

CERES Policy

Global Artisan C-Sink Group Certification and Internal Control Systems (ICS)

1	Aims	This policy establishes guidelines for smallholder group certification by CERES.
2	Background	The cost of certification is a serious obstacle for many growers, especially smallholders, making access to markets for them difficult. Since many years, group certification with internal control systems has been developed as an alternative. These systems have obtained a certain level of official acknowledgement.
3	Normative framework	The Global Artisan C-Sink Standard refers to Internal Control Systems for the certification of C-sink networks and Artisan PROs. Whereas for the case of Artisan PROs it requires a physical on-site audit of each member, it does not necessarily do so for each C-sink farmer. That gives the Artisan C-sink Manager more flexibility to develop low cost / high tech solutions to monitor the C-sink farmers activities.
4	Terms	<p>a. Internal Control System (ICS): Is a tool for quality assurance, where the external certifier delegates part of his work to the Artisan C-sink manager. The external certifiers task is then to evaluate the ICS' performance.</p> <p>b. Group: Biochar producers who are either organized in a C-sink network or working as individual Artisan PROs under the monitoring of an Artisan C-sink Manager.</p>
6	Internal regulation; ICS Manual	<p>The group must have written internal rules (also called ICS Manual), which must include the basic requirements of the Global Artisan C-Sink Standard adapted to the local conditions. Those are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A description on how biochar producers are properly trained. • Requirements how the biomass must be procured sustainably e.g., farm residues or derived from biomass processing waste streams (<i>chapter 6 of the standard</i>). • Rules on how the biomass must be dried and/or aerated to avoid decomposition during storage and subsequent greenhouse gas emissions (<i>chapter 8 of the standard</i>) • A description on how the pyrolysis needs to be done with care to reduce the formation of non-CO₂-greenhouse gas emissions during pyrolysis to a minimum (<i>chapter 4 and 5</i>). • Rules on how the methane emissions caused during production are compensated through tree plantations or equivalent emission reductions (<i>chapter 12</i>). • A description of the eligible C-sinks to which the biochar can be applied (i.e. soil) and that it is not burnt or sold for burning (<i>chapter 7</i>). • Measures which assure that the correct amount of carbon sink is registered in a public carbon registry (<i>chapter 10</i>). • Rules and mechanisms which are applied to assure that the participating artisan biochar producers are paid directly for their climate services, and the amount the artisans receive is transparently communicated. • A description of responsibilities and duties in your organization. • Procedures for the on-site control and monitoring strategy of the biochar producers (i.e., type and frequency of monitoring, how to measure its effectiveness, etc.). • A catalogue of sanctions for different infringements of the rules. • A description of the C-sink registry (written documentation of the local registries' architecture including back-up and IT security, protocol for data transfer to the CSI C-sink register).

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A payment scheme for the biochar producers (when, how, and at what rate the “C-sink money” is paid to whom). • A reference to templates to be used (farmer contract, farm registration form, internal inspection report, etc.). • (in case that biochar is sold) a description of <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) the steps, which the biochar undergoes from farm to final use b) measures taken at each step to assure traceability and final end use as C-sink c) the persons responsible at each level.
7	Internal inspectors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Internal inspectors must be adequately trained. They must have appropriate knowledge of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Their role as inspectors ○ The applicable requirements of the Global Artisan C-Sink Standard ○ Inspection procedures ○ Sanctions established by the group ○ Report writing. b. Besides their knowledge, internal inspectors must have a high level of personal integrity and reliability. c. Conflicts of interest: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If internal inspectors are biochar producers themselves, they should perform inspections in other villages or subgroups, not in their own. ○ There are reasons for separating consultancy and internal inspections, but there are also very good reasons for internal inspectors giving advice to the member farmers. There are many groups, which do not have enough resources for having separate staff for consultancy on the one side, and internal inspections on the other side. An ICS is basically an internal quality management system, and a combination of internal inspections and assistance for improvement, is in line with this approach. Therefore, CERES does not consider it to be a conflict of interest, when the internal inspector gives advice to the farmers.
8	Farmer registration and contracting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. When a group is newly established, or new members join the group, their farms must be properly registered, including all fields where the biomass for the biochar production may come from. It is especially important to register all fields with primary forests to make sure that those will remain untouched! b. The certifier has a contract with the group, not with the individual farmer. Contracts must be signed between the Artisan C-sink Manager and all members. This contract must cover, as a minimum, the basic applicable rules for biochar production, and the farmer's agreement to give access to internal and external inspections. c. Each farmer must have a written guide on “How to produce biochar” with pictures, and an easy- to-understand description in local language
9	Performance of internal inspections	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Internal Inspectors must be: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Properly trained on biochar production, inspection procedures and reporting. b) Supervised on a yearly basis in order to assess the quality of their performance. c) If the quality of their work shows not to be satisfactory they must be trained and re-assessed. If the performance does not improve to the required level they must be replaced. 2. Internal inspections are not just a matter of "filling in forms". Internal inspectors must basically perform the same control procedures as external inspectors, including double-checking of information provided by the operator. 3. Internal inspections must cover the whole operation, including plots where the biomass stems from, places where the biomass is stored,

		<p>fields where the biochar is applied and (if applicable) where trees for methane compensation where planted.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. During announced on-site inspections, the farmer or another responsible person must be present. 5. As a result of an on-site inspection, an inspection report must be written, containing all <u>relevant</u> information concerning the holding, and outlining non-conformities and corrective actions to be taken. The report must bear a date and be signed by the producer and by the inspector. 6. The internal inspector must have access to the previous report during the inspection, to give follow-up to the implementation of corrective actions. The system must provide a specific space for recording such follow-up. 7. If there are changes on the farm (new plots, new biomass feedstock, change in ownership, etc.), the farm registration form and the farm sketch must be updated.
10	Internal approval body	<p>The internal approval body can be a group of persons, e.g. the management board of the organisation. Nevertheless, in many situations it may be more functional that only one or two persons are assigned to perform this role.</p> <p>The functions of the internal approval body are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Evaluate the result of the internal inspection and make sure that proper follow-up is given to pending corrective actions. ○ Implement sanctions were necessary and appropriate. ○ Pre-approval of the producers' list. ○ Keep the biochar producer list updated. ○ Make sure, that excluded or suspended farmers can no longer deliver their C-sinks. ○ Monitor the internal inspectors performance.
11	Producer list and map	<p>A complete and updated list of biochar producers is one of the most essential requirements for group certification.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. As a minimum, the list must include the following information for all farmers: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Farmer Code 2. Farmer Name 3. Location (e.g. name of village/district) 4. Farmhouse latitude 5. Farmhouse longitude 6. Identification of each field, including its GPS coordinates 7. Total farm surface 8. Type of feedstock 9. Biochar production capacity (m3/year) 10. Real amount of biochar produced last season (m3/year) 11. Proper use of biochar confirmed 12. Methane compensation confirmed 13. Date of entrance to the group 14. Date of last internal inspection 15. Last internal inspector 16. Result of last internal inspection (mayor NC, minor NC, no NC) 17. Certification status. b. Besides, it is recommended that the producers' list is managed as a real database, including complete information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dates of all internal and external inspections performed. ○ Non-conformities, corrective actions, and their fulfilment. ○ Amounts of biochar produced throughout the years

		<p>The group should establish privacy rules for access to this database. The information must be available for the certifier, but not necessarily for all group members.</p> <p>c. The producers' list approved by the certifier is an essential attachment to the group certificate. The internal approval body can suggest the inclusion of new members in the producers' list, but the external certifier must approve the new members, before the respective C-sinks can be recognised.</p> <p>d. A regional map must be provided, highlighting locations of all farmers (or, in case of big organizations with several subgroups, at least location of these groups), wholesale points, storage rooms, and processing or packing units.</p>
17	<p>Certification, corrective actions, and sanctions</p>	<p>Group certification means that the organisation is treated as one entity. The group must be aware that this may lead to situations where infringements by only few producers are punished by sanctions or decertification affecting the entire group.</p> <p>Conditions which must be fulfilled before the group inspection takes place:</p> <p>a. All producers have received at least training on biochar production.</p> <p>b. Internal inspectors have adequate knowledge</p> <p>c. 100% of internal inspections have been performed, documented and evaluated. Implementation of corrective actions is at least on its way.</p> <p>d. The producers' list with complete and reliable information is presented.</p> <p>e. The Artisan C-sink Manager has established a system, which assures effective monitoring of the biochar production and application.</p> <p>In case that CERES detects during the external inspection severe infringements, which had not been detected or adequately sanctioned by the ICS, there are the following options:</p> <p>f. If it is obvious that the problem is related to deficiencies in the ICS, then the whole group will be suspended from certification, until remediation of the problems is confirmed by a new external inspection.</p> <p>g. If it is obviously an individual, isolated case, while the ICS in general performs well, then only the individual group member must be excluded or suspended.</p> <p>h. If it is not clear whether the problem is isolated or systemic, then the re-inspection rate and sample size can be increased. This normally involves additional costs. If the result of the additional inspection or increased sample size confirms deficiencies in the ICS, the conclusion will be the same as in (a).</p>