Audit and Certification Process of GUTcert for

PRODUCT CERTIFICATION ACC. TO ISO 17065

- **Sustainable Biomass acc. ISCC, REDcert and SURE**

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1. Principles of GUTcert Certification

A product certification starts with an initial audit and also includes (depending on the product norm) specifically defined surveillance audits and recertifications, where beside the product also the management system of the contracting company is included. On recertification, a new certification cycle begins. By means of the surveillance audits it can be determined whether the product, the organisation and its management system still fulfil the product standard´s requirements. In addition, the auditors determine, together with the organisation, which improvement potentials exist with respect to the management system and the product performance. Only such auditors are used who have high technical and methodical qualifications. The audit team:

- assesses the management system and the product and verifies its compliance with the internal processes of the client,
- determines whether the processes and procedures have been effectively introduced, implemented and maintained, and whether the objectives and specifications/requirements are being pursued,
- verifies the fulfilment of the normative requirements.

Specialties of the GUTcert certification process:

- Personal customer care during the preparation and performance of the process as well as quick response on inquiries.
- The organisation is understood as a partner. Goal of the audit is to improve business processes of the organisation on a lasting basis.
- Standards are accumulated knowledge of experts. The auditors of GUTcert apply this always considering the individual conditions of each client.
- The employees of GUTcert have a high degree of technical competence and skills to implement these principles.

The personal handling of proposals, the preparation of auditors to use audit time on-site effectively and the constant responsiveness of auditors and employees of the certification body are prerequisite to achieve these goals.

Remark: GUTcert is, amongst others, accredited certification body for the above mentioned systems, environmental audit organisation for inspections according to EMAS, technical surveillance authority for certifications according to EfBV and competent body for the admission of providers of and

measures according to AZAV. In all further general GUTcert documents however, the general term "certification body" is used.

2. Certification / Issue of the certificate

2.1. Preparation of the Audit

Data Collection

Is an organisation contacting GUTcert, a data sheet for first data collection is handed over with the request to submit basic data. To expedite the process, this data collection can be pursued by phone or internet.

Offer Preparation

On the basis of this basic data, GUTcert prepares an individual offer describing the conditions for the certification. The determination of audit programmes takes into account the size of the client's organisation, the scope of application and the complexity of the management system, the products and processes and the described level of effectiveness of the products, and the results of previous audits. In the interests of the client, advantage is taken of all opportunities to reduce the audit time.

If the company confirms the offer and places an order on this basis, a desired audit date can be specified. GUTcert can check the offer on the basis of the first document review and modify it, if necessary.

Contract Conclusion, Selection of the Auditors

GUTcert prepares the contract on certification and selects the audit team from the GUTcert pool of auditors. GUTcert auditors are appointed according to technical expertise in the relevant sectors, and are regularly trained on current questions of quality, environmental, energy and occupational health and safety management and the respective international standards.

Auditors and verifiers are subject to strict impartiality, and for this reason must not undertake any consultancy work for the relevant company within less than two years before and after the certification. The term 'consultancy' covers any form of cooperation in the development, implementation or maintenance of a management system and/or a product. This also includes the conduction of internal audits. Trainings and seminars are also considered as consultancy if specific company solutions are offered. Auditors are obligated to absolute confidentiality with regard to the information obtained during their activities.

The certification contract is provided to the organisation together with the mark agreement and the assignment of the auditors. The organisation has the right to reject the auditors assigned by GUTcert. In this case, a new audit team will be assigned by GUTcert. For better preparation for the certification procedure, on request the organisation will be provided with our latest checklist, modified to all new requirements. The auditor prepares a detailed audit schedule for the organisation.

When GUTcert has to subcontract work related to certification to an external body or person, GUTcert takes full responsibility for such subcontracted work and maintain its responsibility for granting, maintaining, extending, suspending or withdrawing. Additionally, GUTcert ensures that the subcontracted body or person is competent and complies with the applicable provisions of this Standard and other standards and guides relevant to testing, inspection or other technical activities and is not involved either directly or through the person's employer with the design or production of the product in such a way that impartiality would be compromised. GUTcert will always obtain the applicant`s consent for the sub-contract.

2.2. Certification Procedure / Assessment

Pre-audit

A pre-audit is always carried out by a member of the later audit team. Above all it serves to rectify uncertainties with regard to the documentation and the implementation of relevant procedures, and to identify weaknesses. This enables the client to correct any possible critical points before the certification audit. It also serves to set priorities for the planning of the certification procedure. A report is compiled on the results of the pre-audit.

Audit Preparation

The audit preparation always includes a review of the product and management system documentation. The client gets a detailed list of the minimum documentation which has to be submitted.

Until the audit preparation, the most relevant documents should be available for the product, as well as the management system manual and the agreement to the auditors proposed by GUTcert. The product and management system documentation usually includes the Management Manual, in which the product to be verified is included as well. Further documents such as work instructions or forms required for understanding the entire system and the product, respectively should also be submitted (see also the detailed instructions on the web site of GUTcert).

The audit preparation serves to evaluate the client's status and his/her understanding with regard to the requirements of the standard. Missing documents or further information needed by the auditor will be requested.

This stage does not require on-site verification. The readiness of the organisation for the audit on-site and the resources required for this purpose are determined. A report of the document review is not necessary but can be submitted to the client on special demand. Additional expenses have to be calculated.

This is followed by an agreement process with the client on the focal points for the on-site audit.

Usually the on-site audit can be carried out at the agreed time (period between audit preparation and on-site audit must not exceed 6 months). If the audit preparation reveals major gaps or non-conformities, these will be communicated to the client. This may make it advisable or necessary to postpone the date of the on-site audit in order allow the organisation to rectify non-conformities and close gaps.

On-site Audit

Following the agreement on the audit date, the audit team carries out the on-site audit on the basis of audit criteria and documentation for system audits at the client's location/s. The procedure is based upon the specifications of ISO 19011 and starts with an opening discussion, followed by interviews in the departments, inspections, monitoring of activities and conditions, interviews with employees and document reviews in order to collect evidences of compliance with all the requirements of the standard.

In the debriefing, the lead auditor/verifier gives the responsible person an interim verbal report in order to inform about the status of the certification of the management system. This gives the opportunity to clarify any remaining uncertainties, for example by the immediate implementation of corrective actions.

If non-conformities are observed, the organisation is given the opportunity to specify measures to correct the non-conformity by a date specified in the non-conformity report. The successful implementation of these measures must be confirmed by the auditor/verifier either by examining subsequently submitted documents or by a follow-up audit on-site before the certification procedure can be continued. Complaints will be verified during the next audit for effective corrections.

2.3. Certification Decession / Issue of Certificate

Within 10 working days, the lead auditor/verifier writes the audit report. This serves as a basis for internal checks and audits until the next certification and helps to conduct them more effectively on the basis of the intensive initial verification.

The final decision on the issue of a certificate lies within the Certification Committee. It issues the certificate on successful verification of the complete certification procedure. The multi-step process of the certification decision is carried out according to the process description in document AA145_Zert_MS.

The certificate is valid from the moment of its issue according to the product norm. Alternatively, the start date of certificate validity can be determined individually as part of the certification decision. The certificates are available in the formats DIN A3 and DIN A4, and in various languages, if allowed by the product norm. The status of the certification is available in public.

2.4. Certification Symbol

Organisations certified by GUTcert may use our certification mark free of charge. They are entitled to use this certification symbol on letterheads, brochures and information material, always in compliance with the certification mark agreement of GUTcert.

The use of the certificate and the certification mark is specified in the GUTcert Certification Regulations. These certification mark agreement is part of the certification contract concluded with the organisation.

3. Maintenance of the Certification

3.1. Surveillance Audits

In a product certification, there could be requests for a surveillance audit after issuing certificate depending on the product requirements. The time period depends on the product norm. The surveillance does not cover the full range of the initial audit, but is restricted to essential features which ensure the functioning of the product and the management system, such as:

- Internal audits and product and management review
- Handling of complaints and incidents
- Assessments of modifications
- Progress with respect to the continuous improvement (also the repairing of recommendations or non-conformities and complaints from previous audits)
- modifications of product and product quality

Besides, the procedure follows that of a certification procedure.

The conclusion of the certification contract covers a complete commission for both, the certification audit and the surveillance audits. The invoicing for the corresponding audits takes place only after the provision of the services by GUTcert.

3.2. Takeover of Existing Certificates

A change of the certification body is also possible during the validity of a certification. The assessment of the certification and the issue of the certificate are pursued according to the respective IAF-guideline.

4. Recertification

The period of validity is specified by the product norm. A recertification audit has to be conducted prior to the expiry of the certificate. The procedure of a recertification audit mainly follows that of an initial certification. Mainly a verification of the current documentation is carried out. With a recertification audit on-site the continuing conformity and effectiveness of the product as a whole is

assessed and the continuing importance and applicability of the certification on the defined scope is confirmed. Earlier audit reports on surveillance audits are considered during the recertification audit. In addition, the corresponding areas of the management system and the product are controlled.

5. Extension of the Scope of Application

An extension of the scope of application can take place in connection with a surveillance audit or a separate audit. Following the receipt of the request, the client first receives a detailed list of the minimum documentation to be submitted. This is reviewed by the auditor/verifier, who then notifies the client of the required measures. An additional audit may be necessary. The client eventually receives a new certificate.

6. Annulment, Suspension, Restriction and Withdrawal of Certificates

If the requirements for the validity of a certificate cease to exist, measures must be taken by the certification body in order to prevent the use of this certificate, and, where appropriate, carry out the further or renewed certification.

Procedures for the annulment, suspension or withdrawal of certificates are documented. The status of every certificate is made publicly available.

6.1. Annulment

A certificate is annulled if the certified organisation, without direct responsibility, no longer fulfils the conditions for the further validity of the certification. These include in particular bankruptcy, the change to another organisation or the discontinuation of the certified product.

Such circumstances will be verified as soon as the certification body becomes aware of this (usually by contacting the organisation). In the event of consistent reasons, the certification contract must be cancelled, and the organisation must be requested in writing to return the certificate and refrain from using the certification symbol in advertising or referring to the certification in any other way.

6.2. Suspension

If the specified time period for the conclusion of the surveillance procedure is exceeded, or the certified product of the client persistently fails to comply with the requirements, the validity of the certificate must be suspended. Suspension will be notified in writing, with the requirement to refrain from using the certification mark in advertising or referring to the certification in any other way until the suspension is lifted. A certificate may also be suspended at the request of the client.

Such suspension can be applied for a maximum of 6 months. A surveillance audit is carried out in order to lift the suspension. On successful conclusion of the surveillance procedure, the suspension is lifted and the existing certificate becomes valid again. If the problems of a suspension are not resolved after the specified period, this may result in withdrawal or restriction of the scope.

6.3. Restriction of the Scope of Application

If the requirements for a particular part of the area of applicability of a certificate are not fulfilled persistently, the scope of the certificate can be restricted by the certification body.

6.4. Withdrawal

A certificate must be withdrawn by the certification body if:

a) the suspension of a certificate cannot be lifted within the required time period or
b) the certification contract with an organisation is cancelled due its own fault.
c) the organisation does not meet the standard requirements after the set deadline
d) the organisation does not produce the corresponding products anymore

The organisation will be requested in writing to return the certificate and refrain from using the certificate or certification mark in advertising or referring to the existing certification in any other way.

In the case of a), this may require cancellation of the certification contract or performance of a recertification procedure.

The head of the certification body is responsible for the withdrawal of a certificate.