Overview of the SRP Assurance Scheme v 1.3

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About the Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP)

The Sustainable Rice Platform e.V. (SRP) is a global multi-stakeholder alliance comprising over 100 institutional members from public, private, research, civil society and the financial sector. Originally co-convened by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ), SRP is now an independent member association, working together with its partners to transform the global rice sector by improving smallholder livelihoods, reducing the social, environmental and climate footprint of rice production, and by offering the global rice market an assured supply of sustainably produced rice.

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Overview of the SRP Assurance Scheme v 1.3

Background

The on-pack **'SRP-Verified'** Label and Assurance Scheme provide a system for supply chain actors to procure SRP-Verified rice and make sustainability claims for rice produced using proven, climate-smart sustainable best practices. Launched in September 2020, the system helps boost incomes for smallholder farmers and enhances their market access. Independent audits provide supply chain actors with a robust and credible framework to de-risk their supply chains, while the on-pack SRP-Verified Label empowers consumers to choose products that directly support efforts to boost farmer livelihoods while reducing the social and environmental impact of rice farming.

The Scheme is based on the [SRP Standard for Sustainable Rice Cultivation v 2.1](), the world's first voluntary sustainability standard for rice. The Scheme provides a robust and credible framework to enable supply chain actors to de-risk their supply chains through audited evidence of compliance with the SRP Standard. It is underpinned by proven best practices as advocated by the International Rice Research Institute and provides a robust and transparent process to assess compliance.

This [SRP Assurance Scheme Version 1.3]() defines rules for actors engaged in measuring compliance or demonstrating improvements, providing demonstrable evidence of compliance with the SRP Standard and Performance Indicators and the use of SRP trademarks (Claims, Logos or Label) upon achieving assurance. The SRP Assurance Scheme focuses on verification, is built on strong internal assessment and provides farm registration and self-assessment as a starting point. The SRP Assurance Scheme encourages innovative remote/landscape assessments, participatory schemes, individual producer assessments and producer group schemes using Internal Management Systems (IMS).

As a demand-side action, the Assurance Scheme targets the global rice trade as an essential complement to SRP's efforts to incentivize wide-scale farm-level adoption of climate-smart, sustainable best practice, and contribute to a transformation of the global rice sector and to contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
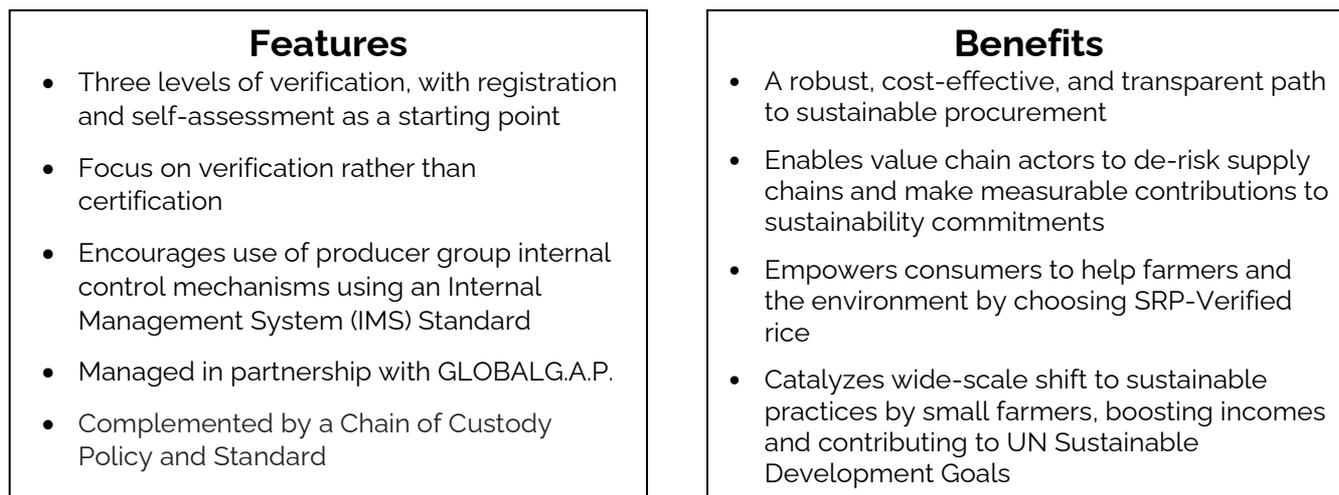
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Features

- Three levels of verification, with registration and self-assessment as a starting point

- Focus on verification rather than certification

- Encourages use of producer group internal control mechanisms using an Internal Management System (IMS) Standard

- Managed in partnership with GLOBALG.A.P.

- Complemented by a Chain of Custody Policy and Standard

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Benefits

- A robust, cost-effective, and transparent path to sustainable procurement

- Enables value chain actors to de-risk supply chains and make measurable contributions to sustainability commitments

- Empowers consumers to help farmers and the environment by choosing SRP-Verified rice

- Catalyzes wide-scale shift to sustainable practices by small farmers, boosting incomes and contributing to UN Sustainable Development Goals

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Figure 1: Features and Benefits of SRP Assurance Scheme

Key roles in the SRP Assurance Scheme

In its role as **SRP's authorized Assurance Service Provider (ASP), GLOBALG.A.P.** manages implementation of the Scheme, including authorization of Verification Bodies, technical and customer support, auditor training, and database management.

The ASP approves and works directly with **a) Data Collectors**, responsible for collecting the registration data and self-assessment reports from **Producers** and **Producer Groups** ; and **b) Verification Bodies (VB)**, responsible for inspecting and verifying compliance with the current version of the SRP Standard and for issuing statements that fulfilment of specified conformance requirements has been demonstrated and uploading data and reports to the SRP database. A list of approved VBs is available at the GLOBALG.A.P. website[1].

To participate in the Assurance Scheme, **Individual Producers, Producer Groups and Participant Operator** must register via a VB.

- Registration of a Participant Operator may cover several sites of different operations within the supply chain. The P.O. must demonstrate compliance with SRP CoC multi-site requirements.

- Registration of individual producers may cover several production sites provided they do not function as separate legal or management entities. Producer groups must additionally demonstrate compliance with the SRP IMS Standard.

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[1] https://www.globalgap.org/uk_en/for-producers/sustainable-rice-platform/

Three levels of assurance

Partners may choose from three levels of assurance, positioned to accommodate the needs of resource-poor small farmers as well as export-oriented value chains. The three levels are described in the following sections and summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1:   SRP Assurance Scheme - Three options for assurance

	LEVEL 1 Self Assessment		LEVEL 2 2nd Party Verification		LEVEL 3 3rd Party Verification	
	Indiv. Producer	Producer Group	Indiv. Producer	Producer Group	Indiv. Producer	Producer Group
Registration in Database	Data Collector		Verification Body		Verification Body	
Self-assessments or internal inspections / year	Yes	• IMS • Producer (N) self-assessment / internal inspection sample: - First year: 100% - Subsequent years: at least: 33% - All producers internal inspection at least every 3 years	Yes	• IMS • Producer self-assessment / internal inspection sample: - First year: 100% - Subsequent years: at least 33% - All producers internal inspection at least every 3 years	Yes	• IMS • 100% Producers undergo internal inspections by the IMS team.
External inspection	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Inspector qualification	NA	NA	2nd party inspector		3rd party inspector	
Scope of annual external insp.	NA	NA	100% production sites	• IMS • Producer (N) sample: - First year: Square root of N - Subsequent years: at least 50% of square root of N	100% production sites	• IMS • Producer (N) sample: - First year: Square root of N - Subsequent years: at least 50% of square root of N
Duration of external insp.	NA	NA	1 day	• 1 day for IMS • 1 day for around 4 producers in the sample	1 day	• 1 day for IMS • 1 day for around 4 producers in the sample
Unannounced inspections	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Number of unannounced insp.	NA	NA	NA	NA	Additional 10%	Additional 10%

Assurance Level 1: Self-assessment

Level 1 assurance allows producers, producer groups or appointed individuals to conduct self-assessments without external verification, following a checklist covering all elements of the SRP Standard. Self-assessment must be conducted within 12 months following the date of registration in the SRP system and is valid for 12 months from the day of inspection. The assessment results (checklist) must be uploaded by the data collector to the SRP database.

In case of producer groups, self-assessment could be performed by the producers, their peers or via IMS internal audits, and takes the form of internal inspections of compliance with the IMS Standard as well as a sample of individual group members. In the first year of participation, 100% of producer group members must be assessed; in subsequent years, audit intensity may be risk-based, focusing on members with higher risk of non-compliance or missed thresholds. However, a minimum of 33% of group members must be audited each year and all producers must be internally assessed at least once every 3 years.

Assurance Level 2: Second-party verification

Level 2 enables a second-party VB linked to producers or producer groups (e.g. project implementing partners) to conduct compliance audits against the SRP Standard of producers/producer groups within the scope of their project/operation. The VB designates a qualified inspector to perform the inspection either in the field or, under certain specified circumstances, via a remote audit using ICT tools (SRP-Remote) or via document submission. The verification is valid for 12 months and is subject to annual renewal.

For individual producers, all production sites must be covered to verify their compliance with SRP Standard. For producer groups, the verification comprises annual inspections of a) the group's IMS compliance; and b) audit of a sample of group members and their production sites. In the initial external inspection, the minimum sample to be inspected is the square root of the total number of SRP-registered producers in the group. In subsequent years, sampling intensity may be adjusted depending on the factors as enumerated in the Scheme, with a minimum of at least 50% of the square root of total registered group members.

Assurance level 3: Third-party verification

Level 3 assurance requires audit by independent third-party verification bodies with no links to producers, producer groups or implementation partners. Audits are performed by a qualified VB-designated inspector, either in the field or, under specified circumstances via a remote review (SRP-Remote) or document submission. Compliance Verification Statements are issued by the VB and are valid for 12 months.

Before the initial third-party verification, individual producers need to conduct self-assessments or peer-to-peer assessments. Similarly, prior to the initial inspection, producer groups need to conduct an internal audit against the IMS Standard as well as internal producer assessments on all participating group members. These audits can be carried out by IMS internal inspectors, peer producers or the producers themselves.
The VB may undertake additional unannounced surveillance audits if there is evidence or suspicion of missed thresholds, especially if this may affect the right to use SRP Claims or Label. To further ensure the credibility of audits, VBs are required to undertake unannounced inspections amongst verified producers/producer groups.

Verification decisions and appeals procedure

Following the audit, inspectors must submit their audit report including details of any missed thresholds identified to their respective VB. Producers have 28 days to submit a corrective action plan and evidence of implementation if they wish to prove compliance with missed thresholds or increase their score post-inspection. These report and evidence are reviewed by a VB reviewer who takes the final decision to grant the verification letter. Thereafter, the VB must inform the producer/producer group and enter the verification decision in the SRP/GLOBALG.A.P. database.

VBs are required to establish a clearly defined and publicly available appeals procedure to be followed in case of complaint or appeal against a VB decision. In case that the VB does not respond adequately, the producer/group may elevate the complaint to the ASP following the ASP's own appeal procedure.

Chain of Custody Policy and Standard v 2.0

Supply chain organizations wishing to use the SRP-Verified Label and make on-pack claims must first be audited and verified against the SRP Chain of Custody (CoC) Standard by an SRP-approved VB. The SRP Chain of Custody Policy and Standard is intended to be used in conjunction with the SRP Standard and Assurance Scheme to enable market actors to make robust and verifiable sustainability claims.

The Assurance Scheme recognizes three different types of Chain of Custody models: Identity Preservation, Segregation and Mass Balance. Chain of Custody verification is required for on-pack use of SRP claims, while IP or Segregation models are required for use of the on-pack SRP-Verified Label.

Assurance Scheme v 1.3 Information Note no. 1 – no. 5

Assurance Scheme v 1.3 Information Note are the documents that provides further clarification and important information in connection with AS v 1.3. To explain the current/up-to-date situation and development of the SRP Normative documents.

AS v 1.3 Information Note No. 1: Audit Guidelines, Effective October 2020

This Information note provides supplementary guidance on two topics:

1. Verification options in response to Covid-19
2. Interim guidance on verification and label use ahead of publication of the SRP Chain of Custody Standard 1.0

AS v 1.3 Information Note No. 2, Effective 15 June 2021

The scope of this document includes the following topics

1. SRP Chain of Custody Certification System
2. Qualifications of data collectors
3. Qualifications of auditors
4. Producer registration fees
5. Approval of on-pack labels

AS v 1.3 Information Note No. 3, Effective April 2022

The scope of this document includes the following topics:

1. Approval of SRP Sublicense and Registration Agreement v 2.0
2. Approval of SRP Chain of Custody Policy and Standard v 2.0
3. Transition Arrangements

4. Chain of Custody Fee Table 2022
5. Use of Transaction Certificates under the SRP Chain of Custody Policy & Standard v 2.0.

AS v 1.3 Information Note No. 4, Effective July 2022

The scope of this document includes the following topics:

1. Verification Bodies Fee Clarification

AS v 1.3 Information Note No. 5, Effective August 2022

The scope of this document includes the following topics:

1. Multi-site Participating Operator registration
2. Extension period for qualification of VB's in-house trainers (IHT)
3. VB's In-House Trainer Examination
4. Extension period for VB Auditor Qualification.

FEES

SRP Assurance Scheme Information Notes No 2 (June 2021), No 3 (April 2022) and No 4 (July 2022) provide clarification on SRP fees.

AS Info. note no. 2 – Producer Registration Fee

4.1. Annex 6(i) of the SRP Assurance Scheme v 1.3 (SRP Fees) stipulated 6 tiers of fees for progressive ranges of farm size. This is now replaced by a single fee level of **€2.50 per hectare,** regardless of farm size, effective as of 1 July 2021.

AS Info. note no.3 – Chain of Custody Fee Table 2022 (VB Fee)

SRP Chain of Custody Fee Table 2022

On 31 January 2022 the SRP Board unanimously adopted a resolution to approve the revised fee structure for the Chain of Custody Standard management as proposed by GLOBALG.A.P. The SRP Chain of Custody Fee Table has been finalized as shown below and shall be valid until 31 December 2022.

Fee type	Frequency	Amount (€)	Charged to
VB license fee	Annual	2,000.00	VB
CoC site (Each registered and accepted CoC company site for the SRP CoC Standard)	Annual	250.00	VB
VB evaluation fee	One-time	500.00	VB
Auditor fee	Annual	100.00	VB

The fee table will apply for all CoC audits conducted under v 2.0 (which became mandatory from 1 July 2022) including those already conducted under interim arrangements set out in the respective Information Notes.

AS Info. note no.4 – Verification Bodies' Fee clarification

Adding text to Assurance Scheme v 1.3. Verification Bodies' Fee Clarification to Ownership, Claims and Condition and Annex 6.

Annex 6 Added text to 1. Producer Registration Fee No. 2)

2) Fees will be charged to the SRP sponsor organizations, (e.g. buyers, millers, traders, etc.) not to producer groups or individual producer groups **unless they are the group contracting with a VB and that commissions and pays for the audit.**

Ownership

- SRP e.V. retains ownership of the SRP Assurance Scheme, Standard, Performance Indicators and related trademarks. The SRP has authorized GLOBALG.A.P. as its Assurance Services Providers (ASP) to manage implementation of the Scheme. However, SRP reserves the right to access data and to conduct integrity audits as well as the rights to its trademarks and brand.

- End-users of the SRP-Verified Label are not required to join as a member of SRP and may use the on-pack SRP-Verified Label in accordance with the SRP Member Communication and Claim/Logo/Label Guidelines (Assurance Scheme Annex 7) provided they can prove the rice was produced by a member of SRP. Any use of the SRP name or trademarks is strictly limited to the rights granted under Section 13 and must also comply with the SRP Member Communication and Claim/Logo/Label Guidelines (Annex 7). **The sponsoring organization commissioning a SRP verification audit and contracting with a VB (which may be a private sector, not-for profit or other organization, including producer groups or individual producers) must be a member of SRP, and will be responsible for payment of audit and other fees as contracted with the VB.**

Claims and conditions

Rules covering use of the on-pack SRP-Verified label and on-pack/off-pack claims differ according to (1) the Assurance Level (1-3); and (2) the Chain of Custody model selected. Permitted claims, label use and prohibitions are set out in Annex 7 of the SRP Assurance Scheme (SRP Member Communication and Claims/Logo/Label Guidelines) and are also subject to visibility requirements stipulated in the SRP Brand Manual (as updated in April 2022). As users are liable for any claims they make, it is critically important that users must be able to substantiate any on-pack sustainability claim.

Users must submit draft label designs and claims to the SRP Secretariat, which is responsible for pre-approving label designs in confidence, and can offer support to

ensure compliance. The approval process is set out in SRP Assurance Scheme Information Note No 2.

Additional information

The following tools and approaches are available at the SRP website under Resources:

1. SRP Standard for Sustainable Rice Cultivation v 2.1
2. SRP Performance Indicators for Sustainable Rice Cultivation v 2.1
3. SRP Assurance Scheme version 1.3
4. SRP Assurance Scheme Information Note no.1 (October 2020)
5. SRP Assurance Scheme Information Note No 2 (June 2021)
6. SRP Assurance Scheme Information Note No 3 (April 2022)
7. SRP Assurance Scheme Information Note No 4 (July 2022)
8. SRP Assurance Scheme Information Note No.5 (August 2022)
9. SRP Brand Manual *(updated 2022)
10. SRP Internal Management System (IMS) Standard for Producer Groups operating under the SRP Standard for Sustainable Rice Cultivation (IMS Standard) v 1.0
11. SRP Internal Management System Guidelines
12. SRP Internal Management System Standard Info Page
13. SRP Chain of Custody Policy and Standard v 2.0.
14. SRP Chain of Custody Policy and Standard Info Page
15. Chain of Custody Policy & Standard v 2.0 Guidelines
16. SRP Assurance Scheme FAQs
17. List of SRP-approved Verification Bodies
18. SRP Chain of Custody Fee Table 2022

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