MPS-ABC Certification Standard

Certification Criteria

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In case of doubt or ambiguity, the Dutch version of the certification standard prevails.

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

- **MPS-ABC Certification Standard**
- MPS-ABC Ground Rules
- Terms and Definitions
- MPS Governance
- MPS-List prohibited active substances
- MPS-ABC Selection Sampling Method

MPS-ABC

Purpose of the standard

By facilitating the keeping of usage records on the environmental themes of crop protection agents, fertilisers, energy, waste and water, MPS-ABC provides the participant with insights into its relative environmental performance compared with breeders of similar products under similar production circumstances. Usage is expressed in points, which subsequently leads to an A+, A, B or C qualification. In addition, the participant gains an insight into its usage levels in the form of tables and graphs. Not only does this make its environmental performance transparent, but MPS-ABC also provides a management system that helps companies to become more sustainable.

Relationship to other MPS standards

Breeders can implement MPS-ABC as an autonomous standard, but they can also use it as a step up to participation in other MPS standards to make their own performance more sustainable and verifiable. For example, MPS-ABC is the underlying certificate for obtaining MPS-GAP and MPS-SQ certification, both of which contain production requirements in relation to traceability, environmental protection, safety and hygiene (MPS-GAP) and good working conditions (MPS-SQ). In addition, MPS-ABC forms the basis for participating in MPS-ProductProof, which enables breeders to demonstrate that their ornamental products are free from certain active substances and therefore comply with retailers' specific requirements.

Accreditation

This certification standard was assessed by the Dutch Accreditation Council against ISO 17065. The certification bodies that inspect and certify on behalf of MPS are accredited to ISO 17065.

MPS-ABC criteria

A. Basic criteria for participation in MPS-ABC

A.1	**The Certification Body (CB) must be in possession of a copy of the quotation and the tripartite agreement concerning participation in MPS-ABC, signed by the participant.**
Companies may only participate in MPS-ABC after completing the application process via the CB and submitting a signed copy of the quotation for participation in MPS-ABC.	
A.2	**MPS-ABC is a company record-keeping system**
A.2.1	MPS-ABC is a qualification encompassing the entire company based on its usage records. Therefore, companies cannot participate solely on the basis of an individual crop, a selected number of crops, part of a crop or a single site within the company. Mixed-operation companies must keep records of usages across all their agricultural operations.
A.2.2	If a company has several locations, usages for these sites are recorded in separate sets of sub-records under the same MPS number.
A.2.3	Companies unable to distinguish between usages in agricultural and non-agricultural operations in their accounts (e.g. energy usage for offices or residential units) must record their total usage figures.
A.2.4	In situations in which it is possible to clearly distinguish between usages in agricultural and non-agricultural operations, MPS reserves the right, should the reliability of the audits give due cause to do so, to require companies to also keep usage records for non-agricultural operations.
A.3	**Participation of divisions of companies with separate accounts**
If part of a company operates as a separate legal entity and keeps completely separate accounts, that part of the company may participate in MPS-ABC certification independently and under a separate MPS number. Applications in this regard must be submitted to MPS for approval via the CB. MPS does not regard separate receipts (invoices) as separate accounts.	
A.4	**The participant must meet its payment obligation at all times**
By signing the MPS-ABC participation agreement, the participant enters into a payment obligation. Participants are informed about the participation costs via annual invoices and any relevant interim communication. The participant is responsible for ensuring that its payment obligation is met at all times.	
A.5	**The company must have a complaints register**
All participants are required to maintain a register of complaints/comments relating to MPS issues which they receive from other participants, traders, auctions, etc. This register must also include details of any corrective measures taken pursuant to complaints or comments.	

B. General technical criteria

Technical standard requirements that are not defined/recorded in the MPS record-keeping tool.

B.1	**Records for rented and contract cultivation sites**	
B.1.1	The participant must apply for a separate set of sub-records in the MPS record-keeping environment for every rented or contract cultivation site. ** See MPS-ABC Method and Ground Rules for the number of sites per sub-record*	
B.1.2	For every rented or contract cultivation site, details of which crops or crop groups are being grown, including surface areas, and, every four weeks, usage for the environmental themes of crop protection products, fertilisers, energy and water must be recorded in sub-records.	
B.2	**Crop protection agents and active substances**	
B.2.1	No agents containing active substances included on the MPS-List prohibited active substances may be used or stored at the participating company.	
	i	Agents containing active substances on the MPS-List prohibited active substances may also not be used by third parties.
	ii	Agents containing active substances on the MPS-List prohibited active substances may also not be used by the participant or third parties for disinfecting packaging materials.
	iii	If there is no appropriate collection point or waste disposal site in the region for disposing of banned or outdated products, these products, labelled as outdated, may be temporarily stored in a locked store.
B.2.2	Only crop protection agents authorised for use in the country of use may be used.	
	i	Agents that are not authorised in the country of use may also not be used by third parties.
	ii	Agents that are not authorised in the country of use may also not be used by the participant or third parties for disinfecting packaging materials.
	iii	If there is no appropriate collection point or waste disposal site in the region for disposing of banned or outdated products, these products, labelled as outdated, may be temporarily stored in a locked store.
B.3	**Integrated Pest Management Plan**	
Participants must have a documented Integrated Pest Management Plan (IPM plan) consisting of at least: A documented IPM plan does not apply to participants who only collect products from nature.		
	i	A description of the pests (including insects, diseases and weeds) of economic relevance to each crop or crop group.
	ii	For each pest, illustrations should be available* to aid identification of the pests, including symptoms in crops affected, conditions under which the pest can spread rapidly and the economic threshold for taking measures. ** This can take the form of a reference to an online database with images of pests, posters or other available material, for example.*
	iii	Description of possible and implemented preventive measures.
	iv	Description of pest monitoring methods and records of checks carried out.
	v	Management methods must be recorded along with their purpose.
	vi	Description of measures to reduce the development of resistance.
B.4	**Natural products**	
B.4.1	Collection of natural products is only permitted with official permission from the owner. Documentary evidence of this must be present at the company (including material collected by third parties) and must at least include the following:	

	i	That permission has been granted for products to be collected.
	ii	For which products and associated quantities permission has been granted.
	iii	A declaration that no crop protection agents and/or fertilisers have been used on these products.
B.4.2	The area for which permission has been granted to collect natural products is not included in the MPS-ABC records.	
B.4.3	For the collection of natural products or the use of natural products collected by third parties, the participant must keep a mass balance which at least records the following:	
	i	Own collected material
	ii	Material purchased, broken down by supplier
	iii	Material sold, broken down by purchaser
B.5	**Purchase of additional end products**	
B.5.1	Additional end products purchased in order to supplement the participant's own production and that are resold under the participant's own MPS-ABC qualification must at least have the same MPS-ABC qualification as the participant's company qualification.	
B.5.2	Additional end products purchased which have a lower qualification than the participant's own company may only be resold if this lower qualification is visible to the purchaser (label with MPS number or on an invoice). This must be demonstrable by a conclusive accounting of purchased end products, which includes at least: MPS number of supplier, qualification at the time of purchase, number of products purchased and a copy of delivery receipt.	
B.5.3	Additional plant material purchased for growing on as part of the participant's cultivation process must:	
	i	Have at least the same MPS-ABC qualification, OR
	ii	Be grown at the participating company for at least three months (if the total crop cycle is shorter than three months, at least two thirds of the crop cycle must have been carried out by the participating company).

C. Record-keeping criteria

C.1	**Submission deadline for usage data**	
C.1.1	Total usage data must be recorded and submitted within five working days of the end of an MPS period (four weeks).	
C.2	**General Information Form**	
C.2.1	The company-level General Information Form must be completed and submitted.	
	i	The company-level General Information Form must be completed in a full and truthful manner and submitted on commencement of record-keeping.
	iii	Interim changes that affect the company-level General Information Form must be incorporated and submitted by the participant within ten working days.
C.2.2	A site-level General Information Form must be completed and submitted for every set of sub-records.	
	i	The site-level General Information Form must be completed in a full and truthful manner for every set of sub-records and submitted on commencement of record-keeping.
	iii	Interim changes that affect the site-level General Information Form must be incorporated and submitted by the participant within ten working days.
C.3	**Crop schedule**	
C.3.1	The crop schedule for each set of sub-records must be recorded in the record-keeping environment, consisting of:	
	i	Crops
	ii	Plots
	iii	Association between crops and plots
	iv	Percentage of environmentally certified starting material
C.3.2	The total area of plots created must match the total area covered by the set of sub-records as defined in the General Information Form for the set of sub-records concerned.	
C.3.3	The participant must keep its crop schedule up-to-date at all times. The participant must make any changes to its crop schedule no later than ten working days after expiry of the MPS period.	
C.4	**Purchase of starting material**	
C.4.1	To be eligible for qualification points for purchased certified starting material, the participant must register purchases of this material in each sub-record. The following information is required as a minimum:	
	i	Date of purchase
	ii	Supplier
	iii	Crop or crop category.
	iv	Quantity
	v	Certificates associated with the starting material (MPS-ABC or FSI compliant (Environmental or GAP)).
C.4.2	Records of starting material must be kept in the record-keeping environment or must be shown in a separate accounting system during an audit	

C.5	**Energy meters**	
The participant must define the method used to record the various forms of energy (gas, electricity, heat) by recording its energy meters. At least the following must be recorded for each energy meter:		
	i	Basis for record-keeping (invoice/total reading/reading per meter).
	ii	Type of meter
	iii	Meter name and number
	iv	Recording of meter readings/usage
	v	Active yes/no
	vi	100% green yes/no (for mains electricity and gas meter)
C.6	**Crop protection agent usage records**	
C.6.1	Records must be kept of all crop protection agents used during the cultivation, storage and processing of the product at the company (including by subcontractors), including at least the following:	
	i	Name and MPS code of the agent
	ii	Quantity used
	iii	Date used
	iv	Used by participant or outsourced
	v	Plot and/or crops on which agent was used
C.6.2	Usage of crop protection agents is recorded per crop or per crop group and per application.	
C.7	**Fertiliser usage records**	
C.7.1	Records must be kept of all fertilisers used during the cultivation, storage and processing of the product at the company (including by subcontractors and substrate suppliers), including at least the following:	
	i	Name and MPS code of fertiliser
	ii	Quantity used
	iii	NPK composition of fertiliser (if not known at MPS)
C.7.2	Usage of fertilisers is recorded per crop or per crop group and per application.	
C.8	**Energy usage records**	
Records must be kept of all energy used during the cultivation, storage and processing of the product at the company, including at least the following:		
	i	Date on which meter reading taken, or period if records are invoice-based
	ii	Meter reading/usage
	iii	Gas and electricity: percentage of green energy
	iv	Gas: calorific value and conversion factor
	v	Other fuels: name and code
	vi	Usage and unit
C.9	**Water usage records**	
Records must be kept of the quantity of water used under human influence for irrigating crops in every period, including at least the following:		
	i	Volume (m^3)
	ii	Source from which water obtained

D. Company audits

D.1 Presence of accounts		
Full accounts must be present and accessible at the company when a company audit is carried out.		
D.2 Access to the company for company audit purposes		
The participant must allow the CB access to the company for the purpose of carrying out a company audit.		
D.3 Preparation for the audit		
The participant must prepare properly for the company audit by providing the following:		
	i	Full and accurate records
	ii	Summary of purchases of crop protection products/fertilisers, or a reference to the optional stock module in the record-keeping environment.
D.4 Audit handling		
The participant ensures proper handling of the company audit, by being responsible for:		
	i	Requesting a code for a used product that is not yet in the MPS database.
	ii	Grower agrees to processing of the audit.

E. Independent sampling

E.1 Access to the company for sampling purposes		
The participant must allow the Certification Body and/or the sampler access to the company for the purpose of taking independent samples.		
E.2 Sample analysis		
The analysis of the sample taken must not show any active substances other than those recorded by the participant.		

MPS-ABC Sanction Regulations

A. Basic criteria for participation in MPS-ABC

Requirement		Infringement	Consequences for qualification status	New audit[1]	New sample[2]	Consequence for RI[3]:
A.1	The CB must be in possession of a signed copy of the quotation.	The CB has not received a signed copy of the quotation.	*Record-keeping cannot commence.*	-	-	-
A.2	Participant must keep a record of usages in all the company's agricultural operations.	Usage on one or more crops/at one or more sites not recorded.	**NQ** [indefinite period] *Until the participant has included all company operations in its records*	-	-	-
A.3	All parts of the company falling under the same accounts must be recorded under one MPS number.	Parts of the company without independent accounts have not been included in the MPS records or are recorded under a separate MPS number.	**NQ** [indefinite period] *Until the participant has included all parts of the company in the MPS records in the correct way.*	-	-	-
A.4	The participant must meet its payment obligations promptly.	Payment obligations are not met promptly.	**NQ** [indefinite period] *Until the participant has met its payment obligations.*	-	-	-
A.5	The company must have a complaints register.	The company has no complaints register.	*Participant is given 12 weeks within which to update the information.*	-	-	-
		Corrective measure has not been carried out within the set time frame.	**NQ** [indefinite period] *Until the participant can demonstrate the existence of a complaints register.*	-	-	-

[1] Additional audits at participant's expense

[2] Additional sampling at participant's expense

[3] Reliability Index (see section 6 of the MPS Certification Standard Ground Rules for more information) RI score is still in the trial stage; there are no consequences for participant yet.

B. General technical criteria

Requirement		Infringement	Consequences for qualification status	New audit[1]	New sample[2]	Consequence for RI[3]
B.1	Participant must meet the requirements for recording rented and contract cultivation sites.	Not all the participant's rented and contract cultivation sites are included in its MPS records.	**No direct consequence.** *Participant is given twelve weeks in which to record all rented and contract cultivation sites in its MPS records.*	-	-	-
		Usage records on rented and contract cultivation sites do not comply with criterion B1.2.	**NQ** [indefinite period] *A qualification can again be awarded once the records are fully updated.*	-	-	-
		Corrective measure has not been carried out within the set time frame.	**NQ** [indefinite period] *Until participant meets its obligations in criteria B.1.*	-	-	-10
B.2	The only crop protection agents that may be used are those that are authorised for use in the country where they will be used, and are permitted within MPS-ABC.	A company audit reveals the use of an active substance that is not permitted in the country of use.	**NQ** [twelve weeks]	-	-	-
		The records reveal the use of an active substance on the MPS-List prohibited active substances.	**NQ** [twelve weeks]	-	-	-
		A company audit reveals that agents with active substances from the MPS List of Prohibited Active Substances are being stored at the company.	**No direct consequence.** *Participant is given twelve weeks to prove that the agents have been disposed of or, if that was not possible, have been placed in a locked cabinet with a label.*			
		Corrective measure has not been carried out within the set time frame.	**NQ** [indefinite period] *Until the participant demonstrably complies with the obligations in criteria B.2.*			

B.3	Participant must have an up-to-date Integrated Pest Management Plan. Note: An IPM plan does not apply to companies that only collect products from the wild.	Participant does not have an up-to-date and complete IPM plan that complies with general technical requirement B.3.	**No direct consequence.** *Participant is given twelve weeks to draw up an IPM plan.*	-	-	-
		Corrective measure has not been carried out within the set time frame.	**NQ** [indefinite period] *Until participant meets its obligations in criteria B.3.*	-	-	-
B.4	Participant must comply with the conditions for natural products.	Participant does not comply with the criteria for natural products.	**No direct consequence.** *Participant is given twelve weeks in which to comply with the criteria.*	-	-	-
		Corrective measure has not been carried out within the set time frame.	**NQ** [indefinite period] *Until participant complies with its obligations in criterion B.4.*	-	-	-
B.5	Participant must comply with the conditions for the purchase of additional end products.	Additional end products purchased with a lower qualification than the participant's own company qualification are not identifiable as such when sold.	**No direct consequence.** *Participant must demonstrate to CB within 12 weeks how this is to be avoided in the future.*	-	-	-
		Corrective measure has not been carried out within the set time frame.	**NQ** [indefinite period] *Until participant complies with its obligations in criterion B.5.*	-	-	-

C. Record-keeping criteria

Requirement		Infringement	Consequences for qualification status	New audit[1]	New sample[2]	Consequence for RI[3]
C.1	Full, up-to-date records have been submitted.	Records were not submitted on time at the end of the MPS period.	-	-	-	-2
		Records were not fully updated at the time of qualification.	**NQ** [indefinite period] *A qualification can again be awarded once the records are fully updated.*	-	-	-
		You must have kept records for at least 13 successive periods in order to qualify.	**NQ** [indefinite period] *A qualification can be re-assigned after 13 periods of continuous record-keeping, following a company audit.*	-	-	-
C.2	The General Information Form has been completed in accordance with the company situation	Records were not complete or up-to-date at the time of the audit.	**No direct consequence.** *Participant is given 12 weeks within which to update the information.*	-	-	-
		Corrective measure has not been carried out within the set time frame.	**NQ** [indefinite period] *Until participant complies with its obligations in criterion C.2.*	-	-	-
C.3	An up-to-date crop schedule has been recorded for each sub-record.	The crop schedule was not complete or up-to-date at the time of the audit.	**No direct consequence.** *Participant is given 12 weeks within which to update the information.*	-	-	-
		Corrective measure has not been carried out within the set time frame.	**NQ** [indefinite period] *Until participant complies with its obligations in criterion C.3..*	-	-	-

C.4	To be eligible for qualification points for certified starting material, the purchase must be recorded in accordance with the requirements in criterion C.4.	Records of purchased starting material were not complete at the time of the audit.	**No direct consequence.** *Participant is given 12 weeks within which to update the information.*	-	-	-
		Corrective measure has not been carried out within the set time frame.	**NQ** [indefinite period] *Until participant complies with its obligations in criterion C.4..*	-	-	-
C.5	Energy usage has been recorded by setting up energy meters.	Energy meters are not, or not fully, set up in the record-keeping tool.	**No direct consequence.** *Participant is given 12 weeks within which to update the information.*	-	-	-
		Corrective measure has not been carried out within the set time frame.	**NQ** [indefinite period] *Until participant complies with its obligations in criterion C.5..*	-	-	-
C.6 - C.9	Usage records do not comply fully with the requirements set out in criteria C.6 to C.9.	Usages observed during the initial audit differ significantly from the recorded usages.	**No direct consequence.** *After making corrections, participant receives an MPS-ABC qualification.*	Verification audit after twenty-four weeks.	-	-
		Usages observed during the company audit differ slightly from the recorded usage data.	*Correction of data by CB*	-	-	-5
		Usages observed during the company audit differ significantly from the recorded usage data.	*Correction of data by CB*	Verification audit after twenty-four weeks.	-	-15
		Within 24 weeks the audit data is again found to differ significantly from the recorded usage data.	**NQ [twelve weeks]** *Correction of data by CB*	Verification audit after twenty-four weeks.	-	-20

D. Company audits

Requirement		Infringement	Consequences for qualification status	New audit[1]	New sample[2]	Consequence for RI[3]
D.1	Original and full accounts must be present at the company location at the time of the audit.	The accounts are not present and/or are not complete.	**No direct consequence.** *Audit is discontinued.*	Within eight weeks	-	-
		During the re-audit, it is once again discovered that the original accounts are not present and/or are not complete.	**NQ** [twelve weeks]	After twelve weeks	-	-
D.2	Participant must grant the CB access to its company to conduct a full company audit.	Participant cancels an announced company audit for good reason.	**No direct consequence.**	Within eight weeks	-	-
		Participant cancels an announced company audit without good reason.	**No direct consequence.**	Within eight weeks	-	-
		Participant cancels an announced company audit again without good reason.	**NQ** [twelve weeks]	Within twelve weeks	-	-
D.3	Participant must prepare properly for the audit.	At the time of the company audit, participant has NQ status as a consequence of having incomplete or outdated records.	**No direct consequence.** *Participant must update its records in order to qualify for a new audit.*	As soon as records are updated	-	-
		Summaries not available	**No direct consequence.** *Possible extra audit time or new audit at participant's expense*	-	-	-
D.4	The participant ensures proper handling of the audit	The participant has not requested a code for a product used that is not yet in the MPS database.	**No direct consequence.** *Participant is given four weeks to request a code*	-	-	-
		Grower does not agree to further processing of the audit.	**No direct consequence.** *Participant is given four weeks to agree.*	-	-	-
		Corrective measure has not been carried out within the set time frame.	**NQ** [indefinite period] *Until participant meets its obligations in criteria D.4.*	-	-	-

E. Independent sampling

Requirement		Infringement	Consequences for qualification status	New audit[1]	New sample[2]	Consequence for RI[3]
E.1	Participant must allow free access to the company for the purpose of taking independent samples.	The sampler is denied access to the company by the participant or its staff without good reason.	-	-	Within two weeks	-10
		The sampler is prevented from freely choosing a sampling site.	-	-	Within two weeks	-10
		During the following sampling, the sampler is once again prevented from freely taking samples without good reason.	**NQ** [twelve weeks]	-		-20
E.2	The usage data recorded must match the results of the analysis of the sample taken.	The analysis reveals the use of a non-recorded but authorised active substance.	**No direct consequence.** *Participant must record the use of the active substance concerned.*	-		-5
		The analysis reveals the use of a non-recorded substance that is not permitted in the country of use.	**NQ** [twelve weeks] *Participant must record the use of the active substance concerned.*	-		-15
		The analysis reveals the use of a non-recorded substance on the MPS-List prohibited active substances.	**NQ** [twelve weeks] *Participant must record the use of the active substance concerned.*	-		-15