

Certification Manual

Veriflora® 3.1 Standard



SCSglobal
SERVICES

Setting the standard for sustainability™

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Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the SCS Global Services (SCS) Veriflora Certification Program. The “Veriflora® Certified Sustainably Grown” label provides your customers independent proof of your commitment to delivering flowers and potted plants that have been grown in an environmentally and socially responsible manner and meet the highest quality standards.

The first step in pursuing certification will be to complete the Veriflora® Application Form. You can find our application online at www.Veriflora.com. Upon receipt of your application, we will scope and source the certification services requested by your company and shortly thereafter, provide you with our proposal.

In pursuing certification, key determinants of timely processing include submitting a complete and accurate application form, review and timely return of a signed work order and SCS Assessment Services Agreement to SCS, and the completion of the Self-Assessment Checklist.

Fees for Veriflora® certification are based on time and materials, including the auditor’s professional fees, travel costs, program management, and administrative fees which cover the necessary time our staff devote to each Client.

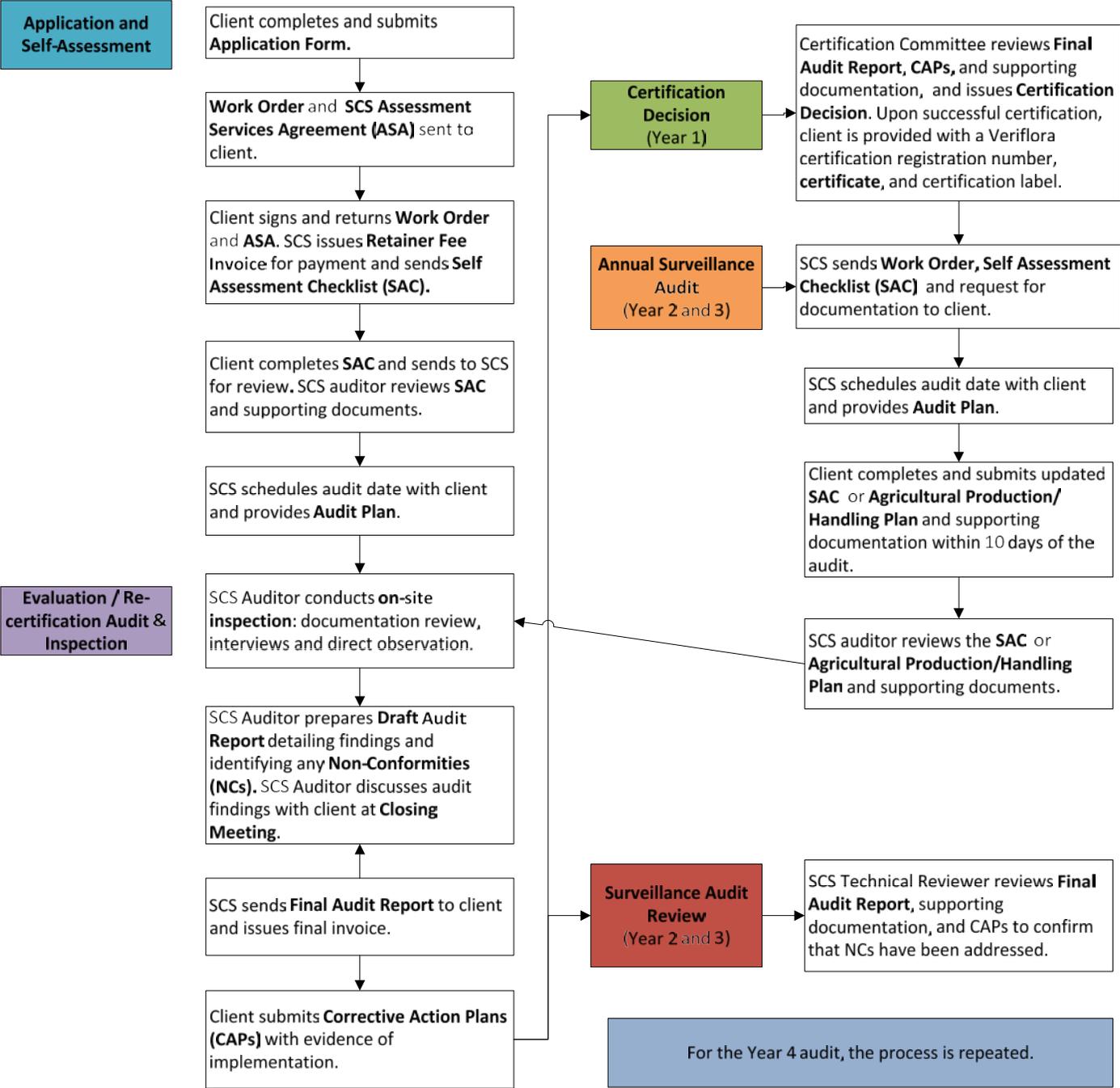
Veriflora® certificates are valid for a period of three years, with annual surveillance audits required in order to maintain certification status.

Please refer to the diagram below and step-by-step description of the evaluation and certification process. We also recommend that you review the Veriflora® 3.1 Standard, downloadable at www.Veriflora.com for additional information about the requirements for certification.

Please contact our offices if you have any questions regarding the certification process or any other aspect of the Veriflora Certification Program. We have a dedicated team of bilingual professionals and skilled auditors ready to assist you with all your certification needs.

SCS Global Services
Veriflora Certification Program
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Veriflora® Certification Process Diagram



Key Terms

Agricultural Production Plan: The written document that describes the protocols and procedures used by the Agricultural Production Operation in carrying out its daily functions.

Annual (Surveillance) Audit: Inspection conducted by an SCS or an SCS-approved Auditor occurring at least annually to ensure ongoing conformity to the Certification Standard.

Audit Report: Report prepared by auditor and provided to Client upon completion of audit, detailing findings and listing areas of non-conformity (NCs) with the Standard, opportunities for improvement (OFIs), and notable practices.

Certificate: The document issued by SCS indicating that adequate confidence has been provided that a process is in conformity with applicable standard(s) or normative document(s) and signifying formal award of certification. Certificates are typically issued for 3-year periods subject to annual surveillance audits. The certificate identifies the entity name, address, registration number, effective date of certification, categories of certification and products/services covered by the scope, as well as the name and address of SCS and other information as determined by relevant accreditation requirements and SCS.

Certification: The overall process by which an entity's operation is assessed for conformity to the requirements of Veriflora Standard, provided a certification decision and, if warranted, granted Veriflora logo use privileges. This determination is made by SCS based upon its review of the audit report and all evidence submitted, as well as the Client's Corrective Action Plan (CAP).

Closing Meeting: At the conclusion of the audit, the lead auditor will hold a closing (or 'exit') meeting with the senior management. The purpose of the meeting is to:

- Clarify the results of the audit and the significance of the observations
- Clarify corrective action and response timeframe expectations

Corrective Action Plan (CAP): Plan prepared by Client and submitted to SCS in response to Non-Conformities raised by the SCS Auditor, describing corrective and preventive actions taken, plan of action, person(s) responsible, and expected timeframe of completion.

Desk Audit: Limited-scope off-site examination of documents and records. The auditor reviews documentation submitted by the client in response to a 'Request for Documentation', as well as previous audit reports and data. A telephone interview may be scheduled.

Evaluation Audit: The full assessment of an applicant or Client against the Certification Standard conducted by SCS or an SCS-approved Auditor for determining award (initial evaluation) or re-award (re-evaluation) of certification. Evaluation includes: 1) on-site review of field and/or facility operations,

involving management and worker interviews, physical inspection, documentation review, gathering of photographic evidence, and exit interviews; and 2) generation of an Audit Report. Note: for large multi-site entities, SCS may conduct assessments of the Central Office/Group Entity as well as a sample of the sites/members covered by the scope of the application, according to an agreed upon sampling plan.

Elements of Sustainability: The eight elements of sustainable agriculture, as defined in the Veriflora Standard, are:

- Sustainable Crop Production
- Resource Conservation & Energy Efficiency
- Ecosystem Protection
- Integrated Waste Management
- Fair Labor Practices
- Community Benefits
- Product Quality
- Product Safety & Purity

Handling Plan: The written document that describes the protocols and procedures used by the Handling Operation in carrying out its daily functions.

Major Non-Conformity: The degree of an auditor's finding(s) that describes the level by which a Client is not meeting the requirements of the relevant SCS standard. Major non-conformities (NCs) are identified as one or more of the following within a system: a non-conformity that if not corrected will cause a total breakdown of the system or integrity of product(s), repeated failure(s), or failure to implement a corrective action plan (CAP) or to correct a non-conformity within an allotted time. Major non-conformities must be corrected within a specified timeframe, normally within thirty (30) days (under exceptional circumstances within sixty (60) days) when identified during a surveillance audit or must be corrected prior to the granting or renewing of certification, if identified during an initial evaluation or re-certification audit.

Minor Non-Conformity: The degree of an auditor's finding(s) that describes the level by which a Client is not meeting the requirements of the relevant SCS standard. Minor non-conformities (NCs) are identified as one or more of the following within a system: A temporary lapse, unusual or non-systematic, where the impacts of the non-conformance are limited, and a) prompt corrective action has been taken to ensure that it will not be repeated, and b) It does not lead to failure to comply with any relevant local, regional or national law or regulation. Minor non-conformities must be corrected within a specified timeframe, normally within ninety (90) days (under exceptional circumstances within 180 days) when identified during a surveillance audit, or must be corrected prior to the granting or renewing of certification, if identified during an initial evaluation or re-certification audit.

Opportunity for Improvement: An area in which an improvement is recommended but not required. OFIs are issued for two main reasons: 1) to identify issues that may lead to future non-conformities and/or 2) to add value to the auditing process by measuring an operation's performance against Veriflora Standard Tier 2 best management practices. Corrective actions for OFIs are voluntary and do not affect the standing of the certification.

Opening Meeting: At the beginning of the audit, the lead auditor will hold an opening meeting with the senior management. The purpose of the meeting is to:

- Introduce the audit team (if applicable).
- Clarify the audit scope, objectives, and schedule.
- Explain how the audit will be carried out.

Self-Assessment Checklist (SAC): The form completed by the Client to assess current conformance with the criteria of the Standard, along with supportive documentation. An updated Self-Assessment Checklist or Agricultural Production/Handling Plan must be submitted each year.

Standard: The written requirements that a grower or handler must meet in order to qualify for citing specific claims about certified products sold in the marketplace (Veriflora 3.1).

Surveillance (Annual) Audit: Inspection conducted by an SCS or an SCS-approved Auditor occurring at least annually to ensure ongoing conformity to the Veriflora Standard.

Step-by-Step Certification Process Description

1. The first step in the certification process is to submit the **Application Form**. Once we receive your application, you will be provided with the **SCS Assessment Services Agreement**. Forms and agreements should be completed, signed, and returned to the Veriflora® Certification Program staff. Forms may be emailed to Veriflora@scsglobalservices.com, or faxed to 510-452-6885.
2. After the Application Form and signed SCS Assessment Services Agreement are received by SCS, applicants will be provided with the **Self-Assessment Checklist (SAC)** in Excel spreadsheet format. *We recommend that you identify a person within the organization to lead this project and be the contact person for the SCS Auditor.*
3. The SCS Auditor will review the Self-Assessment Checklist and supporting documentation. The Auditor may contact you to request clarification or to request additional information or documentation.

Key components to success:

- Complete the Self-Assessment Checklist as thoroughly as possible.
- Submit to SCS as soon as possible electronically to expedite the audit process.

Note:

Approximately 60% of questions on the SAC can be answered by the operations manager/head grower, while about 30% are Human Resource related questions, and 10%

4. SCS will issue a **Work Order**, which includes the scope of the audit, facilities to be evaluated, professional auditing and administrative fees, and estimated Auditor travel expenses. The Work Order should be signed and returned to SCS as soon as possible.
5. Once we receive the signed Work Order, SCS will issue a **Retainer Fee Invoice** for 50% of the auditing fees and estimated travel expenses.
6. The SCS Auditor, SCS-approved Auditor or Veriflora® Certification Program staff will contact you to schedule the **Evaluation Audit**. Once a date has been agreed upon, you will receive the **Audit Plan**, detailing the scope of the audit, auditor / audit team, contact information, and schedule of audit activities.
7. The **Evaluation Audit** will include: on-site inspection, document review, evidence gathering, and interviews with office and management staff, and employees. A typical timeframe for completion is 1 to 1.5 days per site.

8. Following the completion of the Evaluation Audit, SCS will issue the **Final Invoice** for the balance of the Auditing Fees and actual travel expenses. Full payment must be received before the certification process can be completed.

What to expect on the day of the onsite audit:

- Your auditor will hold an Opening Meeting during which (s)he will explain the procedure and plan for the day.
- Then the auditor will request a tour of the facilities, during which (s)he will make observations, ask questions, take notes, and, with your permission, take photographs for use in the audit report.
- There are times blocked out in the Audit Plan for interviews with various departments / personnel, in order to gather information regarding the operation of your facility.
- There are times blocked out for 'Report Writing', during which the auditor will begin to prepare the Audit Report, detailing the findings, validating the criteria that have been met, and identifying Non-Conformities (NCs) and Opportunities for Improvement (OFIs). The auditor will require a place to set up a laptop, and some quiet time to review notes and begin putting together the report.
- At the conclusion of the audit, there will be a Closing Meeting, during which the Auditor will review the audit findings with you, and you will sign the report, indicating your understanding of audit findings. The SCS auditor will explain your and SCS' responsibilities in completing the audit process.

9. SCS will forward the final **Audit Report** to you generally within 20 business days of the audit. The timeframe for responding to the audit findings begins from the date the final Audit Report is sent.

10. You will then prepare a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) in response to Non-Conformities raised by the SCS Auditor, including corrective and preventive actions taken, plan of action, and evidence of implementation. The CAP and evidence of corrections are submitted to SCS within the timeframe specified in the Audit Report.

11. Once we have received the Audit Report, supporting documentation, and CAP, SCS will review these documents and render a Certification Decision. The decision will be either to grant or not to grant certification.

12. Upon successful certification, the Veriflora® Certification Program staff will provide you with a Veriflora® certification registration number, the applicable certification label with your unique registration number, a certificate valid for a period of three years, and the SCS Certification, Validation

and Verification Program Labeling and Language Guidelines. Please review these Guidelines to ensure proper use of the Veriflora® label. All uses of the label and language must be submitted to SCS for prior approval.

13. **Annual Surveillance Audit:** SCS will initiate the surveillance audit scheduling process by sending you a Work Order. You will then submit an updated Self-Assessment Checklist or Agricultural Production/Handling Plan or Peat Moss Production/Handling Plan and associated documentation, indicating any changes in your handling or production plan/practices, for review by SCS prior to the Surveillance Audit. Surveillance Audits should be scheduled with SCS within 30 days of the certification anniversary date and demonstrate continued compliance with the Standard in order to maintain certification status and avoid suspension.

14. The **Annual Surveillance Audit** is conducted and the Audit Report is prepared. Your response to the audit report, including corrective actions, CAPs, and documentary evidence, must be received within the timeframe specified in the Audit Report to avoid suspension of your certificate. Upon review of these documents and the CAP and evidence of corrective actions taken, SCS determines whether your operations remain in conformance with the Standard.

15. **Re-Evaluation Audit:** Certified clients must undergo a Re-Evaluation Audit every three years. Re-Evaluation Audits should be scheduled with SCS within 60 days prior to Certificate Expiration Date. The audit process follows the same steps as the Evaluation Audit described above. Following successful completion of the audit, a new 3-year certificate will be issued.

Rights & Responsibilities

SCS Clients have a right to non-discriminatory policies and procedures. Procedures shall not be used to impede or inhibit access to applicants. SCS shall make its services available to all applicants whose activities fall within our declared field of operation. Access shall not be conditional upon the size of the Client's operations, nor shall certification be conditional upon the number of certificates already issued.

The criteria against which the production or handling practices of a Client are evaluated shall be those outlined in the specified Standard. SCS shall confine requirements, evaluation and decision on certification to matters specifically related to the scope of the certification scheme(s) being considered.

Veriflora certificates are valid for three (3) years, subject to annual surveillance audits. SCS reserves the right to suspend, withdraw or terminate certificates. Reasons for suspension, withdrawal and termination include, but are not limited to: unwillingness or inability to correct nonconformities, unwillingness or inability to meet financial or contractual arrangements; misusing or damaging the integrity of the SCS or relevant trademarks; intentional violation of requirements; or association with fraud.

For a complete description of rights and responsibilities please refer to the SCS Assessment Services Agreement.

For additional information concerning SCS Client rights and responsibilities, please visit:
scsglobalservices.com/corporate-policies

Questions?

For questions about the certification process and to submit documents, contact
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