SUSTAINABLE FOOD GROUP SUSTAINABILITY STANDARD

Standard Checklist

Version 2.0

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Name of document	Effective Date	Expires by
Sust Stnd Checklist v2.0	January 01, 2025	Valid until further notice
To be used in conjunction with		
Sust Stnd General Regulations v2.0 Sust Stnd IMS Checklist v2.0 Sust Stnd Audit Guidelines v2.0 Sust Stnd Question Applicability Matrix v2.0		
Replaces	**Applicable to**	
Sustainability Standard – Checklist v1.5 112421 FINAL	Approved Sustainability Standard Certification Bodies	

Scheme owner

Sustainable Food Group (SFG) is a part of the IPM Institute of North America, a non-profit with over 25 years of experience in implementing sustainability best practices in agriculture and communities. As experts in agricultural supply chain sustainability, SFG has developed high-impact, science-based programs for food industry leaders.

SFG envisions a world where food is grown in sync with natural processes and where agriculture and food companies are a force for good, directly benefiting workers, consumers, water, air, climate, biodiversity and soil. Read more at https://ipminstitute.org/branch/sfg/.

Data partner

Azzule Systems is a leading global data management solution provider, helping companies maintain visibility over their supply chains.

More information

For more information about the Sustainability Standard certification, visit the Sustainability Standard webpage, https://ipminstitute.org/services/sustainability-standard/, or contact Sustainable Food Group at certification@sustainablefoodgroup.org.

All three checklists together comprise the Sustainability Standard™

Note: The Organizational-Level Checklist is always accompanied by either the Farm- or Facility-Level Checklist, depending on whether the audit is being conducted for one Farm, Facility, or both.

Organization-Level Checklist

Question Number	Question Title	Question	Total Available Points	Available Answers	Score Achieved (1-5)	NOTES
Environmental Certifications						
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.)	0	Multiple choice: Demeter Certified Biodynamic, Eco Apple, Equitable Food Initiative, Fair Food Program, Food Alliance, Protected Harvest, Rainforest Alliance, SCS Sustainably Grown, TruEarth, USDA Organic, Other.		
Policies						
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?	10	Y/N		

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?	10	Y/N/NA		
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?	10	Y/N/NA		
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?	10	Y/N		
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?	10	Y/N/NA		

Air Quality						
1.03.01	Protect air quality	Does the organization have measures in place to protect air quality? - 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, lighting, HVAC systems) - 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, indoor environmental control changes based on seasonal trends) - Paving roads on site - Applying suppressants on unpaved roads - Establishing and maintaining wind breaks - Reducing chemical drift (outdoors or indoors) - Managing humidity, ventilation, and/or temperature to prevent the prevalence of molds, bacteria and other airborne pathogens in damp, indoor environments - Implementing or updating infrastructure to filter airborne pathogens in indoor environments	40	Y/N		
1.03.02	Prohibit burning	Does the organization have a policy to prohibit burning trash, vegetation, and crop residue, except where the auditee is participating in scientific research or where used as a recommended best management practice?	20	Y/N		

Water Conservation						
1.04.01	Watershed improvements	Does the organization participate in efforts to improve local and/or regional watersheds?	30	Y/N		
Energy Conservation						
1.05.01	Greenhouse gas accounting	Does the organization complete an annual greenhouse gas accounting assessment?	20	Y/N		
1.05.02	Science-based targets	Has the organization established a science-based target for greenhouse gas emissions reductions?	20	Y/N		
1.05.03	Reduce food miles	Does the organization have measures in place to reduce food miles or transport emissions for product distribution?	20	Y/N/NA		
Waste and Recycling						
1.06.01	Food loss diversion	Does the organization track and have measures in place to divert food loss from landfill through one or more of the following strategies? - Donating to food banks, shelters, schools, or other organizations - Feeding animals or leaving unharvested - Composting - Anaerobic digestion with beneficial use of digestate/biosolids	30	Y/N		

1.06.02	Material waste diversion	Does the organization track and have measures in place to divert non-organic material waste from landfill using the following strategies: - Materials reuse - Materials recycling	30	Y/N		
1.06.03	Sustainable packaging	Does the organization use consumer product packaging that improves sustainability? Examples include: - Biodegradable material - Reusable material - Compostable material - Post-consumer recycled material - No consumer packaging material used (bulk) - Other (please describe); Recyclable material is not eligible for credit due to very low rates of recyclable materials actually being recycled.	20	Y/N		
1.06.04	Recycled content	Is it standard practice for the organization to purchase supplies with incorporated recycled content?	10	Y/N		
Worker Safety and Welfare						
1.07.01	Workers' rights	Does the organization have written policies and practices in place to uphold workers' rights regarding the following issues? - Non-discrimination policy - No harassment policy - Procedures for employees to express grievances without fear of retaliation.	20	Y/N/NA		
1.07.02	Collective bargaining	Does the organization have a written policy that explicitly provides employees the right to collective bargaining?	10	Y/N/NA		

1.07.03	Fair hiring practices	Does the organization employ fair and transparent hiring practices? - Terms of employment are disclosed during recruiting / before hire - Employees hired directly - No recruitment fees	20	Y/N/NA		.
1.07.04	Fair pay practices	Does the organization employ fair and transparent pay practices? - All work hours recorded and compensated, e.g., via automated tracking - Piece-rate workers earn at least minimum wage or employees are paid hourly	20	Y/N/NA		
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?	20	Y/N/NA		
1.07.06	Annual medical monitoring	Does the organization provide annual medical monitoring for workers handing organophosphates or carbamates with WARNING/DANGER or RED/YELLOW label?	20	Y/N/NA		
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?	20	Y/N/NA		

1.07.08	Employee advancement	Does the organization provide opportunities or incentives for employee advancement? Examples include: - 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	30	Y/N/NA		
1.07.09	Tracking worker safety	Does the organization work to improve incident rates?	20	Y/N/NA		
1.07.10	Improving working conditions	Does the organization implement practices to improve working conditions? Examples include: - 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	100	Y/N/NA		

1.07.11	Additional social responsibility practices	Does the organization implement additional socially responsible practices? Examples include: - 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.	100	Y/N/NA		
1.07.12	Tracking additional social responsibility practices	Does the organization track and communicate additional social responsibility practices?	10	Y/N/NA		
Sustainability and Stewardship						
1.08.01	Sustainability team	Does the organization have employee(s) dedicated to sustainability initiatives within their organization?	50	Y/N		
1.08.02	Sustainability goals	Does the organization have a written sustainability plan addressing goals for company operations?	50	Y/N		
1.08.03	Sustainability reporting	Does the organization publicly report on sustainability goals and progress towards goals?	30	Y/N/NA		

1.08.04	On-site research	Has on-site research been conducted or supported financially or otherwise in the past year?	30	Y/N		
1.08.05	Science-based procedures	Are science-based procedures used for on-site research?	20	Y/N		
1.08.06	Sustainable agriculture training	Do employee(s) dedicated to sustainability initiatives within the organization participate in ongoing training related to sustainable agriculture?	40	Y/N		
1.08.07	Hosting training	Has the 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?	10	Y/N		
Informational						
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?	0	Y/N		
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?	0	Y/N		

Farm-Level Checklist

Question Number	Question Title	Question	Total Available Points	Available Answers	Score Achieved (1-5)	NOTES
Biodiversity and Environmental Protection						
2.01.01	Protect sensitive areas	Does the farm map and protect all environmentally sensitive areas within and adjacent to production areas?	30	Y/N		
2.01.02	Avoid sensitive areas	Are environmentally sensitive areas avoided when putting new land into production?	15	Y/N/NA		
2.01.03	Visual monitoring	Are all environmentally sensitive areas within and adjacent to production sites visually monitored at least annually?	15	Y/N/NA		
2.01.04	Quantitative data	Are quantitative data collected on the quality of sensitive areas at production sites?	10	Y/N/NA		
2.01.04a	Improvement over time	Do quantitative data on the quality of sensitive areas at production sites show improvement over time?	5	Y/N/NA		
2.01.05	Biodiversity conservation	Does the organization restore or conserve habitat for native species and wildlife to promote biodiversity?	40	Y/N		
2.01.06	Pollinator habitat	Does the organization create habitat and forage sources for pollinators?	60	Y/N		

2.01.07	Reducing impacts of managed bees	Does the operation employ measures to reduce ecological impacts of any managed pollinators used in production?	20	Y/N/NA		
Environmental Emergency Management						
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)	10	Y/N		
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?	15	Y/N		
Fertilizer and Pesticide Drift						
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?	40	Y/N/NA		

2.03.02	Drift mitigation plans	Are comprehensive drift management plans containing the following elements written and implemented? - 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. - List of on-farm practices in place to mitigate pesticide drift (e.g. vegetative buffer zones/strips)	40	Y/N/NA		
Soil Health						
2.04.01	Erosion mitigation	Does the organization mitigate the risk of soil erosion?	60	Y/N		
2.04.02	Advanced soil health testing	Does the organization monitor and record advanced soil health indicators?	20	Y/N/NA		
2.04.03	Improving soil health	Does the organization implement adequate protective/corrective measures for maintaining or improving soil health indicators?	100	Y/N/NA		
2.04.04	Soil health improvement goals	Has the organization set at least two SMART goals for maintaining or improving soil health indicators?	40	Y/N/NA		
Water Conservation						
2.05.01	Prevent contamination	Does the organization implement measures to prevent water contamination with sediment, nutrients and pesticides?	20	Y/N		

2.05.02	Irrigation based on crop need	Does the organization make irrigation decisions based on documented crop need(s)?	10	Y/N/NA		
2.05.03	Irrigation use efficiency	Is irrigation use efficiency calculated and recorded?	20	Y/N/NA		
2.05.04	Irrigation efficiency improvements	Does the organization implement measures to improve irrigation water use efficiency?	40	Y/N/NA		
Energy Conservation						
2.06.01	Energy efficiency on-farm	Does the organization implement energy efficiency measures to reduce energy used for crop production?	40	Y/N		
2.06.01a	Improvement over time	Has the organization improved energy use efficiency?	30	Y/N/NA		
2.06.02	Renewable energy on-farm	Does the organization use renewable energy for crop production?	40	Y/N		

IPM and Nutrient Management						
2.07.01	IPM resources	Does the organization access IPM information resources?	100	Y/N		
2.07.02	Identification **Minimum Requirement**	Does the organization identify key pests, weeds, and diseases (those which usually require action to prevent economic losses) and understand their biology?	100	Y/N		
2.07.03	Prevention **Minimum Requirement**	Does the organization implement effective non-chemical strategies to prevent losses by key pests?	100	Y/N		
2.07.04	Monitoring **Minimum Requirement**	Does the organization implement effective scouting, sampling and monitoring techniques for all key pests for which these techniques are available?	100	Y/N		

2.07.05	Economic thresholds **Minimum Requirement**	Does the organization use science-based economic thresholds to determine if and when to take action for each key pest for which thresholds are available?	100	Y/N		
2.07.06	Non-chemical intervention **Minimum Requirement**	Are effective non-chemical intervention strategies - cultural, biological and/or mechanical - implemented to manage key pests?	100	Y/N		
2.07.07	Pesticide use justification **Minimum Requirement**	Are pesticide applications tied to a documented need?	40	Y/N/NA		.
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?	10	Y/N/NA		
2.07.09	Pesticide risk reduction	Is pesticide risk tracked and reduced over time?	40	Y/N/NA		

2.07.10	Pesticide resistance identification	Does the organization identify specific pesticides and pests at the greatest risk for developing resistance?	40	Y/N/NA		
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? - 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.)	50	Y/N/NA		
2.07.12	Evaluation	Does the organization formally assess performance of the IPM program including pest management successes and failures?	40	Y/N		
2.07.13	Pesticide risk reduction for specific concerns	Does the organization rank pesticides used in crop production according to the following factors and reduce/restrict the use of those with greatest risk? - Potential for residue post-harvest - Acute toxicity to mammals - Toxicity to beneficials including pollinators - Chronic toxicity to mammals - Additional eco-toxicity measures	50	Y/N/NA		
2.07.14	Pollinator protection	Does the organization protect bees and other pollinators from exposure to pesticides toxic to bees?	40	Y/N/NA		

2.07.15	Basic nutrient testing	Does the 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?	10	Y/N/NA		
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?	10	Y/N/NA		
2.07.17	Nutrient management	Do nutrient application rates reflect available nutrients and projected crop need, based on nutrient management planning?	40	Y/N/NA		
2.07.18	Nutrient use efficiency	Is nutrient use efficiency calculated and recorded?	20	Y/N/NA		
2.07.19	Nutrient use efficiency improvements	Does the organization implement measures to improve nutrient use efficiency?	40	Y/N/NA		
Informational						
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?	0	Y/N		

Facility- Level Checklist

Question Number	Question Title	Question	Total Available Points	Available Answers	Scale (1-5)	NOTES
Biodiversity and Environmental Protection						
3.01.01	Protect sensitive areas	Does the facility map and protect all environmentally sensitive areas within and adjacent to facilities?	10	Y/N		
3.01.02	Avoid sensitive areas	Are environmentally sensitive areas avoided when expanding facilities?	5	Y/N/NA		
3.01.03	Visual monitoring	Are all environmentally sensitive areas within and adjacent to facilities visually monitored at least annually?	5	Y/N/NA		
3.01.04	Quantitative data	Are quantitative data collected on the quality of sensitive areas at facilities?	10	Y/N/NA		
3.01.04a	Improvement over time	Do quantitative data on the quality of sensitive areas at facilities show improvement over time?	5	Y/N/NA		
Environmental Emergency Management						
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).	10	Y/N		

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?	15	Y/N		
Water Conservation						
3.03.01	Processing water use efficiency	Is processing water use efficiency calculated and recorded?	20	Y/N/NA		
3.03.02	Processing efficiency improvements	Does the organization have measures in place to improve processing water use efficiency?	40	Y/N/NA		
Energy Conservation						
3.04.01	Energy efficiency at facilities	Does the organization implement energy efficiency measures to reduce facility energy use?	40	Y/N		
3.04.01a	Improvement over time	Has the organization improved energy use efficiency?	30	Y/N/NA		
3.04.02	Renewable energy at facilities	Does the organization use renewable energy to power facilities?	20	Y/N		