Regulation for the Certification/Approval of Conformity to GOTS, Textile Exchange, NPF and SFA Standards

Summary

Ed.	Rev.	Date	Reason of the revision	Edited	Verified	Approved
00_01	00	26/02/2024	General review	RSC/UQI	RAQ	CdA

1 Normative references and other reference documents

Norm	Title/Description
ISO/IEC 17065	Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies certifying product, process and services.
ISO/IEC 17025	General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories.
Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS)	Defines the requirements to ensure the organic status of textile products.
Manual for the Implementation of GOTS	Provides interpretations and clarifications for specific GOTS standard criteria.
Conditions for the use of GOTS Signs	Defines the conditions of use of the GOTS logo.
Approval Procedure and Requirements for Certifications Bodies (GOTS)	Defines the procedures for Certification/Approval, supervision and requirements for the Accreditation Bodies and Certification Bodies of the GOTS Standard.
Accreditation and Certification Procedures for Textile Exchange Standards	Defines the procedures for certification, supervision and requirements for the Accreditation Bodies and Certification Bodies of the Textile Exchange standards
Content Claim Standard (CCS)	Defines the fundamental chain of custody principles for all Textile Exchange Standards.
Content Claim Standard (CCS) – Certification Procedures	Defines regulatory requirements for Accreditation Bodies and Certification Bodies specific to the CCS standard.
Content Claim Standard (CCS) – User Manual	Supports organizations in implementing the CCS standard.
Global Recycled Standard (GRS)	Defines requirements for third-party certification of products with recycled content, their chain of custody, social and environmental practices, and chemical product restrictions.
Global Recycled Standard (GRS) – Implementation Manual	Provides interpretations and clarifications for specific GRS standard criteria.
Global Recycled Standard (GRS) - Certification Procedures	Defines regulatory requirements for Accreditation Bodies and Certification Bodies specific to the GRS standard.
Organic Content Standard (OCS)	Defines the requirements for third-party certification of products made with organic raw materials.
Organic Content Standard (OCS) - Certification Procedures	Defines regulatory requirements for Accreditation Bodies and Certification Bodies specific to the OCS standard.
Organic Content Standard (OCS) – User manual	Supports organizations in implementing the OCS standard.
Responsible Wool Standard (RWS)	Defines the requirements for third-party certification of products made with wool coming from farms that pay attention to animal welfare.
Responsible Mohair Standard (RMS)	Defines the requirements for third-party certification of products made with mohair coming from farms that pay attention to animal welfare.
Responsible Alpaca Standard (RAS)	Defines the requirements for third-party certification of products made with alpacas coming from farms that pay attention to animal welfare.
Responsible Animal Fiber (RAF)– Certification Procedures	Defines regulatory requirements for Accreditation Bodies and Certification Bodies specific to RWS, RMS and RAS standards.
Responsible Wool Standard (RWS) – User Manual	Supports organizations in implementing the RWS standard.
Responsible Mohair Standard (RMS) – User Manual	Supports organizations in implementing the RMS standard.
Responsible Alpaca Standard (RAS) – User Manual	Supports organizations in implementing the RAS standard.
Recycled Claim Standard (RCS)	Defines the requirements for third-party certification of products with recycled content and their chain of custody.
Recycled Claim Standard (RCS) - Certification Procedures	Defines regulatory requirements for Accreditation Bodies and Certification Bodies specific to the RCS standard.

Recycled Claim Standard (RCS) – Implementation Manual	Provides interpretations and clarifications for specific RCS standard criteria.
Responsible Down Standard (RDS)	Defines the requirements for third-party certification of products made with feathers and down from goose and duck farms attentive to animal welfare.
Responsible Down Standard (RDS) - Certification Procedures	Defines regulatory requirements for Accreditation Bodies and Certification Bodies specific to the RDS standard.
Responsible Down Standard (RDS) – User Manual	Supports organizations in implementing the RDS standard.
Standards Claims Policy (TE)	Provides organizations with guidelines for making declarations and communications about the Textile Exchange Standards
Standards Logo Use Specifications (TE)	Defines the conditions of use of all Textile Exchange standards logos.
Nativa™ Protocol (Nativa Precious Fiber - NPF)	Ensures the quality and traceability along the entire chain of custody of the wool coming from farms that pay attention to animal welfare and environmental and social sustainability.
Sustainable Fibre Alliance Cashmere Standard (SFA)	It guarantees the production of cashmere using exclusively sustainable practices, which result in a reduced environmental footprint and a fair economic return for participants along the entire chain of custody, from shepherds to retailers.
Other provisions, circulars or clarifications	Other provisions, circulars or clarifications issued by the regulatory bodies
Regulations, circulars and provisions of the Accreditation Body	Requirements for the accreditation of bodies that issue declarations of conformity to organisations.
Contract for the Certification of Conformity to GOTS and Textile Exchange Standards, NPF, SFA (hereinafter, for brevity, "ICEA Contract")	Contract that governs the relationships between ICEA and the Organization for the provision of the Certification Service.
Contract for the Approval of GOTS Accessories and Textile Dyes and Auxiliary Agents (Chemical Inputs) in the GOTS Positive List (hereinafter, for brevity, “ICEA Contract”)	Contract governing the relationships between ICEA and the Organization for the provision of the GOTS Accessories and Chemical Inputs Approval Service.
List of Fees for Control and Certification Services in Compliance with GOTS, Textile Exchange, NPF, SFA Standards (hereinafter, for brevity, also just "List of Fees")	Defines the fees relating to ICEA control and certification/approval services.

Note: the documents and standards are intended in the current version.

2 Premise

The Institute for Ethical and Environmental Certification, hereinafter referred to as ICEA, is a non-profit consortium made up of entities that operate in the field of activities related to sustainable development. ICEA provides certification services according to the principles of impartiality, competence, confidentiality, transparency and rapid and effective response to complaints and appeals, to increase market trust in certified productions.

ICEA is accredited in accordance with the ISO/IEC 17065 standard, with the “Approval Procedures and Requirements for Certification Bodies” of the Global Organic Standard GmbH and with the “Accreditation and Certification Procedures for Textile Exchange Standards” of the Textile Exchange for the issuing of certifications of conformity to following standards:

- Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS);
- Content Claim Standard (CCS);
- Global Recycled Standard (GRS);
- Organic Content Standard (OCS);

- Recycled Claim Standard (RCS);
- Responsible Wool Standard (RWS) (supply chain only);
- Responsible Mohair Standard (RMS) (supply chain only);
- Responsible Alpaca Standard (RAS) (supply chain only);
- Responsible Down Standard (RDS) (supply chain only);
- Nativa™ Protocol (Nativa Precious Fiber - NPF);
- Sustainable Fibre Alliance Cashmere Standard (SFA).

ICEA organizes its Control and Certification/Approval activities at its central office, where the governing bodies operate and where decisions on Control and Certification/Approval are taken. The foreign offices take care of the implementation of the Control Programme.
The management of Control and Certification activities is ensured by the Certification Scheme Manager (RSC), the decision on appeals is taken by the Appeals Committee (CRR) and the Impartiality requirement relating to ICEA activities is guaranteed by the Impartiality Safeguarding Committee (CSI). ICEA, for the Control, Laboratory Tests and activities related to Certification/Approval, can make use of qualified external personnel and/or organizations. ICEA ensures the maintenance of the skills of internal and external staff through education, training and updating activities.
The contents of this Regulation are binding for ICEA and its customers (Organisations). This Regulation must be considered solely in its entirety and constitutes an integral part of the Contract for the Certification of Conformity to GOTS and Textile Exchange Standards, NPF, SFA and of the Contract for the Approval of GOTS Accessories and Dyes and Textile Auxiliary Agents (Chemical Inputs) in the GOTS Positive list (hereinafter, for brevity, we refer to both documents with the term "ICEA Contract"), signed by the parties. The content of the Regulation may be subject to review by ICEA in the manner provided for by the ICEA Contract.
All documents and reference standards cited in this Regulation, including the Statute and ICEA organizational chart, are available in copy at the ICEA offices and on the website www.icea.bio.

3 Scope

This Regulation governs the conditions and procedures through which ICEA:

- issues, renews and/or modifies the Certification/Approval in favour of the organisation;
- carries out its control activities for the organisation;
- applies towards the Organisation, on a precautionary or definitive basis, the measures adopted in the event of non-conformity, whether confirmed or suspected, in relation to the standards for which ICEA is accredited or authorised.

This Regulation applies to organizations that request the Control and Certification/Approval services referred to in the ICEA Contract and that carry out at least one of the activities listed in Table 1 and referring to products falling within the scope of the GOTS, Textile Exchange, NPF and SFA standards.

Table 1

Activities		Services offered by ICEA								
		Certification								*Approval in accordance with GOTS*
		GOTS	**OCS**	**GRS**	**RCS**	**RAF**	**RDS**	**NPF**	**SFA**	
1	Mechanical Processes and Product Manufacturing	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
2	Wet processes and finishing operations	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
3	Trading	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
4	Production and/or distribution of dyes and textile auxiliary agents (chemical inputs)									x
5	Production and/or distribution of textile accessories									x

4 Terms and definitions

Accreditation Body	Authorized third party body that formally certifies that a certification body has the competence to carry out specific assessment tasks.
Audit (Inspection Visit)	Activity carried out by ICEA through auditors appointed by it, aimed at verifying the conformity of products and/or production and/or management processes to the reference standard. The audit can be ordinary (initial or surveillance audit) or supplementary (additional to the ordinary audit). The audit can also be announced (the audit date is agreed in advance), semi-announced (announced audit with limited notice), or unannounced (audit with minimal or no advance notice). Finally, the audit can be carried out on-site (the evaluation is carried out at the site being audited) or remotely (the evaluation is carried out in a place other than the site being audited).
Certification Requirement	Requirement specified by the reference Standard, including product requirements, which must be satisfied by the Organization as a condition for issuing or maintaining the Certification/Approval.
Certification Scheme	Certification system (conformity assessment) of products, to which the same specified requirements, specific rules and procedures apply. Defines the rules, procedures, and management methods to implement product certification/approval.
Certification/Approval	Attestation issued by an ICEA as a third-party certification body and concerning the assessment of conformity of products or processes with the requirements prescribed by the reference standard. The term “Approval” is used exclusively in reference to chemical inputs used in the processing of GOTS products and accessories added to GOTS products. In all other cases the term "Certification" is used.
Conformity Assessment	Any activity aimed at determining whether the certification requirements are fully satisfied.
Control System	Set of rules, procedures and management model for carrying out Conformity Assessment.
Correction (Treatment of Non-Conformity)	Action to eliminate a detected Non-Conformity.
Corrective Action	Activity that must be undertaken by the organization to eliminate the causes of existing non-conformities or other unwanted situations and in order to prevent their recurrence.
Non Conformity	Failure to satisfy a requirement by a product or a production or management process of the Organization.
Organization (Client)	A person or legal entity that produces, processes, markets or distributes the products subject to certification and that is responsible for ensuring that the certification requirements, including product requirements, are met.
Preventive Action	Activity that must be undertaken by the organization to eliminate the causes of potential non-conformities or other unwanted situations and in order to prevent their occurrence.
Product Requirement	Requirement that refers directly to a product, specified in the reference standard.
Regulatory bodies	Body, generally an association, which carries out drafting, publication and revision of regulations. In this document, this term refers to the bodies that have drawn up the Certification Standards covered by this regulation.
Sample	Representative part of the entire lot/batch of finished product, raw material, semi-finished product or chemical substance, selected and collected by personnel appointed by ICEA, to be subjected to laboratory tests for the purpose of collecting information on the conformity of the sample itself. The minimum quantity taken must be sufficient for the expected analytical determination.

Scope of the Certification	Identification of the product/process for which certification is issued, of the applicable certification scheme, of the reference standard with which the product is assessed as compliant.
Self-monitoring system	Activity carried out independently by the Organization with the aim of monitoring, from within its own company, the conformity of the production process and product to the prescribed requirements, also through Preventive Actions, as well as checking their actual effectiveness.
Test	Technical operation which consists in determining one or more characteristics of a given product according to specified procedures.
Test Report	Document certifying the results of the Test and other information relating to it.

5 General Aspect

5.1 General principles

The activity carried out by ICEA on the basis of the Contract and these Regulations is inspired by the following general principles:

- the Organization is the only entity responsible for satisfying the Certification requirements of its products and production and management processes and is required to ensure and maintain full and systematic compliance with the regulatory requirements and any other relevant requirements, at all times and for every aspect of your business. Knowledge and correct application of the provisions of the reference Standard as well as of the ICEA Regulation is a Certification requirement;
- ICEA has the responsibility to evaluate, according to ordinary diligence, the evidence provided by the Organization and/or collected in carrying out its activities, within the limits of the sampling nature of the checks carried out, concerning the conformity of the production and management processes and of the products of the Organization, and to base the decision relating to Certification/Approval on this evidence. ICEA does not assume any obligation regarding the positive outcome of the controls carried out for the issue or maintenance of the Certification/Approval.

5.2 Use of Licenses, Certificates and Conformity Marks

The mark and distinctive signs of ICEA are the exclusive property of ICEA. The ICEA mark distinguishes the Certification Body of the same name and allows to identify operators who have achieved ICEA Certification/Approval in compliance with one or more Certification Standards.
The use of the ICEA mark and distinctive signs, as well as the Scope Certificate and the Letter of Approval, is regulated by this Regulation and by the ICEA Contract.

5.3 Concession and use of the mark

The Organization subject to the ICEA Control System may request authorization to use the ICEA mark for its commercial communications, carried out by any means and in relation to purposes pertinent to the activity referred to in the Contract. The use of the ICEA mark for product labelling is excluded from the scope of this article.
The Organization must always request prior authorization from ICEA to be able to carry out any communication regarding the Certification (advertising, headed paper, etc.), sending the relevant drafts to ICEA itself which will be subjected to conformity assessment and approval.
The Organization undertakes, in case of use of the same commercial communication, to comply with ICEA's decisions on this point as well as those relating to the methods of communication of the Certification.
The Organization must only use the ICEA mark made available by ICEA itself, without being able to extract it from documents or any other form of publication. In the case of reductions or enlargements, the dimensional proportions of the figures and text must always be respected, within the single mark and between the different marks. The use of the ICEA mark is, in any case, optional.

5.4 Communication of Certification

The Organization can make public the Scope Certificate or the Letter of Approval and the documents relating to the products covered by the Certification/Approval, respecting the specific provisions established by the reference Standards and by this Regulation.
The Organization cannot implement incorrect or misleading forms of communication of the Certification/Approval, i.e. such as to mislead the recipients of the message. The communication must always be clear, truthful and referring to the field of application of the Certification/Approval, understood as the set of information reported on the Scope Certificate or on the Letter of Approval (Reference standard, Organization that has obtained the Certification/Approval, date of issue of the Certification/Approval, current issue of the Certification, activities carried out at the production sites, certified/approved products, etc.). It is forbidden to make references to the Certification/Approval, as well as to use the logo when the Certification/Approval has not yet been issued or has been revoked or suspended or the Organization has renounced it.
The Organization must not implement forms of communication that could bring ICEA into disrepute.
The Certification/Approval, its publication and its advertising use are reserved for the Organization and are not transferable to other parties not authorized by ICEA.

5.5 Impartiality

ICEA ensures that its Certification/Approval activities are conducted in compliance with the principle of impartiality and in the absence of conflicts of interest, or ensuring that these have been resolved so as not to negatively influence the activities themselves carried out by ICEA.
ICEA does not participate in the design, manufacturing, distribution of the certified product and does not offer or provide consultancy to its customers.
ICEA ensures that all its staff (both internal and external), including committees, who could influence certification activities, act impartially.
Furthermore, ICEA is committed to continuously identifying risks to its impartiality in order to eliminate or minimize such risks. For this purpose ICEA:

- has defined its impartiality policy;
- identified the tools for detecting impartiality risks and their management;
- has a Committee for the Safeguarding of Impartiality (CSI).

5.6 Information system

The requirements and methods of access and management of the ICEA Control System are described in this Regulation, which is made available to all parties interested in ICEA Certification/Approval services who request it in compliance with the provisions of the reference standards. The information relating to the ICEA Control System, its additions and modifications is published on the ICEA website (www.icea.bio) and/or communicated with information circulars.
The information can also be requested from the ICEA central office and/or from the territorial office responsible for the territory. The references to the offices and managers are published on the website www.icea.bio.

6 Procedure for control and Certification/Approval

6.1 Application for Certification/Approval

In order to start the process of subjection to the ICEA Control System, the Organization sends ICEA the specific Application for Certification/Approval, appropriate to the field of activity carried out, by completing the WeICEA portal or other forms requested by ICEA.
The Certification/Approval Application can be forwarded by any Organization whose activities fall within the scope of one of the Standards in the introduction and does not entail the obligation for the Organization to use other ICEA services.
The Application for Certification/Approval must contain at least the following information:

- the list of products to be certified/approved with their specifications (e.g. composition);
- the Standard for which the Organization requests Certification/Approval;
- the characteristics and general information of the Organization, including company name, site addresses, activities and processes carried out;

- information concerning the processes outsourced by the Organization, including specifications on the types of processes entrusted, the list of subcontractors and their production sites, any certifications obtained by the subcontractors;
- information on any denials of Certification/Approval by other Certification Bodies, including the reasons for the denial;
- a copy of the latest audit report, if the Organization had previously been audited for the reference Standard;
- information about each Certification/Approval Application made in the past in relation to the reference Standard (Certifications/Approvals obtained, suspended, withdrawn or expired);
- information about any other Certification/Approval and relationship with other Certification Bodies that share the same Certification/Approval scope;
- any other information required by the reference standard and the documents connected to them.

The Certification/Approval Application must be completed by sending all supporting documentation, within 180 days from the date of signing the ICEA Contract.
Failure to submit, within the deadlines indicated by ICEA, the mandatory documentation to be attached to the Certification/Approval Application will result in the rejection of the application itself.

> *Note valid only for Organizations carrying out the activities referred to in points 4 and 5 of Table 1:* When a new revision of the GOTS Standard is released, ICEA cannot accept new applications for approval of accessories and chemical inputs in accordance with the previous version of the same standard.

6.1.1 Modification of the Application for Certification/Approval

For the entire period of validity of the Contract with ICEA, the Organization must promptly transmit to ICEA, by completing the WeICEA portal or other forms requested by ICEA, all changes compared to the previous Application for Certification/Approval relating to the certified/approved products, the sites used (own and those of third parties), the production processes and any other changes that may influence its ability to satisfy the certification requirements.
ICEA will review the information transmitted in order to ascertain its completeness and conformity and will take the consequent actions (e.g. extension or reduction of the scope of the certification/approval).

6.1.2 Contract for the Certification/Approval

The Contract signed by the Organization and ICEA regulates the relationship for the provision of the Certification/Approval service in compliance with the Standard(s) indicated in the Certification/Approval Application. Failure to sign and return the Contract will result in ICEA's rejection of the Certification/Approval Application, with consequent impossibility for the Organization to obtain the requested Certification/Approval.
With the Contract the Organization:

a) requests subjection to the ICEA Control System by accepting the obligations indicated therein, the economic conditions, the payment methods and notification to ICEA of the relevant changes and, in any case, everything provided therein;
b) declares to have received, to know and accept everything provided for by the Contract itself, by this Regulation and by any of their annexes;
c) signs the information regarding the use of personal data by ICEA.

The Organization may renounce Certification at any time, in the ways provided for in the Contract.

6.1.3 Fees for Certification/Approval service

ICEA activities are financed through the fees requested from the Organizations for Control and Certification/Approval Services.
The fees are defined in the ICEA List of Fees whose acceptance by the Organization occurs through the signing of the ICEA Contract, to which the relevant estimated fee is attached, calculated on the basis of the data provided by the Organization.
The ICEA List of fees is public and available to all subjects who request it.

6.2 Review of the Application for Certification/Approval

Before carrying out the audit, ICEA conducts a review of the Application for Certification/Approval in order to ensure that the information regarding the Organization, the products and all other data is sufficient to start the process of subjection to the ICEA Control System and that the Application for Certification/Approval is complete and adequate. ICEA also verifies its competence and availability of resources, in order to ensure the correct flow of the Certification/Approval process.
In the event of a positive outcome of the Review, ICEA provides for the planning and execution of the Audits.
In the event of a negative outcome, ICEA communicates to the Organization the deficiencies and/or non-conformities with the Certification/Approval requirements requested, indicating the deadlines within which the supplementary documentation must be submitted or, if necessary, issues a provision of Denial of the Certification/Approval.
ICEA may refuse to accept a Certification Application and to sign a Certification Contract with an Organization when there are well-founded and demonstrated reasons, such as an Organization that participates in illegal activities, which has a history of repeated non-conformity with Certification requirements, or when it is registered in one of the lists of banned companies indicated by the relevant Regulatory Body, or other similar problems.

> *Note valid only for organizations that carry out the activities referred to in point 5 of Table 1:* Valid test reports in order to verify the requirements established by the standard in reference to the limit values of residues in the accessories, are the basis of the evaluation of the accessories themselves.

6.3 Audit

Following the positive outcome of the review of the Application for Certification/Approval, ICEA plans and carries out the audits in order to verify the information transmitted by the organization and compliance with the applicable requirements defined by the reference Standard.
The number and duration of the audits necessary to verify the Organization's compliance are defined by ICEA in compliance with the provisions of the Regulatory Bodies and based on the risk level of the Organization itself.
The audits are carried out by qualified personnel appointed by ICEA, they can be announced, semi-announced, unannounced, on-site or remote and may involve the taking of a sample of raw materials, finished products or inputs, to be subjected to laboratory tests in order to ascertain the conformity of company products or processes to the requirements defined by the reference standard.

> *Note valid only for organizations that carry out the activities referred to in points 1, 2 and 3 of Table 1:* In compliance with the provisions of the Regulatory Bodies, ICEA normally carries out an on-site audit every year at all the Organization's facilities and its non-certified subcontractors included in the Certification Application, without prejudice to the exceptions provided for by the same provisions.

> *Note valid only for organizations that carry out the activities referred to in point 4 of Table 1:* In accordance with the provisions of the Regulatory Body, the on-site audit at all the Organization's facilities and its subcontractors is carried out before the issuance/renewal of the Letter of Approval, which may be valid for up to three years or until implementation of the new revision of the Standard, if this is prior to the expiry of the Letter of Approval.

> *Note valid only for organizations that carry out the activities referred to in point 5 of Table 1:* In compliance with the provisions of the Regulatory Body, no audits are foreseen at these Organizations.

At least the following aspects will be checked during the audit:

a) the Organization's production system through the inspection of the production and storage facilities (used by the Organization or by subcontractors), including, if necessary, those where the products covered by certification are not produced, stored or administered.
b) records and financial data in order to verify the flows of certified products;

c) areas of risk for the integrity of the product;
d) implementation of the changes to the reference standard and related requirements;
e) implementation of corrective actions in response to any non-conformities detected during previous audits;
f) other applicable relevant aspects specific to the certification scheme (e.g. social requirements, waste management, records relating to production inputs).

The objective evidence collected during the audit and the results of the audit itself are recorded by the auditor on the checklist and on the audit report respectively. This last document lists any non-conformities found and must be signed not only by the auditor, but also by the Organization's contact person (legal representative, site manager, or their delegate), for acknowledgment and acceptance. Should the organization refuse to sign the audit report, the auditor will note this refusal on the audit report and/or checklist. In any case ICEA will consider the audit, its results and any sampling valid.
A copy of the Audit Report and the checklist, where required by the Regulatory Body, will be released to the Organization.

6.4 Review of Audit Results and Certification/Approval Decision

6.4.1 Review and Decision

The decision on Certification/Approval is taken by ICEA following the Review of all the information collected on the Organization and all the results of the carried out audits, including the results of any laboratory tests.
ICEA ensures that the Audit Review and the Certification/Approval Decision are carried out by staff appointed by ICEA, other than the one that conducted the audits. The Certification/Approval Decision must be completed within 60 days of the audit. If the Decision is not made within this period, the Certification/Approval must be denied and another audit must be carried out before the Organisation can be certified in accordance with the Standard.
The decision to issue the Certification is based exclusively on evidence of the Organisation's compliance with the requirements of the reference standard, collected during the audit and review processes.
In the event of a positive decision concerning the certification/approval, ICEA issues the certification documents as described in the next point and, if required, registers the Organisation in the list of certified organisations of the reference Standard. ICEA regularly updates the public databases made available by the Standard Bodies, communicating the required information (e.g. name, addresses, contacts, product specifications, types of processes carried out, validity of the certificate, etc.).
The Certification/Approval Decision may include a request for correction of minor non-conformities found during audits within a specified time period.
In the case of Critical or Major non-conformity, the certificate cannot be issued until the Organization has demonstrated the implementation of corrective actions.
If, however, ICEA decides not to issue the Certification/Approval, it will inform the Organization about the reasons for the denial, with explicit reference to the not satisfied requirements of the reference Standard.
Without prejudice to the possibility to appeal to ICEA against such denial, the Organization that intends, however, to obtain the Certification/ Approval shall demonstrate that it has implemented the necessary corrective actions by sending comprehensive documentation to support. In this case, ICEA will re-examine and, where appropriate, carry out new audits. If the Organization fails to implement corrective actions within the indicated deadlines, the Application for Certification/Approval will automatically fail and will be deemed rejected by ICEA.

6.4.1 Certification/Approval Documents

In case of a positive decision concerning the Certification/Approval ICEA will issue the following documents:

a) **Letter of Approval** in accordance with the GOTS standard to companies that produce and/or distribute GOTS Accessories or Dyes and Textile Auxiliaries (chemical inputs). The Letter of Approval is valid until the new version of the GOTS Standard comes into force, either for a shorter period based on the risk assessment made by ICEA, or until ICEA withdraws it. The Letter of Approval may contain inputs evaluated in accordance with only one version of the Standard. In the period between the release of a new version of the Standard and its implementation, the previous version of the

Standard remains in force and two valid Letters of Approval may be issued, for the same Organization, based on the two different versions of the Standard;

b) **Scope Certificate** for the reference scheme to the Organizations that produce, work or sell products other than those indicated in the previous point. The Scope Certificate is valid for one year from the date of issue or until withdrawal by ICEA. The date (month and day) on which the first Scope Certificate is issued is generally designated as Anniversary Date. The Scope Certificate attests the conformity of the production process and the products of the Organization to the requirements established by the reference Standard. It also authorizes the Organization to use references to the Certification in the labelling, advertising or commercial documents of the products indicated therein. The Organization may provide a copy of its scope certificate in order to inform its customers of the Certification obtained. The Certificate is published on the website www.icea.bio;

c) **Transaction Certificates** (TC) issued to the Organizations that have a valid Scope Certificate and that certifies compliance with the Reference Standard of specific batches or production batches sold by the Organization. This document is issued following an explicit request by the Organization (complete with all the documents supporting the sale), after verification by ICEA of information relating to volumes (quantities purchased/sold), traceability data, commercial records (transport documents and invoices for incoming and outgoing raw materials, Transaction Certificates for incoming raw materials, records of any processing carried out by the Organisation or its third parties on the product sold, and all other mandatory documents required by the Reference Standard) and any laboratory tests required by the Reference Standard.
The Transaction certificate accompanies the certified products throughout the supply chain and is issued by ICEA within 14 calendar days following receipt of a complete and valid request from the Organization.

Note valid only for Organisations applying for certification according to the GOTS, NPF and SFA Standard: ICEA will not issue Transaction Certificates after 180 days from the date of the least recent shipment. However, if the documentation is adequate and the information complete, based on the risk assessment, ICEA will consider whether to still issue the requested Transaction Certificates beyond 180 days from the date of shipment.

Note valid only for Organisations applying for certification according to one of the Textile Exchange Standards: ICEA will not issue Transaction Certificates after 90 days from the date of the least recent shipment. However, if documentation is adequate and information complete, based on risk assessment, and in accordance with Textile Exchange restrictions for Transaction Certificate requests received more than 180 days from the date of the least recent shipment, ICEA will consider whether to issue such Transaction Certificates requested more than 90 days from the date of the least recent shipment.
ICEA shall not issue Transaction Certificates 30 days after the expiration date of the Scope Certificate without its renewal or if it has been withdrawn.
However, if the documentation is adequate and the information complete, based on the risk assessment, ICEA will consider whether to issue Transaction Certificates requested after 30 days but no later than 90 days from the expiration date of the Scope Certificate.

6.5 Changes Affecting Certification/Approval

The Letter of Approval and Scope Certificate are revised:

a) in the case of extension or reduction of the scope of the Certification/Approval requested by the organisation (e.g. addition or withdrawal of products, processes, subcontractors, production sites, transfer to other production sites) or deriving from sanctions adopted by ICEA in the case of a finding of non conformity;
b) upon the new version of the Standard is effective.

Before the revision of the Letter of Approval or the Scope Certificate, ICEA carries out in any case a review of the received documentation and available information. If the change concerns the addition of new processes, subcontractors, production sites, ICEA, on the basis of the risk assessment, may decide to carry out an audit at the site affected by the change, followed by a new review of the audit results and a new Certification/Approval decision.

In case of revision of a Scope Certificate or Letter of Approval, the expiry date of the document will not be changed.

6.6 Surveillance and certification/approval renewal

ICEA regularly re-evaluates the organisation in order to verify if it continues to satisfy the requirements of the reference standard and if the corrective actions have been implemented.
In accordance with the requirements of the reference standard, before the expiry of the Scope Certificate or of the Letter of Approval, ICEA carries out surveillance activities of the products subject of the Certification/Approval.

> *Note valid only for organisations carrying out the activities in points 1, 2 and 3 of Table 1:* Maintenance and renewal of certification are based on annual on-site audits, including possible additional semi-announced or unannounced audits, based on risk assessment of the organisation. Exceptions to annual on-site audits are specified in the reference standards and/or related documents.

> *Note valid only for organisations carrying out the activities in point 4 of Table 1:* Maintenance and renewal of the Letter of Approval are based on audits carried out generally once every 3 years and, in any case, before the expiry of the Letter of Approval or when a new revision of the Standard is effective.

This audit activity follows the procedures indicated in point 6.3 with the addition of specific controls on the financial records (e.g. bank receipts/payments) relative to the Transaction Certificates, if applicable for the organisation, for the certified products purchased and sold in the previous period of validity of the certificate.
After the audits ICEA proceeds with a new review of audit results and a new Certification/Approval Decision.

> *Note valid only for organisations applying for certification according to the GOTS Standard:* The Scope Certificate is reissued with an expiry date equal to the day before the Anniversary Date. If an organisation has a gap in certification up to 180 calendar days, the Anniversary Date of the previous Scope Certificate shall be maintained. A new Anniversary Date shall be assigned in the event of a certification gap of more than 180 calendar days. The latter case shall be considered a new certification.

7 Non-conformities

7.1 Classification of Non-Conformities

Non-conformity consists in failure to comply with the provisions set out in the reference Standards, the ICEA Contract and Regulations and the technical specifications of the Certification Scheme.
The non-conformity may be caused by behaviour and/or negligence imputable to the organisation, its subcontractors or other persons in charge, as well as by events not directly imputable to the organisation itself and also even regardless of its negligence.
Non-conformities may be found during the review of the Application for Certification/Approval, during audits, following receipt of laboratory tests or during the review of the audit, as well as following information received from third parties, such as other Control Bodies or Regulatory Bodies.
Non-conformities, as well as the sanctions applied (also as a precautionary measure), are clearly referred to the points of the Standards, of the ICEA Certification Contract and Rules, and of the technical specifications of the certification scheme.
The organisation shall propose to ICEA, within the established deadlines, the correction of the non-conformity found and/or the corrective action necessary to remove the non-conformity and the causes that determined it and prevent its recurrence in the future.
Non-conformities are classified, according to gravity, into critical, major, minor and recommendations and entail the obligation for the organisation to take the necessary corrective action in order to restore compliance.

7.1.1 Critical non-conformities

Standards to which they apply: GRS, OCS, RCS, RWS, RAS, RMS, RDS
Definition: they are determined by serious non-compliance with the core principles of the reference Standard or by intentional fraud.
Actions taken by ICEA: The detection of a critical non-conformity leads to the Denial of the Certification/Approval (in case of initial Certification/Approval) or to the Suspension of the current Scope Certificate or Letter of Approval, in case of surveillance. In case of ascertained fraud, ICEA issues a Withdrawal of the Scope Certificate or Letter of Approval.
Organisation fulfilment: If a Suspension measure is issued, the organisation must immediately remove the non-conformity and the causes that generated it. If the Scope Certificate or Letter of Approval is withdrawn, the organisation may resubmit a new Application for Certification/Approval in accordance with the provisions of the Regulatory Bodies.

7.1.2 Major non-conformities

Standards to which they apply: All.
Definition: concern requirements identified as major by the standards or non-compliances that, alone or in combination with other non-conformities related to other requirements, determine or may determine the systematic failure to achieve the objectives of the standard, because they are carried out over a long period of time, or are repeated or systematic, or affect a large area, or influence the integrity of the product, or are not corrected or adequately managed once identified.
Actions taken by ICEA: The finding of a major non-conformity during the initial Certification/Approval process results in the suspension of the Certification/Approval process until the nonconformity is closed.

> *Note valid only for organisations that request certification according to the GOTS Standard:* The finding of a major non-conformity in the surveillance phase implies the adoption by ICEA of a measure of Suspension of the Scope Certificate or of the Letter of Approval.
>
> *Note valid only for organisations applying for certification according to one of the Standards of the Textile Exchange, NPF and SFA:* The finding of a major non-conformity in the surveillance phase implies the adoption by ICEA of a sanction of Suspension of the Scope Certificate if, at the end of the 30 days allowed for the resolution of the non-conformity, the same is still open.
> The Scope Certificate is, however, immediately suspended if there are 5 or more open major non-conformities.

Organisation fulfilment: The organisation shall propose corrective action to resolve the non-conformity within 30 days from the date of finding the non-conformity.

7.1.3 Minor non-conformities

Standards to which they apply: All.
Definition: Concerns requirements identified as minor by the standards or single failures of the management system of the organisation that are temporary, not systematic, without large-scale effects and do not determine the systematic failure to achieve the objectives of the standard.
Actions taken by ICEA: If the non-conformity is not closed within the 60 days allowed for resolution, the minor non-conformity is elevated to a major non-conformity with a deadline for resolution of 30 days from the expiry of the terms of the minor non-conformity.
Organisation fulfilment: the organisation shall submit the corrective action for resolution of the non-conformity within 60 days from the date of detection of the NC.

7.2 Recommendations

Standards to which they apply: All.
Definition: For the RDS, RWS, RMS, RAS standards concern criteria that have been included as examples of good practice in animal welfare. For the other standards they are indicated as opportunities for improvement.
Actions undertaken by ICEA: None
Organisation fulfilment: None

8 Sanctions taken in the event of non-conformity.

In case of findings of non-conformity ICEA, evaluated the entity of the non-conformity, may decide to:

a) Continue the certification under specific conditions (e.g. increased surveillance and/or request for correction of the non-conformities within a set time limit);
b) Issue a sanction.

The sanctions are applied in a manner proportional to the importance, nature and circumstances of the non-conformity and may be:

a) Denial of Certification/Approval (only in the case of initial Certification/Approval);
b) Suspension of the Certification/Approval;
c) Withdrawal of the Scope Certificate or Letter of Approval.

The communication of the sanction shall state the reasons for the same sanction and the deadlines within which an appeal may be submitted. If no notice of appeal is received within 15 working days from the date of receipt of the sanction, this and any requested treatment of non-conformity will be deemed to have been accepted by the organisation.
The sanction shall be notified to the organization by certified e-mail or by a system guaranteeing receipt. In the case where the organisation is based in a foreign country, the sanction will be communicated to the organisation by international registered letter with return receipt, anticipated via e-mail and/or fax.
ICEA verifies compliance with the provisions of the sanction and the effectiveness of the correction and/or corrective action, by means of a documentary check, or, if necessary, by carrying out a new audit.

8.1 Denial of Certification/Approval

Only in the case of initial Certification/Approval, if there are reasons to refuse the Application for Certification/Approval (e.g. the organisation participates in illegal activities, or has a history of repeated non-conformities, or is on the list of banned companies) or when the Decision relative to Certification/Approval is not completed within 60 days of the audit, ICEA will issue a sanction of Denial of Certification/Approval, within 60 days from the date on which the Application for Certification/Approval becomes invalid. Following this sanction, if the organisation is still interested in obtaining the Certification/Approval it will have to submit a new Application for Certification/Approval.

8.2 Suspension of Certification/Approval

Note valid only for organisations that apply for Certification/Approval according to the GOTS Standard: ICEA issues the sanction of Suspension of Certification/Approval if a major non-conformity is found.

Note valid only for organisations applying for Certification/Approval according to one of the Standards of the Textile Exchange, NPF, SFA: ICEA issues the sanction of Suspension of Certification if a critical non-conformity is found, or if a major non conformity is not closed within 30 days, or if there are 5 or more open major non-conformities.

Suspension of Certification/Approval means temporary suspension of the Scope Certificate or Letter of Approval and may affect one or more processes, one or more production units, one or more subcontractors or the entire company. The suspension applies to the individual process or site if the non-conformity does not affect other processes or sites.
Suspension entails the prohibition, for the period indicated, from marketing the products covered by the sanction with references to the Certification/Approval and may also entail the Reduction of the Scope of the Certification/Approval, if applicable, also of products already placed on the market.
During the period of suspension, the certified organisation is required to continue to apply the provisions of the reference Standard.
Failure to comply with a suspension determines a more serious non-conformity with consequent application of a sanction of Withdrawal of the Scope Certificate or Letter of Approval.
If a Scope Certificate is suspended for 180 days or until its expiry date (whichever is sooner), the Scope Certificate is withdrawn.

Note valid only for organisations applying for certification according to one of the Textile Exchange Standards: ICEA informs the Textile Exchange, the Accreditation Body and all direct customers who have received Transaction Certificates from the organisation in the previous 12 months about the Suspension of Certification.

ICEA does not issue Transaction Certificates to organisations that have received a Suspension of Certification/Approval following a finding of non-conformity, regardless of the date the product was sold. The organisation with a suspended Scope Certificate shall not sell products with references to the certification or use the logos.

8.3 Withdrawal of the Scope Certificate or Letter of Approval

ICEA issues a withdrawal of the Scope Certificate or Letter of Approval in the following cases:

a) If non-conformities of such a level as to compromise the reliability of the certified organisation are found;
b) in the event of failure to resolve a critical or major non-conformity within the established deadlines;
c) in case of failure to comply with the commitments undertaken towards ICEA.

Withdrawal of the Scope Certificate or of the Letter of Approval entails deletion of the organisation from the list of certified companies and constitutes cause for legal termination of all "inter-partes" agreements.

Note valid only for Organisations applying for Certification/Approval according to the GOTS: If the withdrawal of the certificate is due to fraudulent activities, ICEA promptly informs the Global Organic Standard GmbH, which will circulate the information among the Certification Bodies.

Note valid only for Organisations applying for certification according to one of the Standards of the Textile Exchange: ICEA informs the Textile Exchange, the accreditation body and all direct customers who have received transaction certificates from the Organisation, in the previous 12 months of the sanction of Suspension of Certification.

ICEA does not issue Transaction Certificates for Organization that have received a Withdrawal of the Scope Certificate or Letter of Approval following a finding of non-compliance, regardless of when the product was sold.
The organisation with a withdrawn Scope Certificate must not sell products with references to the certification or use the logos and may re-submit a new Application for Certification/Approval in accordance with the provisions of the Regulatory Bodies.

8.4 Suspension of Certification/Approval and Withdrawal of the Scope Certificate or Letter of Approval due to unpaid debts

In the case of non-payment, by the established due date, of the fees due for audit and Certification/Approval activities, following at least one payment reminder to which the organisation does not respond within the established deadlines, ICEA adopts a sanction of Suspension of Certification/Approval until the organisation regularises payment and in any case for a period not exceeding 3 months.
If the organisation has not paid the amount due by the expiry of the Suspension, ICEA will issue the sanction of Withdrawal of the Scope Certificate or Letter of Approval.

9 Additional and Precautionary measures

9.1 Reduction of the Scope of the Certification/Approval

The adoption of a sanction by ICEA, in addition to the obligations connected to the sanction itself, may result in the reduction of the scope of the Certification/Approval.
More specifically:

1) if the non-conformity found compromises product qualification, the organisation will have to give evidence of the downgrading of the non-conforming product. This downgrading consists in prohibiting the certified organisation from referring to the certification in sales documents, labelling and advertising of the entire batch or production cycle in which the non-conformity was found. If the

non-compliant product was sold, the organisation will have to communicate the downgrading to its customers and, if necessary, activate the eventual withdrawal procedure.

ICEA will not issue Transaction Certificates or will withdraw those already issued for downgraded products.

Note valid only for Organisations requiring the approval of chemical inputs according to GOTS: In case a chemical input is removed from the list of the approved chemical inputs, ICEA will inform of the removal, of the type of non-conformity found and of the potential risk related to the use of this input, the Global Organic Textile GmbH that in their turn will inform the other Certification Bodies.

2) If the detected non-conformity is such as to compromise the ability to produce a compliant product of a production unit (own or of a subcontractor) or of a process, ICEA will have to implement a reduction of the scope of the certification, removing from the Scope Certificate or Letter of Approval the non-conforming process, production unit or subcontractor. This measure applies to the single process or production unit if the non-conformity does not affect other activities or production units.

Reducing the scope of certification means that the certified organisation is not allowed to use the facility or processes subject to the measure for certified product processing.

9.2 Precautionary Segregation

In the case of positive test results or other evidence that requires further investigation related to the suspicion or doubt of conformity of one or more batches, or processes, or production unit (own or of third parties), ICEA sends to the organisation a communication of Precautionary Segregation indicating the information underlying the suspicions or doubts of conformity and the manner in which the organisation must remove such suspicions or doubts.

This measure, in order to prevent the marketing or use of non-compliant products, may be applied, in relation to the suspected non-compliance, to specific batches of product or to the company's entire production.

The organisation is required to send any observations aimed at clarifying the doubts and circumstances that have led to this measure, within the deadlines indicated in the same measure.

If no communication is received from the organisation, or if its observations are not enough to remove the suspicion of non-conformity, ICEA issues the final sanction.

If, on the other hand, the organisation provides clarification that does not confirm the suspicions or doubts, ICEA annuls the Precautionary Segregation.

No appeal against the Precautionary Segregation is permitted as it is not a final sanction.

10 Voluntary Withdrawal and/or Change of Certification Body

In case of voluntary withdrawal ICEA proceeds to withdraw the Scope Certificate or the Letter of Approval. The organisation is required to carry out the fulfilments prescribed by any sanction issued by ICEA, even if subsequent to the withdrawal, for facts preceding the withdrawal itself.

Should the organisation wish to change certification body, it is required to communicate in advance to ICEA this intention (before sending the withdrawal), in order to allow ICEA any further verifications and audits necessary for the issue of the release, act through which ICEA collaborates in the migration of the organisation to another certification body. Under normal circumstances, migration to another Certification Body is not permitted if there are open non-conformities.

11 Annulment and Revocation of sanctions

11.1 Annulment of a sanction

Action by which an issued sanction is made to lose its effectiveness. Such action may be the effect of the outcome of an appeal presented by the organisation, or it may be adopted by ICEA following the internal review process. Annulment has retroactive effect, makes the invalid sanction and all its effects cease to exist from the moment it was issued, and allows "full reintegration".

11.2 Revocation of sanctions

Action by which a sanction is withdrawn in the event of a change in the factual situation or of a new assessment, where applicable and with non-retroactive effect (ex nunc, i.e. "from now on"); unlike

invalidation, revocation may apply to sanctions that are vitiated, i.e. that have become inappropriate following a subsequent evaluation. Withdrawal does not have retroactive effect, i.e. the effects of the sanction are maintained and are valid until the date of the withdrawal.
Withdrawal allows for "conditional re-integration" upon verification of continued compliance in relation to the non-conformity found.

12 Appeals and Complaints

12.1 Appeal against a decision taken by ICEA

The organisation may appeal against a decision of ICEA within 15 days from receipt of the decision, by sending the communication, in writing and by registered letter with return receipt or PEC to ricorsi@iceapec.info, to the Appeals Committee (CRR) indicating the specific motivations on which the appeal is based and attaching the supporting evidence.
The Organization based in Third Countries sends the appeal by e-mail to the address icea.tex@icea.bio.
Following receipt of the Appeal, within 7 days, ICEA communicates the taking charge and the consequent opening of the proceedings before the Appeals Committee. Within 30 (thirty) days from the date of the taking in charge of the appeal by ICEA, the Appeals Committee decides. The outcome of the Appeal is communicated by ICEA, within 7 days from the date of the decision of the Appeals Committee. The acceptance of the Appeal may result in the obligation for ICEA to review or annul the contested sanction.

12.2 Complaints

ICEA takes charge of Complaints coming from any subject (Organisations, customers of Organisations, Public Administrations, Accreditation Bodies, Regulatory Bodies, groups of interest, etc.) that has objections on ICEA services, on the way of acting or on the decisions related to the certification process.
The Complaint is written and can be sent either by e-mail to reclami@icea.bio or by post to the ICEA Complaints Office at the Headquarters in Bologna or by accessing the "Complaints" service on the homepage of the website www.icea.bio.
An Organisation that disagrees with the auditor's assessment or wishes to express its own evaluation of the auditor's behaviour during the carrying out of the audit may use the same channels of communication as above.
In order to be evaluated, the complaint shall include at least:

- name of the person making the complaint;
- name of the company or organization subject to the complaint;
- e-mail address;
- reference to the service, office, area;
- reason for and clear evidence of the complaint.

ICEA communicates the taking charge of the complaint, activating the appropriate actions for its management, within 7 days from the receipt of the same.
ICEA ensures the processing of the complaint by sending a written response on the outcome, within 30 days from the taking charge of the complaint. In case of need of further investigation with audits planned for this purpose or involvement of other Certification Bodies, the response will be sent within 60 days from the date of taking charge of the complaint.