

**ASSURANCE CERTIFICATION SCHEME (ACS)  
FOR PHYTOSANITARY CERTIFICATE**

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# **AVA accredited certification scheme for the export of plants and plant produce**

## **Introduction**

The assurance Certification Scheme (ACS) is a special arrangement offered by Agri-food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) to all traders on top of existing inspection and certification services which are presently available at the Plant Regulatory Branch- Plant Health (PRB)

Under the ACS arrangement , the traders take over the inspection function by implementing and documenting a AVA approved and documented quality system to ensure the final product for export is free from pest infestation. AVA will then ensure that the implemented quality system comply with documented standards through regular audit and if necessary compliance action

## **Who can apply**

ACS arrangement with AVA are available to all regular traders who opt for ACS voluntarily in preference to traditional inspection arrangements. The minimum requirement is that the applicants must have maintained satisfactory records with AVA for phytosanitary certification in the past 12 months. The arrangement is further subjected to the following conditions:

- 1] The establishment , staff, equipment and processing procedures are capable of producing product that consistently meets the requirement for phytosanitary certification by AVA.
- 2] The organization can document in a quality assurance (QA) manual its quality controls, policies, procedures, allocation of responsibilities and record keeping
- 3] The organization is capable of following the procedures set down in its manual
- 4] Any requirement set down by government of importing countries do not preclude the ACS arrangements

## **What are the benefits**

### **(A) For the Organization**

- 1) A more ordered and coordinated approach in achieving a quality product especially on pest infestation.
- 2) Client satisfaction with a consistently quality product.
- 3) Increased flexibility, as inspections no longer have to be done by AVA inspectors before certification. The organization has more flexibility in organizing timings of shipments.
- 4) Increased competitiveness.
- 5) Employees have a sense of direction and purpose. Jobs are well documented and understood.
- 6) Cost savings in terms of financial and manpower resource. This will depend on the volume of shipments per year.
- 7) Through good planning, a decrease in waste and reject materials.

### **(B) For AVA**

- 1) Savings in inspection manpower.
- 2) Assurance of more effective control of process and product quality.
- 3) Increased job interest for AVA inspection staff due to their new role of auditors and advisers on quality systems.

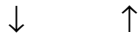
## **How to Apply**

A letter indicating that an establishment wishes to apply for ACS accompanied by the Quality Manual should be forwarded to Head, Plant Regulatory Branch- Plant Health, Import and Export Division . The covering letter should indicate the contact officer for ACS arrangement within the organization. The letter should also indicate the nature of trade if it is a group certification arrangement and the products which will be covered.

## **Evaluation of Application Procedure**

The evaluation and assessment process for acceptance into the scheme can be represented diagrammatically as follows:

Applicant submits their QA manual



Desk audit



Initial site audit



Follow up Audit  
(if necessary)



Accredited certification

## **Others**

All information and data submitted in the ACS manual will be classified "Confidential" status.

## **Terms and Conditions of ACS**

### 1. QA manual

Traders will need to describe detail procedures on quality assurance system at various points which will ensure that as a minimum, all export product requiring phytosanitary certification meets the requirements of the importing country and basic labeling requirements. The emphasis here is that the quality system is in place in the establishment and working. It is an effective working document for the company and allow AVA to audit the system. Trader is obliged to comply with its QA manual, once it has been approved by AVA. AVA must be advised immediately of changes to critical quality control procedures, products covered etc., and the manual must be amended accordingly. Any significant change to the quality system must be approved by AVA. General guidelines and elements that need to be included into the QA manual are outlined in Appendix 1.

## 2. Desk Audit

This is the primary step of evaluation of a QA manual to determine the adequacy of the quality system. Files relating to the past performance of the applicant will be checked for any outstanding matters which could affect the regulatory standing of this applicant.

## 3. Initial Site Audit

If the desk audit shows that the quality system as described, seems to be effective regarding specified objectives, then a site audit of the quality system will be arranged and conducted. This involves a major assessment on the entire quality system to ensure that the procedures documented in the manual are being followed and in practicality are effective. The company will be advised of the findings and recommendations regarding entry into the ACS arrangement.

## 4. Routine Compliance Evaluation

The objective is to ensure that the company continues to operate its quality system in accordance with the arrangement and is able to adjust the quality system as requirements change and problems are addressed and corrected. No quality system procedure is ever finalized. The QA arrangement is subjected to re-negotiation and update of manuals whenever necessary. The routine compliance evaluation will generally take the form of three audits each year. It may be necessary to increase the frequency and/or intensity depending on organization performance or changed risk factors.

## 5. Charges

The charges which apply for Desk Audit, Site Audit, Routine Compliance Evaluation and Phytosanitary Certificate are amended from time to time. A schedule of current charges is available for your inspection from the PRB, Sembawang Research Station.

## 6. Certification

Under the QA arrangement, the consignment will be issued with a Phytosanitary Certificate when the following are produced:

### 6.1 A completed PQ 1 (Application for Phytosanitary Certificate)

Endorsed by the AVA accredited inspector. It should be submitted to PRB 2 days in advance before the date of shipment.

6.2 All documentary evidence that may be necessary to demonstrate that the product meets phytosanitary requirements, e.g. Import Permit, PQ regulations of importing countries. Fumigation Certificate, Test Reports and Letter of Credit if any .

## 7. Group Certification Arrangement

It is applicable to cooperatives, packers and suppliers. The applicant assumes responsibility for ensuring the export products under his/her control comply with ACS arrangement with AVA. The applicant is required to submit the completed PQ 1 (Application for Phytosanitary Certificate) on behalf of the named exporters.

## 8. Suspension or Closure of Service

AVA may suspend or terminate the ACS arrangement if the trader falsifies or presents any declaration, statement, representation or document which is false for the purpose of obtaining Phytosanitary Certificate or the QA performance of the establishment falls below AVA requirements or the consignment is rejected by the import authority due to pest infestation. Traders are of course, at liberty, to terminate the ACS arrangement with AVA by giving notice in writing, if the service is found not useful to them.

## **Appendix 1**

### Primary Guides for the Preparation of QA Manual

The Quality Assurance (QA) manual is a document produced by the organization to describe the quality system in operation at that establishment. It is a compilation of policies, procedures, controls and documentation encompassed by the quality assurance system. The manual must describe the system that is in place, not that which should be in place. The manual must be prepared in such a way that it is easily understood, concise and usable. To achieve this, the following are recommended.

1. Cross-reference thoroughly, particularly where recorded sheets or logs are concerned.
2. Identify recording sheets or logs by title and form or document number, both of which should be quoted whenever the form is referred to in a manual.
3. Clearly label flow charts, diagrams, tables and check-lists for easy reference.
4. Group like sections together, rather than scatter references throughout a manual.
5. Use tables, diagrams and other forms of easily understandable instructions wherever possible.

To facilitate amendments, all manuals should:

1. Be prepared in loose leaf.
2. Have a number and date on each page.
3. Include a table of contents.

### **Documenting A Quality System Under the Assurance Certification Scheme (ACS)**

#### **MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY**

1. Quality Policy Statement

AVA would expect an applicant company for the ACS arrangement to have a strong commitment to quality, clearly evident to staff. A statement describing the aims of the

organization in this regard, signed by the Managing Director, should therefore be included in the manual.

## 2. Declaration by Chief Executive

This is a mandatory statement signed by the senior executive of the company responsible for quality assurance, to formalize the ACS arrangement with AVA; and to endorse the procedures outlined in the manual. Specimen for this declaration is provided in Appendix 2.

## 3. Schedule of Products

A schedule of products sought to be covered under the ACS arrangement should follow the declaration. Companies should therefore prepare a list of products, countries being exported to and the type of certification required by these countries.

As importing countries frequently revise their requirements, often without notice, it cannot be assured that previous requirement will still apply. Therefore it is the responsibility of the exporter to ensure that they are aware of the requirements of the importing country and to prevent costly rejection or destruction of exported products. The system adopted by the exporter to check these requirements needs to be documented.

## 4. Management Review and Internal Audit of Quality Assurance System

The company's quality assurance system should be reviewed internally on a regular basis, to review the efficiency of procedures and confirm the maintenance of quality at or above the agreed level. The plan should state the frequency, method and who is responsible for such reviews. The results of such reviews must be documented and made available to AVA on request.

# **ORGANISATION**

## 5. Personnel

### 5.1 Organization Chart

It is recommended that an organizational chart of senior management, production and quality control personnel be provided. The company shall appoint a Management Representative responsible for all matters affecting the quality assurance system.

### 5.2 Duty Statements

Duty statements should include positions of staff responsible for the operations of the QA arrangements.

## **QUALITY SYSTEM**

### **6. Raw Material Control**

#### **6.1 Quality Control of Raw Material**

Raw materials can be defined as all those materials which the organization requires to produce a product. These include harvested flowers, packing materials and Chemicals. The quality of raw materials has a significant bearing on the quality of the finished product and the time and capital outlay required for processing. It is important to ensure that the quality of raw materials entering the packing shed is that which the organization requires. A purchasing specifications and procedures are required. The method(s) employed by the organization to control the quality of raw material must be documented in the QA manual. The written procedures describe how function should be controlled, who is in control, what is to be controlled, where and when. All appropriate documents, work instruction etc. must be available when they are needed and that any changes need to be properly authorized and acknowledged.

#### **6.2 Storage**

Procedures must document how raw materials are handled, stored and controlled so as to minimize risk of contamination by pests, deterioration, cross-contamination with clean product and to ensure safety practices when chemicals are used.

### **7. Process Control**

#### **7.1 Layout of Establishment**

Provide a simple plan of the packing shed showing location of major items of equipment, receipt and dispatch areas, sorting and grading areas, areas and dis-infestation tanks/tents etc. (Please see Appendix 3).

#### **7.2 Analysis of Production Processes**

In order to assure the final product meet the import requirements imposed by the foreign Plant Quarantine authority, the potential hazards to quality within the process must be known. Each product line should be analyzed to identify the critical points within the process which must be controlled to ensure that the quality of the product is not jeopardized. The following steps form a typical sequence of analysis.

- identify quality parameters, i.e. what does the customer want?
- inspect process and draw flow chart, i.e. look at the process which is in place at the establishment and write down the steps involved.

- identify hazards to the quality of the product, i.e. what can go wrong in the process to cause the quality of the product to deteriorate or no longer meet specifications, e.g. pest infestation.
- rate the hazards and assess the risk.
- determine critical control points at which to reduce or eliminate the hazards to quality.
- establish controls at critical points e.g. specifications, procedures, inspections and records.

### 7.3 Product Identification and Trace-ability

The product must bear the lot identification or coding system which enables the organization to trace and identify product in the event of a product failure at an inspection point. The identifying marks and records relating to each consignment must allow the origin and the treatment history of the product to be traced if requested by AVA.

### 7.4 Product Failure

AVA requires that the procedures for dealing with products which fails at an inspection point are documented. Specify acceptance/rejection criteria for further processing, segregation of suspect product and disposal procedures. A history of rejected product should be maintained to show how it was reprocessed or disposed of. The causes that lead to the rejection of the products must also be identified. Documentation of corrective action should be made so that recurrences are eliminated or reduced.

## 8. Finished Product Control

AVA requires that the organization describe procedures for storage of finished product, including stock rotation, temperature control, control of non-inspected and/or non-treated product. The organization must also describe their procedures for releasing, detaining or rejecting stocks of finished product. This includes specifications/criteria for acceptance/rejection.

## 9. Pest Control and Sanitation

### 9.1 Field

The pest control programme employed by the company and its contract suppliers/growers plays a major role towards assuring a clean finished product. AVA requires this programme to be documented in the QA manual and identifies:

- types of pesticide used

- application rates
- method of application
- when and where applied
- type of pests controlled

## 9.2 Product

The organization needs to describe the procedures to ensure all products before entering the packing station/shed are pests free. In particular, AVA needs to know:

- types of dis-infestation
- types of chemical and concentration used
- when and where applied
- person responsible for overseeing the programme
- dilution chart of pesticide

## 9.3 Packing Station/Shed

The establishment should have a cleaning, sanitation and pest control programme. This is necessary to ensure that there are no potential breeding grounds for pests and diseases and therefore little risk of re-infestation/infestation during and after the processing of the product. An outline of how the programs operates is required.

## 9.4 Waste Disposal

Briefing outline waste disposal procedures applying to product handling areas, amenities and exterior of establishment with special emphasis on method of disposal and means of avoiding breeding sites for pests and diseases.

## 10. Compliance Of Phytosanitary Requirements Of Importing Countries

The organization shall establish and maintain documented procedures for inspection and testing activities in order to verify the phytosanitary requirements for the final product (including packing material and conveyance such as containers) are met. Two personnel from the Quality Control Department holding at least a supervisory position are to be nominated to conduct this compliance inspection. They will be authorized by AVA

after training as the accredited inspector. The detail records of the inspection and testing for every consignment are required to be documented.

## 11. Training

The organization shall establish and maintain documented procedures for identifying training needs and provide for the training of all personnel performing activities concerning about the detection of pests, application of dis-infestation measures and the compliance with foreign phytosanitary requirements. Records of training shall be maintained.

## Appendix 2

### Declaration by Chief Executive

I \_\_\_\_\_(name) being the owner/director \* of the registered company

\_\_\_\_\_ (name) hereby declare to all staff and to Agri-Food and

Veterinary Authority , that I undertake, on behalf of the company to:

- a) ensure compliance with the Terms and Conditions of the ACS arrangement.
- b) comply with the policies, procedures and specifications set out in this manual which defines the quality system in operation for the preparation of the products specified in the schedule of products.
- c) grant entry to the premises at any time to persons who are AVA authorized officers for the purpose of the ACS arrangement. This entry includes for the purposes of formally auditing matters contained in the manual and monitoring performance related to preparation of the products listed in the schedule which are required to meet legislative requirement and/or for which certification is required.

I understand that being committed to this ACS arrangement is essential to the successful maintenance of the arrangement and I will endeavor to ensure that all personnel in the system understand their objectives and responsibilities.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Dated \_\_\_\_\_

\* delete whichever not applicable

ESTABLISHMENT LAYOUT

