

# MPS-Compact – General Rules

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

MPS has introduced the MPS-Compact standard specifically for small-scale growers. It complies with the FSI reference standard for small-scale growers and offers ornamental growers a cost-effective solution for demonstrating responsible business and cultivation practices.

The MPS-Compact standard consists of three normative documents:

- a. General Rules (this document) which describe how the assessment process works.
- b. Criteria for small-scale growers that define the compliance requirements for growers and can also be used for external audits and self-assessments. The criteria are divided into three parts: registration, Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and an optional social part. These compliance criteria for growers can be used for external audits and self-assessments.
- c. The MPS-ABC Certification Standard (the latest published version will apply unless otherwise specified in the General Rules).

## 2. DEFINITIONS

**Grower: Legal entity** (person/business) legally responsible for the production process and the products registered in this standard.

**Small-scale grower:** Grower with a maximum annual turnover in flowers and ornamental plants as defined in ‘Scope of Application’.

**Certification Body (CB):** Institution that verifies whether the product or service meets the requirements of the certification standard. The standard owner has signed an agreement with the CB on the performance of audits.

**Certificate:** Document certifying compliance with the standard.

**Self-assessment:** Documented assessment carried out by the grower to monitor compliance with the standard.

**Observer:** Stakeholders such as retailers or traders who have access to the grower's data relating to this specific regulation and who have observer access to the data pertaining to the standard. They have access to more information than public users.

**Applicable to the social part only:**

**Service provider: Party performing** an activity supporting the process of cultivating the product, such as spraying work. The grower has no employment relationship with service providers, so the definition of employees (see below) does not apply. Service providers do not fall within the social scope of the standard.

**Family business:** Business in which only the grower's immediate family members work, i.e. partners, children, siblings, parents. There are no other employees apart from these family members.

**Employee:** A person who has signed an employment contract to undertake paid work for the grower for a certain time period. This could be:

- full-time, part-time and temporary work
- work paid per hour, per month or per unit
- work based on an employment contract, an agreement with a self-employed person or through a subcontractor (employment agency).

### 3. SCOPE OF APPLICATION

The geographical scope of application of this standard is Europe and Israel.<sup>1</sup>

To be eligible for the small-scale grower standard, the grower's annual turnover in flowers and ornamental plants may not exceed €250,000. This assessment will be conducted by FSI. A business is no longer eligible for the standard when it achieves turnover in excess of €250,000 for two consecutive years. Thereafter, the business has one year in which to transition to regular certification in accordance with FSI-approved standards.

Small-scale growers operate under one legal and economic entity. The entity is legally responsible for its entire registered production, including placing the product on the market.

Growers must report activities and data on all ornamental products they produce and place on the market. Growers who only produce bulbs, either for the end consumer or as starting material, do not fall within the scope of this standard. Growers who produce cut flowers from bulbs, or potted bulbs, do fall within the scope of this standard.

Growers can have multiple production sites. All production sites must be located in the same country and must be owned or rented by and under the direct control of the grower. All production sites at which the grower grows ornamental products fall within the scope of this standard for small-scale growers.

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<sup>1</sup> For countries in Europe, see the UNCTAD list:  
[https://unctadstat.unctad.org/EN/Classifications/DimCountries\\_All\\_Hierarchy.pdf](https://unctadstat.unctad.org/EN/Classifications/DimCountries_All_Hierarchy.pdf)

For production sites not owned by the grower (as a legal entity) that are involved in producing products for this entity, a signed document must be present. This document must clearly state that the owner of the site bears no responsibility for and has no influence or decision-making authority over the production activities and products at this rented site.

In addition, there must be a written contract between the grower and the owner of each production site, which must include the following elements:

- Name and legal identification of the grower
- Name and legal identification of the owner of the production site
- Contact address of the owner of the production site
- Details of the individual production sites
- Signatures of the representatives of both parties.

### **Post-harvest processing by third parties**

If post-harvest processing – such as sorting, deleafing, bunching, pruning, hydration, cooling, storage or packaging – is outsourced, the grower is responsible for full compliance with the standard during these processes.

Relevant certifications of subcontractors can be accepted as proof of compliance.

If post-harvest processing does not take place under the grower's ownership, this fact must be indicated for each product during registration with MPS and stated on the certificate.

## **4. CERTIFICATION PROCESS**

### **Annual declaration and self-assessment**

Participating growers must complete an annual declaration confirming, among other things, their turnover and family business status. This declaration will be validated by FSI.

The self-assessment must be completed annually. This relates to all production sites, products and processes within the scope of the standard, in order to verify compliance with the standard. The completed self-assessment must be available on site for review at all times.

### **Audit by CB**

The CB will conduct an on-site audit against the full standard in the first year and at least every third year thereafter (i.e. year 1, year 4, year 7, etc).

In the intervening years the grower may receive unannounced audits, with prior notice of up to two working days. The CB will visit at least 15 percent of growers in the intervening years based on a risk assessment.

Risk factors include incomplete or late record-keeping; recorded data not conforming to the audit and/or residue analysis; and the number of improvement points established during the audit.

Growers must comply with 100 percent of the applicable criteria from year 1 onwards.

Based on usage records, the grower will receive an A+, A, B, or C qualification in the MPS-ABC record-keeping tool after 13 consecutive 28-day periods of record-keeping. A maximum of seven periods may be entered retrospectively on commencement of record-keeping.

### **Timing of the audit**

For the first audit, six consecutive periods of logged data (e.g. use of crop protection agents and fertilisers) must be available.

All audits are conducted while cultivation activities are taking place at the business.

Unannounced audits can be conducted at any time of the year, particularly when the risk of non-compliance is higher. In the exceptional case where the grower cannot accept the proposed date (due to medical or other justifiable reasons), the grower will be able to reschedule the unannounced audit once.

Where the social part applies, audits will be scheduled when employees are present at the business, preferably at a time when the highest number of employees are present.

### **Remote audit in special cases**

The CB may ask MPS to conduct audits remotely in exceptional situations (e.g. war, natural disasters). This request must be substantiated and evidenced.

A remote audit always includes a video tour of the business.

### **Applicable to the social part only: Sampling rules for interviews and document review**

If there are employees working at the business (not a family business), the CB auditor will conduct interviews and a document review for the social part of the assessment. In particular, the assessor will:

- a) Conduct an interview with the management.
- b) Conduct interviews with and review documents of a sample of employees. The sample will comprise at least 10 percent of the total number of employees during the year (rounded up). The audit must be scheduled to facilitate this.

Where work is temporarily subcontracted, the grower is responsible for providing evidence of compliance.

### **Audit duration**

The minimum duration of an initial audit is four hours. If the social part is included in the scope of application, the minimum duration is six hours.

In subsequent years (years 4, 7, 10, etc.), the minimum duration of this follow up audit for such growers may be shorter, but no less than 50 percent of the duration of the initial audit. At least three-quarters of the audit time is spent on site.

Unannounced audits take into account previous performance and key risks and will last at least the same length of time as a regular follow up audit.

### **Transition to a new regulation for small-scale growers or new CB**

If a grower switches to a different standard owner of a small-scale grower standard or a different CB, they must meet 100 percent of the criteria.

Growers who have received a sanction cannot switch to a different small-scale grower standard or a different CB until the current CB has closed the relevant non-conformity.

The transition process must be completed before the CB audit can take place.

## **5. Sanctions**

If a non-conformity is identified, the CB will issue the grower with a warning during the audit. All non-conformities identified during the initial audit must be resolved within three months. Non-conformities identified during a subsequent audit (in year 2, 3, 4, etc.) must be resolved within 28 days.

Growers cannot switch to a different CB until the non-conformity(ies) that led to the relevant sanction has (have) been satisfactorily resolved.

Certification will be suspended if no records have been logged for three consecutive months.

For the MPS-ABC classification, at least 13 periods of data must be present on the specified qualification date. If this is not the case, the classification will be set to unqualified.

### **Non-compliance warning**

If a non-conformity is identified during the audit, the grower will receive a warning during the concluding audit meeting and will also be notified in writing.

### **Suspension of the certificate**

If the cause of the warning is not resolved within the specified period (three months or 28 days), the CB will suspend the certificate within 24 hours.

### **Cancellation**

If the cause of the suspension is not resolved within the specified period, the certificate will be cancelled.

### **Sanction Regulations**

<b>Regulation</b>	<b>Non-compliance</b>	<b>Sanction</b>
<b>1 Requirements table for small-scale growers</b>		
<b>1.1 Certification audit</b>		
1.1 a	All requirements set out in the MPS-Compact certification standard must be satisfied.	A non-conformity has been found.
		Participant must demonstrably take corrective measures within three months of receiving the result of the audit.

Corrective measures must demonstrably be taken within the specified period.	Corrective measures are either not taken or not demonstrably taken within the specified period. <sup>1</sup>	A new audit is scheduled.
<b>1.2 Follow up audit</b>		

1.2 a	All requirements set out in the MPS-Compact certification standard must be satisfied.	A non-conformity has been found.	Warning. Participant must demonstrably take corrective measures within 28 days of receiving the result of the audit.
1.2 b	Corrective measures must demonstrably be taken within the specified period.	Corrective measures are either not taken or not demonstrably taken within the specified period. <sup>1</sup>	The certificate is suspended.  The agreement is temporarily suspended until corrective measures have demonstrably been taken. <sup>2</sup>
1.2 c	Corrective steps/implementation of the amendments must be demonstrated within 12 months in the event of temporary suspension of the agreement.	The corrective measures/implementation of the amendments have not been demonstrated within the 12-month period.	The agreement is dissolved.

### 1.3 Unannounced audits

1.3	The unannounced audit cannot take place (see audit timing for conditions).	The audit cannot take place due to non-justifiable reasons.	The agreement is dissolved.
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### 1.4 Other non-conformities

1.4		The CB finds evidence of fraud and/or is able to prove that the requirements of MPS-Compact are not expected to be satisfied.	The agreement is dissolved.
		There is contractual failure.	The agreement is dissolved.

If the suspension is voluntary, the period and corrective measures for compliance are set by the grower himself, which must be agreed upon with the respective CB, but must be closed out before re-registration.

1 Demonstrable correction means that written/visual evidence is made available to CB.  
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2 The temporary suspension of the agreement will last no longer than 12 months. If corrective measures have not demonstrably been taken, the agreement will thereupon be dissolved.

#### Certificates

The certificate is not transferable from one entity to another when a production site switches to a different legal entity. In that case, a new on-site audit will take place. The certificate is valid for 36 months, subject to any sanctions and extensions in accordance with the applicable requirements.

## 6. APPROVAL BY CB

The grower commits to MPS-ECAS as the certifying body (CB) when they collaborate with the standard owner MPS. The CB ensures that the grower adheres to this by having them sign the three-party agreement.

CBs will appoint a contact person responsible for this standard, along with an internal CB trainer.

The **internal CB trainer** for this standard must successfully complete the required training for the standard for small-scale growers and must pass the relevant test.

**CB auditors** performing audits against this standard must have:

- a) Audit experience of at least two audits in accordance with GLOBALG.A.P. PFA/IFA or MPS--GAP.

OR

A post-secondary education diploma in a field related to the scope of application of the certification (horticulture) and two years of practical experience working in a horticultural business, either as an employee or in their own or their family's business in the relevant scope of application.

OR

In the case of a post-secondary education diploma not related to the scope of the experience: three years of practical experience working in a horticultural company, either as an employee or in their own or their family's business in the relevant scope of application (full-time equivalent).

OR

At least ten years of practical experience working in a business as a manager/supervisor in the relevant field (full-time equivalent).

- b) Required evidence: copy of post-secondary education diploma, CV.
- c) Passed the test for this standard within three months.
- d) Conducted at least two audits as an auditor of a system with similar criteria (environmental, GAP and social) to the scope of application of this standard.
- e) (In the case of audits for the social part: Mandatory training in local labour law and training in conducting employee interviews.)

## 7. DATA ACCESS RULES

The table below shows which information is shared with which parties.

	Standard owner	Certification Body	Observer	Public
Product	X	X	X	X
Assessment status	X	X	X	X
Regulation	X	X	X	X
Result	X	X	X	
Certification Body	X		X	X
Number of employees	x	x	x	
Processing of the product	X	X	X	X