



The Operational Manual

The Vietfarm Standards

(For the Vietfarm Organization)



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1. Purpose of the Manual

The operational manual describes the VietFarm Standard certification system, its basic rules and principles in the certification process, the concept of certification compliance criteria and the reasons for sanctions if the certification is violated. In addition, the operating manual provides an overview of information on the inspection and certification process.

2. Scope of Appliance

The standard operating manual applies to all parties involved in the VietFarm Standard including VietFarm standard applicants, the VietFarm Secretariat, the VietFarm Council, and inspectors and customers of VietFarm.

3. Certification System

3.1. What are the VietFarm Standards?

VietFarm is an independent standards system that adopts and is assessed by international standard bodies. VietFarm Standards can be applied to enterprises, cooperatives and farms in the agricultural sector. With the quality of international standards and a commitment to sustainability, small and medium agricultural producers in Vietnam will gain the trust of domestic and international customers and consumers. VietFarm Standards will certify the products and apply labels on certified products.

3.2. Content and Methods of Building the Standards

The VietFarm Standards are designed according to the criteria of quality management systems, food hygiene and safety management systems, good agricultural practices and technical requirements of international and regional agricultural products in conjunction with national standards for agricultural products and current regulations on food safety in Vietnam.

3.3. Reference System

- The international standards referenced as guides to developing the VietFarm Standards include: IFOAM, Fairtrade, UTZ, Global G.A.P., Vietgap, National Standard on Organic Agriculture (TCVN 110401-1: 2017)
- TCVN 17065 (Vietnam-Government endorsed version of ISO 17067)
- International and national technical standards for the maximum amount of pesticide residues, heavy metal contamination in food, and fungal toxin contamination in food
- Regulations on food hygiene and safety in manufacturing and processing for Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and Hazard Analysis and Limit Review (HACCP)
- ISO 9001: 2008 and ISO 14001: 2004 [Expired from September 15, 2018]
- ASEANGAP, Good agricultural practices for fresh fruits and vegetables in ASEAN region
- JGAP (2010), Control Point and Compliance Criteria for Fruits and Vegetables

- GLOBALG.A.P, General Regulations, Part 1 General requirements, Part 2 Quality Management System Rules; Integrated Farm Assurance, All Farm Base - Crops based- Combined crops, Fruit and Vegetables, Tea (Version 4.0, Version 5.0)
- QCVN 12-1: 2011 / BYT National technical standards on hygiene and safety for food that comes in direct contact with synthetic plastic packaging and tools
- QCVN 12-2: 2011 / BYT National technical standards on hygiene and safety for food that comes in direct contact with rubber packaging and tools
- QCVN 12-3: 2011 / BYT National technical standards on hygiene and safety for food that comes in direct contact with metal packaging and tools
- QCVN 8-1: 2011 / BYT National technical regulations on limits of fungal toxin contamination in food
- QCVN 8-2: 2011 / BYT National technical regulations on limits of heavy metal pollution in food
- QCVN 8-3: 2012 / BYT National technical standards for microbial contamination in food
- QCVN 03-MT: 2015 / BTNMT National technical regulations on permissible limits of some heavy metals in the soil
- QCVN 08-MT: 2015 / BTNMT National technical regulation on surface water quality
- QCVN 02: 2009 / BYT National technical regulations on the quality of drinking water
- QCVN 01-132: 2013 / BNNPTNT National technical standards for vegetables, fruits and fresh tea qualified to ensure food safety during production and preliminary processing
- Circular No. 50/2016 / TT-BYT regulating the maximum limit of pesticide residues in food
- Joint Circular No. 05/2016 / TTLT-BNNPTNT-BTNMT dated May 16, 2016 of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment guiding the collecting, transporting and handling of pesticide packaging after use
- Circular No. 03/2018 / TT-BNNPTNT on plant protection of drugs permitted for use

3.4 . Criteria for Compliance with the Vietfarm Standards

VietFarm has developed criteria that require participating parties to comply. These criteria are aimed at transforming the requirements of the VietFarm Standards and VietFarm’s certification policies into verifiable control points to determine whether the participating parties are in compliance with the VietFarm Standards or not.

The compliance criteria of the VietFarm Standards are published on the website at www.vietfarm.org.vn

Where participating parties do not conform to the corresponding standard requirements, it is understood that they are not meeting the criteria set forth by the Vietfarm Standards.

To understand the different types of criteria, it is necessary to understand how the VietFarm Standard requirements are classified:

3.4.1. The Core Criteria

There are 29 criteria categorized into the Core Criteria. Achieving these criteria is a prerequisite for receiving the VietFarm certificate. Failure to meet these criteria is considered in opposition to the goals and reputation of the VietFarm Standard system, and may lead to certificate suspension.

3.4.2. The Standard Criteria

There are 57 criteria categorized in the Major Criteria. Criteria classified into this group are necessary for an agricultural unit to gain the recognition of customers, especially international clients. If the VietFarm Standard participating party does not comply with these criteria, there will be time to revise (over a designated period) to maintain the certificate, or in the case of a certificate expiring, to qualify for recertification. The corrective measures, instructions, and training are monitored by the experts of the VietFarm Standard.

Note that there are a number of criteria where compliance requirements will change from year to year when participating in the VietFarm Standards.

3.4.3. The Developmental Criteria

These criteria help the parties involved in perfecting their own mechanisms and capacities, by being responsible and building reputations with their customers and the community.

3.4.4. Efficiency Ratings (Professional Use)

For the compliance criteria, 5 levels of compliance are described and numbered from 1 to 5. Instead of choosing Yes or No, the evaluation expert must choose one of those 5 levels corresponding from the points 1 to 5.

3.4.4.1. The Core Criteria

VietFarm Standard participants are required to score from 3 to 5. If the score is not achieved, the evaluation expert should accurately describe the cause and reasons.

3.4.4.2. The Major Criteria

VietFarm Standard participants need to score between 2 and 3. Experts do not need to explain the current situation immediately but should be able to give comments in cases which are not fully described by the initial performance ratings.

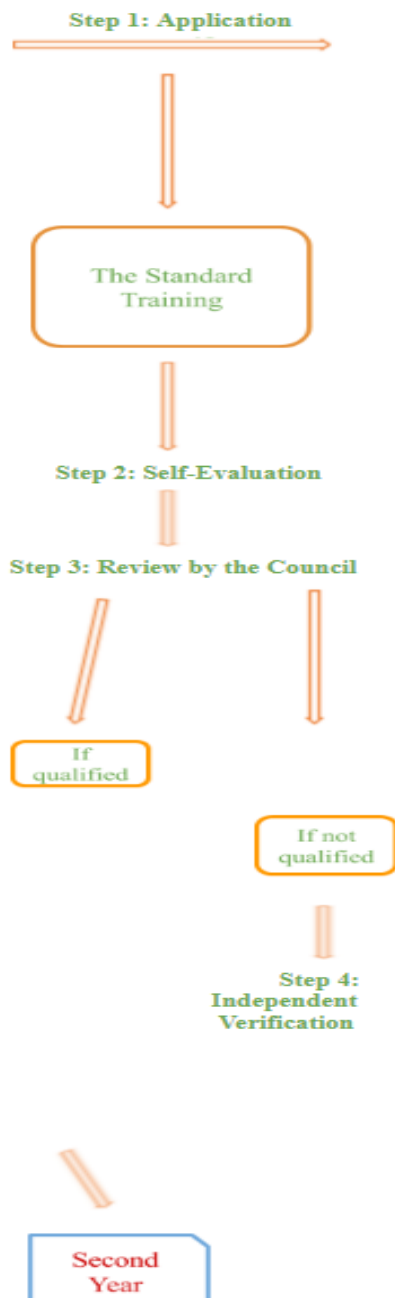
3.4.4.3. The Developmental Criteria

VietFarm Standard participants need to achieve a score of 1 or higher. However, applying these criteria may not need to be done in the first year, but should be further improved and completed in the following years.

3.5. VietFarm Standard Certification Process

Producer/Vietfarm Member

- If prospective participating parties desire to apply to the Vietfarm Standard, send the application form to the Vietfarm Secretariat
- Participating parties are obliged to:
 - Learn about [Vietfarm's standards](#)
 - Check and meet the requirements
- Participating parties start self-evaluating according to VietFarm's criteria
- After training, participating parties are obligated to take a test (if necessary)



The Vietfarm Secretariat

- The Secretariat will check, support and complete all applications and send them to the VietFarm Standard Council

Vietfarm Standard Council

- The VietFarm Standard Council and VietFarm's agricultural experts conduct training on VietFarm's Standard
 - Training on Vietfarm Standards
 - Training on participating party's self evaluation process
- VietFarm Standard Council proceeds to evaluate the participating party's set of self-assessment criteria

- Experts begin inspecting and start the training for capacity building

Step 5: Vietfarm Certification

- Participating parties have completed the requirements for the VietFarm Standard

- The VietFarm Standard Council provides certificates to participating parties who reach the requirements and complete Vietfarm Standard's participation process

Step 1: Application

- The producer that wishes to become a VietFarm members shall send their application to VietFarm Secretariat (CDI). The application form can be downloaded here (www.vietfarm.org.vn)

- The application will then be reviewed by the Secretariat and sent to the VietFarm Evaluation Board

Step 2: Self-Evaluation

- The producer shall conduct the self-evaluation procedures for their products on reports, lists of products, production processes and other necessary processes

Step 3: Review by the Council

- Once the Evaluation Board approves the application, the producer will be trained to better understand the VietFarm standards and the evaluation process

Step 4: Independent Verification

Following the producers' self-evaluation, the Evaluation Board will decide whether the producer is qualified to become a participating party based on the following criteria:

- Achieving 80% of VietFarm's standards
- If 80% of VietFarm's standards are not reached, the producers will be informed about the reasons and will be allowed to improve their performance and have their application re-considered within 6 months

Step 5: Vietfarm Certification

- VietFarm certificate is valid for 6 months
- The participating parties' products will be labeled under VietFarm branding
- VietFarm will provide assistance for its participating parties to improve their production capacity: in cultivation, processing and exporting via training sessions
- VietFarm will support the producers to join the network and promote trade with domestic and international markets

4. The Structure of VietFarm

The Structure of the VietFarm Ecosystem includes the VietFarm Alliance (VFA), auditors, certified producers such as farmers, cooperatives and chain-of-custody processors, traders and consumers. The VFA has a range of functions which include setting and writing the VietFarm Standards, overseeing the overall use of the label, writing the VFA audit manual, promoting responsible agriculture, educating and training farmers, maintains the database for farmers, co-operatives, wholesalers, and retailers, advising on policy and resolving internal disputes. The VFA is governed by the Board of Directors who are elected

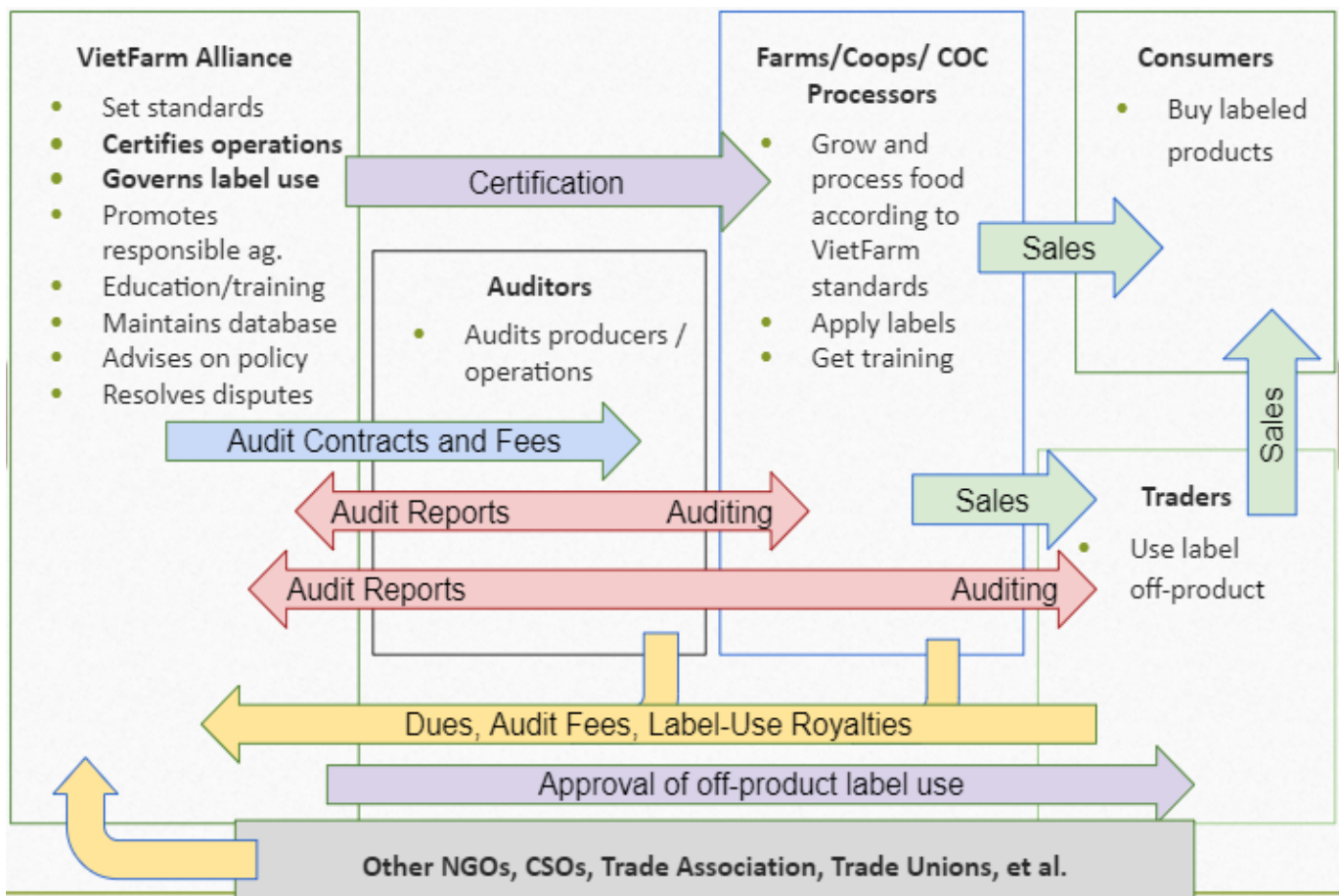
from those with VietFarm membership and who possess the power of chamber-weighted voting. The VFA also maintains Advisory Committees such as the Standards Committee (comprised of members), the Audit Review (the Board Chair is an ex official member, while other members of this committee are not affiliated with the VFA) and the Disputes Resolution Committee (which may include external members).

Auditors annually audit farms, farmers and chain-of-custody producers. Auditors are accredited and deemed competent by the VFA. Auditors must have passed a “conformity assessment” TCVN 17065, (formerly known as ISO 17067), administered by the Vietnamese government. Auditors are contractually obligated to use the VFA audit manual. The auditors also write audit reports which will be reviewed by the VFA Audit Review Committee. Auditors can help monitor the use of the VietFarm label, but VFA has the final say on label approval.

Certified producers include farmers, cooperatives and chain-of-custody processors. They are able to receive membership with the VFA. Certified producers grow and process food according to the VietFarm Standards and follow the labeling guidelines set out by the VFA. They also pay certification audit fees and label royalties to the VFA. Certified producers’ final function is that they sell products to consumers.

Traders are allowed to use the VietFarm label off product if they pay royalties to the VFA. Consumers are the final segment of the VietFarm Ecosystem. They buy labelled VietFarm products.

4.1 The VietFarm Ecosystem



5. VietFarm Standard Certification

This document describes VietFarm Standard’s certification, circumstances leading to the sanctioning of the participating party and the re-registration process after being sanctioned.

5.1. Certification Standards

Each of the VietFarm participants whose product was certificated by VietFarm will be provided a certificate. The certificate will specify the product type, area and quantity under VietFarm’s Standards.

Units who comply with VietFarm Standards should receive VietFarm’s certification within 1 year. Compliance to the standards will continue to be monitored / checked or unexpectedly inspected according to the criteria of VietFarm Standards in the following forms: independent assessment by experts, cross-assessments between parties participating in VietFarm, and self-assessment.

After each year, the certificate must be renewed.

Overall, VietFarm certification will only be granted if the participating parties meet all of VietFarm’s requirements. Until the unsatisfactory criteria have been dealt with, participating parties will not be certificated (There may be exceptions that are decided by the VietFarm Council with clear, official documents).

5.2. Sanctions

The following are cases where VietFarm Standard participants are sanctioned. Sanctions may be selected by the VietFarm Council depending on the criteria of the VietFarm Standard.

5.2.1. Revoke Certification and Refuse Certification

The following cases may be denied certification:

1. The inspector determines noncompliance with the mandatory criteria during the initial monitoring and evaluation process.
2. There is evidence of failure of compliance with corrective measures in a specified time frame.
3. Corrective measures were not made according to experts' evaluation or the objective evidence provided by the participating party.

Note: In cases where the VietFarm Standard Council issued a license to a participating party, the trading license will be revoked and the certificate will be rejected.

5.2.2. Suspension of Certification

Members may have their certification suspended in the following cases:

1. Inspectors determine nonconformities with the core criteria and the developmental criteria.
2. The member is unable to provide appropriate corrective measures after a given time period.
3. There is no evidence of corrective measures sent to the VietFarm Standard Council during the required time.
4. The corrective measures have not been implemented based on the evaluation of the objective evidence provided by the member.

The maximum suspension of certification is within 5 months. During that time, the certificate of the suspended member is not allowed to use VietFarm labels for new products.

5.2.3. Revocation of Certification

Members' certification may be revoked in the following cases:

1. No objective evidence was sent to VietFarm Standard Council in a given time.
2. Corrective measures were not implemented based on the evaluation of objective evidence provided by the member.
3. Members who did not or do not comply with the principles and regulations of VietFarm Standards. For example: not paying fees, delaying inspection, purchasing fraud and sale contracts, and transactions.

5.2.4. Re-registration after Sanction

After being sanctioned, the prospective participating party can register to re-certify with the VietFarm Standard with the following conditions:

1. Any inappropriate remedy must be implemented within the time period set by the VietFarm Council.
2. Any unpaid fees must be paid in full within a period of time before the cancellation. In case of overdue, it is essential to pay back the initial fee.

5.3. Right to Respond / Appeal

When the VietFarm Council has a sanctioning decision for participating parties, the Council will specify the time that the party has the right to respond / appeal. If the participating party has any responses / complaints / appeals, the participating party has the right to appeal and request the Council to reconsider. The party can download the Complaint Form at www.vietfarm.org.vn

6. Inspection and Testing

6.1. Inspection

change or confirm the inspectors' reports provided that it gives objective, clear and specific evidence. After that, all non-compliance cases will be verified for the participating party within 30 days.

In case the participating party has not proposed any remedial measures at the end of the inspection, the VietFarm Standard Council will extend to the participating party for a period of 1 month for the party to have time to correct and add suggestions.

The inspectors have the responsibility to evaluate these corrective measures to achieve compliance with the VietFarm Standard within 14 days after the measures were given.

When the appropriate corrective measures are confirmed, the participating party should carry out implementation during the time given by the VietFarm Standard Council (implementation time depends on the specific level of the problem).

6.1.1. Reference Content for Inspection Activities

The examination / inspection of the VietFarm Standard participant is referenced based on the VietFarm Standard Payment Process for inspectors (internally issued).

6.1.2. Inspection Content

The inspection content includes inspection preparation, the inspection, evaluation and results after inspection.

6.2. Planning and Preparing Inspections

The inspection time will be sent to the participating party 1 month in advance. After that, the Secretariat will contact the participating party to determine the convenient inspection time for both parties.

After that, the Secretariat will send information to the participating party detailing the scope and process of the inspection.

6.3. Conducting Inspections

The inspector evaluates the performance of a participating party based on the criteria of the VietFarm Standard during the inspection process. The participating party is required to have the compulsory documents available via the notification letter. In the process of inspecting and verifying compliance to the VietFarm Standards, inspectors have the right to request additional documents as needed.

6.4. End of Inspections

The inspector needs to complete the report with inappropriate cases and present this report at the end of the inspection. During this meeting, the inspector explains everything that was not in compliance to the participating party and also informs them the number of points achieved on the core criteria, major criteria and developmental criteria. After that, the participating party is required to propose corrective measures to overcome the problems indicated by the inspector.

After the inspection the results including, the corrective measures proposed by the participating party, will be reported to the VietFarm Council by the inspector.

6.5. Evaluation of Inspection Results

After receiving the inspection results, the VietFarm Standard Council is responsible for handling the inspection report and examining the validity of all reported data. The VietFarm Standard Council reserves the right to the procedures.

6.6. Certification after Inspection

After the participating party completes the corrective measures and is certified by the inspector for completion and conformity, they will proceed with the VietFarm Standard renewal process