evaluation is also necessary. Assessments should be made on the basis of: delivery note, delivery reliability (in accordance with specifications), self-imposed transport requirements and complaints received (in accordance with the complaints procedure).

#### C. *Implementation of purchasing working method*

The certificate holder works in accordance with the established purchasing working method. The certificate holder must carry out a supplier evaluation before the certification audit. Thereafter, a supplier evaluation is carried out by the company at least once per year. This must be done by the certificate holder in accordance with the established purchasing working method. The suppliers of plant material which together provide 80% of the total purchasing of the certificate holder are assessed by the certificate holder annually in terms of ability to comply with the terms and conditions of purchase as per the suppliers' delivery performance check list (on price, quality and delivery period), complaints forms and registrations of inspections. The outcome of this evaluation, any action taken and how this is dealt with are logged (whether they are an acceptable supplier or not).

On the basis of the results, the purchasing working method drawn up by the company should be adapted.

## 4.2 Contract cultivation

### 4.2.1 Terms and conditions for contract cultivation

#### A. *Drawing up the contract cultivation working method*

Plant material sold under the certificate holder's name but grown under contract must also be produced responsibly. In order to properly manage this, the certificate holder must ensure the following:

1. Plant material in possession of the contractor
 

If it concerns a delivery contract whereby the contractor retains ownership of the plants until the batch is delivered to the contracting party, the requirements imposed on this form of contract cultivation are the same as those for acceptable suppliers as stated under 4.1.1 B (Rules for purchase of plants for direct sales by MPS-Quality certificate holders) in this certification standard.
2. Plant material in possession of the certificate holder
 

If the certificate holder remains the owner of the plants during cultivation, the following requirements are imposed on this form of contract cultivation:

  - a. The certificate holder has a written contract in which the arrangements between the certificate holder and contractor are recorded. This contract is signed by both parties.
  - b. The certificate holder has paper work from all contract growers which includes the following:
    - A copy of a research statement (formerly known as PCN-free certificate) of the plot of land concerned on which the contract cultivation takes place;
    - The soil type where the crops are grown (if relevant);

- Copy of spraying licence;
  - Crop protection records;
  - Fertiliser records;
  - Confirmation of endorsement of the Working Conditions Act and that (if necessary) a risk assessment and evaluation has been carried out.
3. Every year the certificate holder spot checks their contract growers and can demonstrate the results of this. This includes at least the following:
    - a. on time delivery;
    - b. honouring agreements;
    - c. product quality;
    - d. cultivation support;
    - e. handling of complaints;
    - f. payment behaviour;
    - g. compliance with most recent HBN terms and conditions;
    - h. compliance with the collective labour agreement (CAO);
    - i. compliance with other laws and regulations (amongst others, Mestbeleid (fertiliser policy), other organic fertilisers come under the BOOM decree (Besluit Overige Organische Meststoffen), analysis reports are available, spray equipment maintenance carried out, mandatory testing has been carried out, crop protection storage cabinet meets statutory requirements, permits are in order, risk assessment and evaluation has been carried out).
  4. The number of contract growers to be checked is as follows:
    - a. In the case of 1 to 5 contract growers, 1 is checked;
    - b. In the case of 5 to 10 contract growers, 2 are checked;
    - c. In the case of more than 10 contract growers, 3 are checked.

*B. Implementation of contract cultivation working method*

The certificate holder works in accordance with the established contract cultivation working method.

The certificate holder must carry out a contractor evaluation at least once a year. This must be done by the certificate holder in accordance with the established contract cultivation working method.

The results of the contractor evaluation and any action taken and the way in which it is dealt with must be recorded.

On the basis of the results, the contract cultivation working method drawn up by the company should be adapted.

### 4.3 Soil

1. The certificate holder can show which plot of land the batch in question comes from, including specification of soil type, for batches cultivated outdoors.
2. Crop rotation techniques are applied so that good soil quality and diversity of soil organisms are established and maintained.
3. For crops grown in pots or containers, RHP potting compost is used. If purchased RHP potting compost is blended at the request of the MPS-Quality certificate holder, the customer must demonstrate that the potting compost originally had RHP status.
4. If the use of soil supply is required, RAG-approved soil is used.
5. If RHP potting compost is not used, the producer of the potting compost must supply RHP potting compost within two years. To this end, the producer must submit a declaration of intent to the MPS-Quality certificate holder. Until such time, the potting compost producer

must satisfy minimum requirements which can be requested from the certification bodies or Stichting RHP.

#### 4.4 Integrated pest management

1. The certificate holder implements integrated pest management and complies with the regulations laid out in the AMvB (Order or Council) pertaining to crop protection (decree pertaining to principles of integrated pest management).
2. The certificate holder ideally makes use of mechanical weed control, applies the environmental benchmark or the environmental indicator MPS-MIND and takes preventive measures to combat root weeds using an operational cleaning plan.
3. In relation to crop protection and weed control, the following has been provided for by the certificate holder:
  - a. if, when deploying chemical crop protection agents, there is a choice between locally administering chemical crop protection agents and administering chemical crop protection agents over the entire crop, the former is selected.
  - b. if, when deploying chemical crop protection agents, there is a choice between seed treatment or the treatment of planting, potting or cutting material on the one hand, and crop treatment on the other, seed treatment or the treatment of planting, potting or cutting material is preferred;
  - c. if there is an option to use low dosing systems for weed control, this will be selected;
  - d. the contractor adheres to the regulations set out in the Activities Decree in terms of crop protection. This means, amongst other things, careful and correct spraying techniques and observation of crop-free zones;
  - e. before chemical soil disinfection can be carried out, the soil must have been inspected for root knot nematode (*Meloidogyne hapla*) and root lesion nematode (*Pratylenchus penetrans*), and this must have a positive outcome (presence of nematodes);

#### 4.5 Fertilisation

When using artificial fertilisers or animal manure the certificate holder must comply with the following requirements:

1. The certificate holder complies with the prevailing standards of the Mestbeleid (fertiliser policy);
2. When using animal manure, the determined spreading/application period for animal manure must be taken into account by the certificate holder (Decree on the Use of Animal Manure);
3. When using other organic fertilisers such as sewage sludge, compost or black soil, the certificate holder will abide by the regulations outlined in the BOOM decree;
4. The certificate holder complies with the requirements of the Activities Decree with respect to fertilisation.

#### 4.6 Selection

During cultivation, the certificate holder continually inspects the crop for intermingling, species and varietal purity, whether or not the crop is true to species/variety and for the presence of pests and diseases. Anomalous plants are continually removed from the crop or marked.

## 4.7 Lifting

The certificate holder will ensure that:

1. after lifting, products do not deteriorate in quality (in the field or during internal transport) because of drying out or leaching;
2. lifted products are virtually free of damage;
3. plants are lifted at the correct time unless other arrangements have been made with the customer. The certificate holder must disclose in the agreement the consequences lifting at the wrong time can have on product quality. (This requirement is not relevant to perennials and plants grown in pots or containers);
4. during lifting a method is used to prevent intermingling of batches.

## 4.8 Storage

### 4.8.1 Conditions for storage

#### *A. Drawing up the storage working method*

1. In order to facilitate an optimum regrowth/strike rate, the certificate holder has a written work instruction for storage, heeling in and overwintering of their products, when under own management. The work instruction includes the following aspects:
  - a. a description of the heeling-in process (direction of the heeling-in bed; how to avoid the heeling-in bed from getting too wet; soil type; is the heeling-in bed out of the wind) and/or storage in the warehouse (avoiding a batch being uncovered when stored; draught prevention; maintenance of relative humidity; ethylene-free storage);
  - b. how to prevent drying out;
  - c. how to prevent batches from getting mixed together during storage;
  - d. how the correct storage temperature can be maintained (preventing overheating);
  - e. how to avoid infestation by pest and diseases;
  - f. when inspections for infestations are carried out;
  - g. how the inspections are recorded;
  - h. how hygiene is safeguarded during storage;
  - i. how ethylene-free storage is ensured.
2. With heeling in, the heeling-in beds must have been sampled once every 3 years for the presence of root knot nematodes and root lesion nematodes or clean sand must be used (or the heeling-in bed is located on sandy soil). If nematodes are found in the sample, measures must be taken: ensure that the heeling-in bed is always made free of nematodes (disinfection or apply new soil) or relocate the heeling-in bed.
3. The heeling-in bed must have proper drainage.
4. If products are stored elsewhere, the certificate holder has set out in a contract with the cold storage company which criteria are being checked and who carries out the inspection. It also sets out that the cold storage company will log nonconformities and report them to the certificate holder.
5. The person in charge of storage and inspection of the storage areas.

#### *B. Implementation of storage working method*

The certificate holder stores products in accordance with the established working method.

## 4.9 Sorting, packing and delivering

### 4.9.1 Conditions for sorting, packing and delivering

#### A. *Sorting, packing and delivering*

1. Before delivery, the certificate holder carries out a final inspection of the batches, at a time when the plants can still be inspected, and checks whether the necessary administrative records are available. The final inspection must demonstrably have been carried out. The product is checked against the following product requirements. The requirements specified in this paragraph apply to all tree nursery crops.  
Product requirements are as follows:
  - The supplied product complies with the most recent quality descriptions of the Raad voor de Boomkwekerij (Tree Nursery Council) for the culture group in question, the most recent VVFN terms and conditions, the most recent VBN regulations, the most recent HBN terms and conditions or any supplementary requirements agreed in writing;
  - The supplied product complies with the purchase agreement requirements;
  - The product is true to species and true to variety;
  - The product has a good root system;
  - Visibly, the product is virtually free of pests and diseases;
  - Upon delivery, the product is 100% visibly free of root weeds and virtually free of other weeds. Product origin is known and can be traced to the supplier up to 1 year after delivery (verifying presence of supplier document/delivery note and in so far as applicable a Naktuinbouw certificate or a document from an inspection body accepted by the Naktuinbouw such as in Denmark or France);
  - The product satisfies the agreed length and thickness sizes;
  - The product is accompanied by a supplier document/delivery note or packing note and/or where applicable a plant passport. Furthermore, the product is correctly labelled or includes some other means of identification;
  - Packaging is sound and where applicable information is enclosed with the product;
  - Batches are uniform.
2. When sorting rootstocks, these must be kept for as short a time as possible in the sorting room to prevent drying out (compromise between good working temperature and good temperature for the rootstocks).
3. The certificate holder delivers in accordance with the specifications and is therefore in possession of:
  - a written purchase/exchange agreement (2.1 describes what has to be included in the purchase agreement);
  - any customer-specific requirements such as soil type, auction requirements or municipal specifications and requirements.
4. The packaging method is described in the purchase agreement, or reference is made to standard packaging method (framework contract; general description).
5. Packaging is adequate and in accordance with the customer's requirements.
6. All batches to be delivered are accompanied by a delivery note with the correct information about the product. The delivery note shall contain at least the following information:
  - name of supplier;
  - buyer's name;
  - delivery address;
  - date;
  - Naktuinbouw registration number;
  - name of species and variety of the product;
  - total number of plants.
7. Batches are labelled individually.

8. The certificate holder informs the customer in the event of changes in the purchase agreement (for example, changes in quantities, type, sizing, time of delivery) and logs them.
9. At the time of delivery, the certificate holder factors in the viability of the plan as a point of attention.
10. The supplied product is uniform.
11. Container products are sufficiently moist and visibly free of moss and weeds upon delivery.

*B. Drawing up an audit plan and cleaning plan*

Every year the certificate holder makes:

3. An audit and maintenance plan for all used equipment.
4. A cleaning plan for cleaning all sorting materials that come into contact with the product (packaging, buckets, etc.) and for the handling areas.
5. The audit plan and cleaning plan shall set out the following:
  6. necessary work;
  7. how often the work is carried out;
  8. the person responsible for carrying out and inspecting the work;
  9. record-keeping of the work done;
  10. repository for the audit plan and cleaning plan.

*C. Implementation of working method for sorting and packing, and cleaning plan and audit plan*

1. Information about orders, batches and specifications is given orally and/or in writing to the employees responsible. A written copy of the cleaning and audit plan is made available.
2. The product complies with the following after sorting and packing:
  - the prevailing specifications of the Raad voor de Boomkwekerij, unless otherwise agreed with the customer.
  - or the specifications as agreed upon between the certificate holder and their customer.
7. If during the sorting, packing and delivery process it emerges that the product does not comply with the terms agreed upon with the customer and these cannot be rectified, you must contact the customer.
8. The certificate holder must keep a record of the number of complaints filed in relation to supply information. The number of complaints must be reduced in accordance with the improvement plan (see 1.1, Improvement management).
9. The certificate holder works in accordance with the established working method, the cleaning plan and audit plan.

## 4.10 Transport

In order to avoid a decline in quality during transport, the certificate holder must take the following minimum measures:

1. the product is at all times covered to prevent drying out, leaching and freezing during transport; if this does not happen, there must be a logical explanation why this has not been done;
2. in order to prevent damage in transit the product always has adequate packaging and any loading and unloading operations are carried out carefully;
3. the products are never transported together with vegetables or fruit in order to prevent ethylene damage.
4. if transport has been contracted out, the transport company must have been informed of the aforementioned points.

#### 4.11 Management of products with nonconformities

1. The certificate holder ensures that products with nonconformities are not used unwittingly. In the unlikely event that a product from a certificate holder does not comply with the product requirements of the quality label, the company must make express reference to this on the delivery document.
2. Products with nonconformities are clearly identified.
3. Provision is made for responsibility and decision-making powers in terms of how to deal with products with nonconformities.
4. With respect to products with nonconformities the decision maker has the following options:
  - a. the product can be reworked or modified to comply with the specified requirements;
  - b. the product, either repaired or not, can be accepted with special permission;
  - c. the product can be reclassified for alternative uses;
  - d. the product can be rejected or destroyed.



## 5. MPS-QUALITY SANCTION REGULATIONS

<b>1 CERTIFICATION AUDIT</b>		
<b>1.0</b> The requirements as stated in the MPS-Quality certification standard must be fulfilled.	More than five minor or at least 1 major nonconformity observed.	Certificate is not awarded (certification audit). Participant must take demonstrable corrective measures within 3 months.
	A maximum of five minor nonconformities observed.	Warning: the certificate is awarded under the condition of the resolution of the shortcomings by means of corrective measures within 3 months.
<b>1.1</b> Corrective measures must have been carried out demonstrably within the specified period.	Corrective measures have not been carried out demonstrably within the specified period.*	Warning. A period of two weeks is specified in order to make the corrective measures demonstrable after all. *
<b>1.2</b> Corrective measures must have been carried out demonstrably within the specified period.	Corrective measures have not been carried out within the specified period.*	The certificate is not awarded/is withdrawn. The agreement will be temporarily suspended until the corrective measures have been demonstrably carried out. **
<b>1.3</b> Modifications to the certification standard must be implemented by the participant within the specified period.	Modifications have not been implemented by the participant within the specified period.	The certificate is withdrawn. The agreement will be temporarily suspended until the corrective measures have been demonstrably carried out.**
<b>1.4</b> Corrective measures/ implementation of the modifications must be demonstrated within 6 months in the event of a temporary suspension of the agreement.	The corrective measures/ implementation of the modifications have not been demonstrated within the 6-month period.	The agreement is dissolved.

Major Nonconformities Forms (major NCFs) are completed if elements of the standard are not documented and/or implemented (to a significant degree), or if elements of the standard are not documented/implemented in accordance with the certification standard (or the spirit of the standard), resulting in structural shortcomings.

Minor Nonconformity Forms (minor NCFs) are noted if elements of the standard are partially undocumented and/or implemented, or if elements of the standard are not documented/implemented in accordance with the certification standard (or the spirit of the standard), resulting in possible structural shortcomings in the long term.

\* Demonstrable correction means that evidence is made available to MPS, If the nature of the corrective measures necessitates verification on site before the certificate can be awarded, the cost of this work will be charged to the participant. The participant will be informed of this in advance.

\*\*The temporary suspension of the agreement will last no longer than 6 months. If corrective steps have not been taken demonstrably, the agreement will then be dissolved.