Verification Process

Cotton made in Africa (CmiA) and other

Standards of the Aid by Trade Foundation

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Document Management

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PwC		Created	08.04.2010	v1
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1. Introduction

1. The document describes the complete verification cycle from the engagement of the verifier to the submission of the final report.

2. The objective of this document is

   - To clarify roles and responsibilities of the affected parties, such as Verification Management, the verifier and the Managing Entity.

   - To provide insights into the process of the on-site verification visit and to give an indication of the expected timeframe.

2. Engagement of the verifier

3. The verifier is selected by Verification Management to perform the verification of a Managing Entity from the list of trained and registered verifiers.

4. The selection criteria of the verifier may include, without order of priority:

   - Qualification

   - Price and effort estimate

   - Geographic distance

   - Track record

   NOTE: Verifiers may also be proposed by the Managing Entity subject to assessment by Verification Management. Nevertheless the Verifiers have to be registered once.

5. Once the verifier has been engaged by Verification Management, e.g. through signing of an Assignment Letter, the Managing Entity is informed of the upcoming verification. The Managing Entity should be advised that key staff is available at the time of the verification. The duration of verification should be indicated.

6. Verification Management supports the Managing Entity with detailed information on the proceedings, requirements and expectations linked to the verification exercise, e.g. through a management briefing. In addition, a ***document request list*** is sent out to the Managing Entity, listing potential documents that should be available on site, or need to be sent prior to the verification respectively.

7. **Recommended engagement templates:**

   - Assignment Letter

3. Preparation of verification

8. Verification Management provides the engaged verifier with the latest <u>verification report</u> as well as the <u>self assessment</u> of the Managing Entity at least one month prior to the verification.

9. The verifier gets in contact with the Managing Entity in order to inform about the upcoming verification visit and to clarify organisational details and logistics at least three weeks prior to the verification.

10. Documents that should be provided by the Managing Entity to the verifier *prior* to the verification include:

    *   The self assessments undertaken since the last verification

    *   The last verification report (not relevant for initial verification)

    *   The impact assessment´s baseline study

    *   The management plan

    *   Progress reports relevant to specific criteria, if available

    *   Information on any major incidents or complaints

11. If documents are not available, the Managing Entity should provide an appropriate explanation on the document request list.

12. The verifier conducts the formal review of the documents. The Verifier then analyses the delivered documentation to plan and prepare for the verification visit.

13. Based on the additional information from the CmiA Unit, the Verifier defines the <u>verification plan</u>. The plan includes the following details:

    *   Schedule of the verification visit (dates and timing)

    *   Individuals from management and stakeholders to be required for the opening meeting or an interview, if possible to be specified before verification on-site

    *   Initial questions arising from the document review

14. The proposed plan is to be submitted to Verification Management for review at least two weeks before the verification visit.

15. One week before the actual visit, the Verifier submits the verification plan to the Managing Entity.

16. **Recommended preparation templates and tools:**

- Verification report

- Self assessment, including information on size and structure of CmiA Unit as well as on pesticides and other inputs used

- Document request list

- Verification plan

4. Performance of verification

17. Once on site, the verifier conducts the <u>opening meeting</u> with the responsible management as well as relevant stakeholders if required. The objective of the opening meeting is to inform about the objectives and to clarify open questions on the proceedings of the verification visits. Standard items such as those listed below will have to be covered on the agenda as a minimum requirement:

    • Presentation

    • Objectives of the verification visit

    • Clarification of roles and responsibilities

    • Proceedings and agreement on the planned schedule

    • Expectations and requirements of the verifier as well as the managing entity

    • Recent events, issues, incidents related to or affecting the criteria or the sustainability matrix

    • Other open issues or questions

18. The Verifier shall now have enough information to lead/undertake the subsequent <u>management interview</u>. It makes sense to open the management interview with a brief description of the CmiA Unit and an overview of the underlying business model for the local cotton sector. The management interview also serves to get a good understanding of the overall management of the CmiA system and Managing Unit's campaign cycle. The duration of the management interview depends on the size of the CmiA Unit as well as the level of complexity (e.g. number of farmers, business model) and the accessibility of information. It might be necessary to come back with specific questions to management in the course of the ongoing verification.

19. During the management interview comfort is to be gained on the management capacities as well as the overall awareness and control.

20. Following the management interview, the verifier examines the available/provided documents to collect supporting evidence for the interview results and to build a first opinion. This opinion should reflect the verifiers´ level of comfort and helps the verifier to structure subsequent verification work.

21. Ideally, all the above-mentioned activities take place on day one and two of the site visit.

22. From day two onwards the field checks are to be performed. The Verifier should obtain sufficient supporting evidence for the confirmation of the Self Assessment.

5. Reporting results of verification

23. Concluding the strategic and operational verification, the verifier documents and summarises the verification results. Continuously, the verifier needs to check if reasonable comfort with the verification results is achieved. Otherwise, further action steps are required (e.g. additional interviews, field checks etc.).

24. The reporting of the verification results requires the organisation of the evidence into the following categories:

    • Critical findings (supported with sufficient evidence per criteria tested)

    • Risks identified

    • Observations from field checks and interviews

    • Potential Improvement opportunities identified

    • Progress with regard to the management plan

25. The Verifier uses the respective tables in the verification report template to document the verification trail as well as the results.

26. On the closing of the last day on site a final meeting with the managing entity will take place to present and discuss the verification results, i.e. the findings, observations and risks, potential improvement opportunities as well as the ratings to obtain a mutual agreement. The results of the meeting are to be documented and form part of the verification report. The verifier will send the debriefing Presentation to Verification Management.

27. The verifier completes and signs the verification report as well as a declaration of completion. The managing entity signs the declaration of completion.

28. The draft verification report and the declaration of completion are sent to the Verification Management, at the same time as to the Managing Entity.

29. Both the Managing Entity and Verification Management have 14 days to comment on the draft verification report. After those two weeks, the Verifier integrates corrections, additional information or any comment that seems suitable into the report. The final report is again sent to the Managing Entity and Verification Management. The Managing Entity has one week to validate the final report by formal acceptance; silence is considered as consent.

30. The following table illustrates the timetable for reporting process:

Delay	Activity
Week 0	End of on-site verification Verifier submits de-briefing presentation to Verification Management
Weeks 1 and 2	Verifier submits draft report to Verification Management and Managing Entity (for gins: only one week)
Weeks 3 and 4	Time for comments from Managing Entity and Verification Management
Week 5	Verifier integrates comments and submits final verification report to Managing Entity and Verification Management
Week 6	Verifier transmits Managing Entity's acceptance of the report or file of non-acceptance including reasons to Verification Management

31. Any feedback concerning the realization of the verification can be addressed to Verification Management.

32. **Recommended reporting templates and tools:**

- Report template, including declaration of completion