



Sustainability Standard™

Sustainable Food Group Sustainability Standard™ Question Applicability Matrix Version 1.1

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Sustainable Food Group
Part of the
IPM Institute of North America, Inc.
211 S. Paterson St., Suite 380
Madison, WI 53703

Introduction: This matrix identifies questions in the Sustainability Standard that may not be applicable to small producers. Small producers are those with a gross cash farm income (GCFI) of less than \$350,000 and less than or equal to five permanent workers, with no more than 25 total workers on-site at the management unit at any time. Large producers are any producers that do not meet these criteria. This matrix is intended to help auditors determine which questions may not be relevant to audit depending on the size of an operation. However, question applicability is subject to change during an inspection at the auditor's discretion. All facility-level questions are applicable to all processing facilities regardless of size.

Key: Black shading denotes a question that is likely not applicable to small producers.

Organization-Level Checklist

Question Number	Question Title	Question	N/A to small producers
1.01.01	Certifications	Is production currently certified under any other program(s) addressing elements of sustainable agriculture and requiring an on-site audit? (Informational only, answer will not affect score.)	
1.02.01	No biosolid use Minimum Requirement	Is there a written policy statement prohibiting the application of both untreated and treated biosolids to production sites for at least one year prior to production?	
1.02.02	GMO transparency Minimum Requirement	If the crops/ ingredients grown are modified using GMO technologies, is there a written policy that they will be disclosed to the buyer?	
1.02.03	CRISPR transparency Minimum Requirement	If the crops/ ingredients grown are modified using CRISPR technologies, is there a written policy that they will be disclosed to the buyer?	
1.02.04	Legal compliance Minimum Requirement	Is there a policy that the organization complies with all laws and regulations governing pesticide and nutrient use, labor, hiring and employment practices, and employee health and safety?	
1.02.05	Group certification Minimum Requirement for Group certification only	Does the Group maintain an Internal Management System (IMS) to ensure facility and producer group member compliance with the Sustainability Standard certification criteria? Does the IMS meet all minimum requirements identified in the IMS Checklist?	

1.03.01	Protect air quality	<p>Are at least three measures in place to protect air quality?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reducing odors by carefully handling and storing bulk materials (e.g., manure, waste) - Modifying existing equipment to reduce emissions - Purchasing utilities that use less energy or have lower emissions (e.g., tractors, irrigation pumps, processing equipment) - Keeping vehicle use to a minimum (e.g., practices that reduce tractor passes, motorized transportation needs) - Adjusting timing of operations (e.g., no tillage during high winds) - Paving roads on site - Applying suppressants on unpaved roads - Establishing and maintaining wind breaks 	
1.03.02	Prohibit burning	Does the organization prohibit burning trash, vegetation, and crop residue?	
1.04.01	Prevent contamination	Does the organization implement measures to prevent water contamination with sediment, nutrients, and pesticides?	
1.04.02	Watershed improvements	Does the organization try to improve local and/or regional watersheds?	
1.05.01	Greenhouse gas footprint	Has the organization calculated a greenhouse gas footprint?	
1.06.01	Food loss diversion	<p>Does the organization have measures in place to divert food loss from landfill through one or more of the following strategies?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Source reduction - Donating to food banks or shelters - Animal feed - Industrial uses - Composting 	
1.06.02	Food loss tracking	Does the organization track the amount of food loss diverted using each strategy?	
1.06.03	Material reuse	Does the organization reuse materials?	
1.06.04	Tracking material reuse	Does the organization track the type and amount of materials reused?	

1.06.05	Materials recycling	Does organization recycle materials?	
1.06.06	Tracking recycling	Does the organization track the type and amount of materials recycled?	
1.06.07	Sustainable packaging	Does the organization use consumer product packaging that improves sustainability? Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Biodegradable material - Reusable material - Compostable material - Post-consumer recycled material - Other (please describe) 	
1.06.08	Recycled content	Does organization purchase products with recycled content?	
1.07.01	Workers' rights	Does the organization have written policies and practices in place to uphold workers' rights regarding the following issues? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non-discrimination policy - No harassment policy - Procedures for employees to express grievances without fear of retaliation. 	
1.07.02	Collective bargaining	Does the organization explicitly provide employees with the right to collective bargaining?	
1.07.03	Fair hiring practices	Does the organization employ fair and transparent hiring practices? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Terms of employment are disclosed during recruiting / before hire - Employees hired directly - No recruitment fees 	
1.07.04	Fair pay practices	Does the organization employ fair and transparent pay practices? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All work hours recorded and compensated, e.g., via automated tracking - Piece-rate workers earn at least minimum wage or employees are paid hourly 	
1.07.05	Personal protective equipment	Does the organization provide training and personal protective equipment for pesticide handlers, applicators and any workers performing potentially dangerous tasks?	
1.07.06	Annual medical monitoring	Does organization provide annual medical monitoring for workers handling organophosphates or carbamates with WARNING/DANGER or RED/YELLOW label?	

1.07.07	Workers' compensation	Does the organization guarantee workers paid medical care for work-related injury and illnesses and compensation for lost wages during recovery?	
1.07.08	Employee advancement	Does organization provide opportunities or incentives for employee advancement? Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employee education and cost share - Educational leave - Internal advancement vs. external hires - In-house education and training - Incentive or quality bonuses - Profit sharing with employees/trade partners - Safety incentives 	
1.07.09	Tracking worker safety	Does organization track worker safety, i.e., incident rates?	
1.07.10	Improving working conditions	Does the organization implement practices to improve working conditions? Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incorporation of automation - Workers are not required to regularly work more than 48 hours per week. - Lunch and work breaks are granted and respected. - Disciplinary measures are clearly outlined and appropriate. These measures are communicated to all workers. - Management provides information on workers' rights to organize. - Workers have tools and work clothes that are replaced regularly and free of charge. - Provide safe transport for workers to and from housing 	
1.07.11	Additional social responsibility practices	Does organization implement additional socially responsible practices? Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide livable housing - Provide access to 24-hour medical care - Provide access to dental care and psychological care - Provide access to AA programs - Provide access to domestic violence prevention programs - Provide daycare and schooling for children - Provide adult literacy programs - Provide opportunities for adults to gain high school diploma. 	
1.07.12	Tracking additional social responsibility practices	Does organization track and communicate additional social responsibility practices?	
1.08.01	Sustainability team	Does the organization have a team of experts that advise on or manage sustainability AND does this team meet at least annually to review performance on sustainability measures and identify and plan improvements?	

1.08.02	Sustainability goals	Does the organization have a written sustainability plan addressing goals for company operations?	
1.08.03	Sustainability reporting	Does the organization publicly report on sustainability goals and progress towards goals?	
1.08.04	On-site research	Has on-site research been conducted or supported financially or otherwise in the past year?	
1.08.05	Science-based procedures	Are science-based procedures used for on-site research?	
1.08.06	Sustainable agriculture training	Have organization staff involved in implementing sustainability practices participated in sustainable agriculture-related training events in the past year exceeding legal requirements?	
1.08.06.a	Training topics	Were at least three different sustainability topics covered in training events that organization staff participated in within the last year?	
1.08.07	Hosting training	Has organization provided, hosted or supported one or more events in the past three years that include training in one or more aspects of sustainable agriculture?	
1.09.01	Informational	Have any of the operations in the scope of the application been cited for violations of any legal requirements since the previous audit or within the last three years if they are a new applicant? If yes, has the operation made changes to correct violations?	
1.09.02	Informational	Have any operations in the scope of the application experienced an environmental emergency since the previous audit, or within the past three years for new applicants?	

1.09.03	Informational	Does the organization have any additional sustainability-related initiatives, projects, or programs that you would like to share?	
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Farm-Level Checklist

Question Number	Question Title	Question	N/A to small producers
2.01.01	Identify sensitive areas	Are all environmentally sensitive areas within and adjacent to field production sites identified on a map?	
2.01.02	Avoid sensitive areas	Are environmentally sensitive areas avoided when putting new land into production?	
2.01.03	Protect sensitive areas	Are protective measures in place to avoid damaging or degrading sensitive areas at field production sites?	
2.01.04	Visual monitoring	Are all environmentally sensitive areas within and adjacent to field production sites visually monitored at least annually?	
2.01.05	Quantitative data	Are quantitative data collected on the quality of sensitive areas at field production sites?	
2.01.05 a	Improvement over time	Do quantitative data on the quality of sensitive areas at field production sites show improvement over time?	
2.01.06	Biodiversity conservation	Does the organization restore or conserve habitat for native species and wildlife to promote biodiversity?	
2.01.07	Pollinator habitat	Does organization create habitat and forage sources for pollinators?	
2.01.08	Reducing impacts of managed bees	Does the operation employ measures to reduce ecological impacts of any managed pollinators used in production?	
2.02.01	Emergency procedures posted	Are emergency contact information and basic staff procedures readily available at likely locations in the event of possible emergencies including natural disasters? (E.g., vehicle accident, fire, worker pesticide exposure, earthquake)	

2.02.02	Environmental emergency management plans	Are written environmental emergency management plans available in the event of possible emergencies, including potential emergencies, staff roles and responsibilities, and resources for response, control, containment and/or cleanup? Are employees trained on emergency management plans?	
2.03.01	Equipment calibration	Are pesticide and nutrient application equipment calibrated at least annually, or more frequently if recommended by the manufacturer and are procedures (methods) and results documented?	
2.03.02	Drift mitigation plans	Are comprehensive drift management plans containing the following elements written and implemented? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training protocol for staff - Weather conditions that are unsafe for specific types of pesticide applications - Information to help applicator select or adjust formulations, additives, equipment, techniques or other options to reduce drift - Contact information for those requiring notification if unexpected drift has occurred. 	
2.04.01	Erosion mitigation	Are eroded areas not present, or if they are present, are they corrected in a timely manner if they occur? Which measures are in place to mitigate the risk of soil erosion from wind or water? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wind breaks - Retention ponds - Contour planting - Managed drainage - In-field grass strips - Vegetative buffers - Other 	
2.04.02	Advanced soil health testing	Does organization monitor and record advanced soil health indicators?	
2.04.03	Improving soil health	Does organization implement adequate protective/corrective measures for maintaining or improving soil health indicators?	
2.04.04	Soil health improvement goals	Has organization set at least two goals for maintaining or improving soil health indicators and collected quantitative data measuring changes in soil health since the previous audit (or within the previous three years for new applicants)?	
2.04.04.a	Goals met	Has organization met at least two quantitative goals for improvement in soil health indicators since the previous audit (or within the previous three years for new applicants)?	
2.05.01	Irrigation based on crop need	Does the organization make irrigation decisions based on documented crop need(s)?	

2.05.02	Irrigation efficiency improvements	Does the organization implement measures to improve irrigation water use efficiency?	
2.05.03	Irrigation use efficiency	Does the organization measure and report irrigation use efficiency, i.e., irrigation water use per unit of production?	
2.06.01	Energy efficiency on-farm	Does organization implement energy efficiency measures to reduce energy used for crop production?	
2.06.02	Renewable energy on-farm	Does organization use renewable energy for crop production?	
2.07.01	IPM resources	Does organization access IPM information resources?	
2.07.02	Identification Minimum Requirement	Does organization identify key pests, weeds, and diseases (those which usually require action to prevent economic losses) and understand their biology?	
2.07.03	Prevention Minimum Requirement	Does organization implement effective non-chemical strategies to prevent losses by key pests?	
2.07.04	Monitoring Minimum Requirement	Does organization implement effective scouting, sampling and monitoring techniques for all key pests for which these techniques are available?	
2.07.05	Economic thresholds Minimum Requirement	Does organization use science-based economic thresholds to determine if and when to take action for each key pest for which thresholds are available?	
2.07.06	Non-chemical intervention Minimum Requirement	Are effective non-chemical intervention strategies - cultural, biological and/or mechanical - implemented to manage key pests?	
2.07.07	Pesticide use justification Minimum Requirement	Are pesticide applications tied to a documented need?	

2.07.08	Pesticide application records Minimum Requirement	Are there complete and legible pesticide application records for the current season that include location, date, time, material applied, REI, rate, applicator name, application method, wind speed and direction, air temperature and target pest?	
2.07.09	Pesticide risk reduction	Is pesticide risk tracked and reduced over time?	
2.07.10	Pesticide resistance identification	Does organization identify specific pesticides and pests at the greatest risk for developing resistance?	
2.07.11	Pesticide resistance mitigation Minimum Requirement	Does the organization implement effective strategies to mitigate the risk of resistance for pests and pesticides at the greatest risk? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Untreated refuges - Crop rotation - Rotating modes of action - Tank mixing multiple modes of action - Rotating chemical and non-chemical methods - Use of mating disruption - Other (scouting, monitoring and use of thresholds is not eligible for credit on this question.) 	
2.07.12	Evaluation	Does organization formally assess performance of the IPM program including pest management successes and failures?	
2.07.13	Pesticide risk reduction for specific concerns	Does organization rank pesticides used in crop production according to the following factors and reduce/restrict the use of those with greatest risk? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potential for residue post-harvest (10 pts) - Acute toxicity to mammals (10 pts) - Toxicity to beneficials including pollinators (10 pts) - Chronic toxicity to mammals (10 pts) - Additional eco-toxicity measures (10 pts) 	
2.07.14	Pollinator protection	Does organization protect bees and other pollinators from exposure to pesticides toxic to bees?	
2.07.15	Basic nutrient testing	Does organization monitor and record basic soil characteristics (N, P, K, organic matter and pH) via soil and/or tissue analysis at least once every three years?	
2.07.16	Nutrient application records Minimum Requirement	Are there complete and legible nutrient application records for the current season that include date, time, material applied, rate, applicator name and application method?	

2.07.17	Nutrient management	Do nutrient application rates reflect available nutrients and projected crop need, based on nutrient management planning?	
2.07.18	Nutrient use efficiency	Is nutrient use efficiency, i.e., nutrient use per unit of production, calculated and recorded?	
2.07.19	Nutrient use efficiency improvements	Is nutrient use efficiency tracked and improved over time?	
2.08.01	Informational	Have any operations in the scope of the application been cited for off-target application of fertilizers or pesticides since the previous audit, or within the last three years for new applicants? If yes, has the operation made changes to reduce potential for off-target applications?	

Facility- Level Checklist

Question Number	Question Title	Question	N/A to small producers
3.01.01	Identify sensitive areas	Are all environmentally sensitive areas within and adjacent to facilities identified on a map?	
3.01.02	Avoid sensitive areas	Are environmentally sensitive areas avoided when expanding facilities?	
3.01.03	Protect sensitive areas	Are protective measures in place to avoid damaging or degrading sensitive areas at facilities?	
3.01.04	Visual monitoring	Are all environmentally sensitive areas within and adjacent to facilities visually monitored at least annually?	
3.01.05	Quantitative data	Are quantitative data collected on the quality of sensitive areas at facilities?	
3.01.05 a	Improvement over time	Do quantitative data on the quality of sensitive areas at facilities show improvement over time?	
3.02.01	Emergency procedures posted	Are emergency contact information and basic staff procedures readily available at likely locations in the event of possible emergencies including natural disasters? (E.g., vehicle accident, fire, worker pesticide exposure, earthquake)	
3.02.02	Environmental emergency management plans	Are written environmental emergency management plans available in the event of possible emergencies, including potential emergencies, staff roles and responsibilities, and resources for response, control, containment and/or cleanup? Are employees trained on emergency management plans?	
3.03.01	Processing efficiency improvements	Does the organization have measures in place to improve processing water use efficiency?	
3.03.02	Processing water use efficiency	Does the organization measure and report processing water use efficiency, i.e., processing and/or packing plant water use per unit of production?	

3.04.01	Energy efficiency at facilities	Does organization implement energy efficiency measures to reduce facility energy use?	
3.04.02	Renewable energy at facilities	Does organization use renewable energy to power facilities?	
3.04.03	Reduce food miles	Does the organization have measures in place to reduce food miles for product distribution?	