The SRP Assurance Scheme v 1.3

Overview

The **'SRP-Verified'** on-pack Label and Assurance Scheme are based on the SRP Standard and 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.

SRP Assurance Scheme: Key Features	Key Benefits
• 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	• 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

Key roles in the SRP Assurance Scheme

In its role as **Assurance Service Provider (ASP), GLOBALG.A.P.** manages implementation of the Scheme, including farmer registration, auditor training, verification audits, shadow audits 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 uploading them to the SRP

database; 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. A list of approved VBs is available at the GLOBALG.A.P. website: https://www.globalgap.org/uk_en/for-producers/sustainable-rice-plattform/)

To participate in the Assurance Scheme, **Individual Producers and Producer Groups** must register via a VB. Registration of individual growers 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 Policy and Standard.

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:

1. **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 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.

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%

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.

2. 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.

3. 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 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

For supply chain organizations to use the SRP Verified Label and make on-pack claims, they must first be audited and certified against SRP Chain of Custody (CoC) Standard by an 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 certification is required for on-product use of SRP claims and use of the on-pack SRP- Verified Label.

Claims and conditions

Use of the SRP-Verified on-pack 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. It is a critically important condition that users must be able to substantiate any on-pack sustainability claim. The SRP Secretariat and Technical Committee are responsible for pre-approving label designs and can offer support to ensure compliance.

Additional information

The following tools and approaches are available at the SRP website (www.sustainablerice.org):

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 (Audit Guidelines) 9 Dec 2020
5. SRP Assurance Scheme Information Note No 2 (SRP Chain of Custody Certification System, Qualifications of data collectors, Qualifications of auditors, Producer registration fees, and Approval of on-pack labels) 15 June 2021
6. SRP Brand Manual 2020
7. SRP Internal Management System (IMS) Standard for Producer Groups operating under the SRP Standard for Sustainable Rice Cultivation (IMS Standard) v 1.0
8. SRP Internal Management System (IMS) Guidelines for Producer Groups operating under the SRP Standard for Sustainable Rice Cultivation (IMS Guidelines) v 1.0
9. SRP Chain of Custody Policy and Standard v 1.0.
10. SRP Assurance Scheme FAQs
11. List of SRP-approved Verification Bodies

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