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## Certification Processes Steps for Product Certification

### SUMMARY

**Purpose** - This document describes certification steps for product certification including the issuance, recertification, extension, termination, reduction, suspension or withdrawal of certification.

It also describes the monitoring of certification.

### STEPS

#### **Step 1. Preliminary investigation and application**

When a client expresses interest in Product certification services for a product that has an existing scheme, The Gambia Standards Bureau Certification Body (TGSB CB) determines whether:

- the client is implementing standards and regulations required by the scheme for that product
- the client is sufficiently prepared for the audit process

If the above requirements are met by the client, the *Certification Rules* are sent to him and he is requested to complete the *Application form and the Technical Information Form*.

If the information provided by the client is complete and admissible, a cost quotation is prepared and issued to the client.

If the client agrees to pay the fees, TGSB-CB signs a certification agreement with the client. This agreement establishes all the contractual relations related to the certification process.

If the client is found not to be ready, TGSB CB provides feedback on the gaps identified.

#### **Step 2. Stage one audit**

Initial certification audit is conducted in two stages, i.e. stage one and stage two.

If the quotation is acceptable to the client, a stage one audit is carried out which includes both the desk audit (documentation review) and the on-site stage 1 audit, i.e., part of the stage one audit is conducted at the client's premises for initial audits.

This stage one audit shall be done to:

- audit the client's documentation against the normative document requirements.

- provide focus for the stage 2 audit and agree with the client on the details for the stage 2 audit
- to confirm information given in the *application form* and collect information regarding the scope of the audit.

The period between the stage 1 and the stage 2 audit is dependent on the gaps identified during the stage one audit and is mutually agreed between TGSB CB and the client, but it shall not be more than 6 months. If the six months lapse before the stage 2 audit is done, another stage 1 audit must be performed. If a client's system is found, after the stage 1 audit, not to be ready for stage two another stage 1 audit shall be performed at the appropriate time.

### **Step 3. Stage two audit**

The stage two audit is done on site and its main objective is to evaluate the implementation as well as the effectiveness of the client's system.

The audit includes an examination of at least the following:

- i) information and evidence about conformity to all requirements of:
  - GAMS Codex Standard 227-2001 – Gambian Standard for Bottled/ Packaged Drinking Waters
  - HACCP according to ISO 22000
  - GAMS 23:2020 – Gambian Standard on Good Hygienic Practices
- ii) the client's compliance to legal requirements
- iii) operational control of the client's processes

During this audit non-conformities may be raised. These non-conformities are classified as either **major** or **minor**.

When major nonconformities are raised, the process of certification decision making shall not begin until the corrective actions have been undertaken by the auditee and effectiveness thereof been evaluated and found to be effective.

For minor nonconformities the recommendation for certification can be made based on an acceptable corrective action plan (CAP) and the effectiveness of the corrective action shall then be evaluated at the next audit. The time for carrying out of the corrective action shall therefore be determined by the auditee/client and submitted as part of the corrective action plan.

Corrective action plans must be submitted for all nonconformities. The time for submitting of corrective action plans by the auditee/client is a maximum of 15 working days and the auditor/CB must indicate acceptance of the plan before the client undertakes the actions therein.

#### **Step 4. Sampling and Testing**

Sampling and testing shall be carried out as and when needed as described in the *Certification Rules*. Samples may be collected during or after audits. They shall be sent to TGSB-CB's competent laboratory for testing. Upon receipt of the test reports, a copy is sent to the client.

The *Certification Rules* provide the possibility for the applicant to submit an application accompanied by a test report, defining the conditions under which the test report may be accepted.

#### **Step 5. Follow-up audits**

Follow-up audits shall be performed within 6 months from the date of the audit to check if Corrective actions for NCs have been effectively undertaken.

#### **Step 6. Review and decision**

After the follow-up audit, during which time the corrective actions from the stage two audit are confirmed to have been carried out, the audit findings, sampling and test reports are examined by TGSB-CB *Review and Decision Experts* no later than 15 days after the audit. These experts are DO NOT take part in the evaluation processes.

After reviewing the experts send a review report including a recommendation regarding the certification decision to TGSB Director General enabling him to make a certification decision.

Once certified, a licence to use the TGSB mark of conformity is given to the client. This licence is valid is valid for 3 years.

If certification is not granted, the client shall be informed about the decision. If not pleased with the decision outcome, the client can make an appeal.

#### **Step 7. Surveillance**

The license holder must throughout the validity of the certification commit to:

- comply with the defined requirements
- systematically inform TGSB of any change in one of the characteristics of the certified product or any change in organization

surveillance activities are described in the *Certification Rules*.

#### **Step 8. Recertification**

This is virtually identical to the initial audit except that the stage one audit does not have to be on site.

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### **Extension of certification**

The scope of a certification shall be expanded by TGSB CB, in response to an application for expanding an already granted certificate by the client.

Upon review of the application, any necessary audit activities shall be determined by TGSB to decide whether or not the extension may be granted. This shall be conducted in conjunction with a surveillance audit or on its own.

### **Reduction, suspension or withdrawal**

TGSB CB has a policy for suspension, withdrawal, or reduction of the scope of certification. Certification shall be suspended in cases when, for example:

- the client has persistently or seriously failed to meet certification requirements
- the certified client does not allow surveillance or recertification audits to be conducted at the required frequencies
- the certified client has voluntarily requested a suspension.

Under suspension, the client's certification is temporarily invalid.

TGSB CB shall restore the suspended certification if the issue that has resulted in the suspension has been resolved. Failure to resolve the issues that have resulted in the suspension in a time established by the CB shall result in withdrawal or reduction of the scope of certification.