

Assurance Code System Report 2.0

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Assurance System Structure

UTZ Certified works through a proxy accreditation system whereby UTZ **approves** Certification Bodies (CBs) to offer certification services against its standards.

In order to be approved as an UTZ Certified CB, the CB must be **accredited** by a recognized Accreditation Body (AB) that is member of IAF or ISEAL (i.e. ASI, IOAS). Further details about the CB approval process and requirements can be found in Chapter 3 of the most recent version of the UTZ Certified Certification Protocol¹ (version 4.0).

UTZ approved CBs conduct (annual) audits of members in accordance with the requirements of the UTZ Certified Certification Protocol and base the certification decision on the results of the audit.

CBs inform UTZ Certified about each audit conducted and each certification granted by uploading the information (certificate and summary report of the audit) in the UTZ traceability and certificate handling system, the Good Inside Portal (GIP).

In order to ensure that the certification process has been carried out in accordance with the Certification Protocol, the Standards and Certification **(S&C) Department reviews 100% of the certifications** granted by UTZ CBs.

Information about CBs, UTZ members, clients of CB's and their certificates (e.g. expiry date, suspensions, cancellations, etc.), as well as certified volumes, traded volumes, and transactions is available in the GIP. This information is used for traceability, M&E, CB's account management and CB monitoring purposes.

As part of the assurance model, UTZ Certified has also a CB monitoring program² and a CB training program³ to follow up on performance of CBs and support them with training interventions when needed.

Standards assessed through the assurance system

The UTZ Program has two standards: the **Code of Conduct and the Chain of Custody Standard**.

For auditing against either UTZ standard, CBs are required by UTZ Certified to be accredited against ISO 17065 with scopes related to agriculture or food or chain of custody (the list of the Approved Certification Bodies is available on the UTZ website⁴).

The UTZ Certified is the **Certification Protocol** is also a relevant document for the UTZ program, which describes the process for becoming an UTZ certified member or an approved UTZ Certification Body (CB). It explains which members need to receive an external audit, and how and when this audit must be conducted. The Certification Protocol also describes the arrangements determining the relationship between the CBs and UTZ Certified.

These Standards, the Certification Protocol and other relevant documents of the UTZ Program (e.g. list of banned pesticides) are reviewed regularly. For this, UTZ Certified conducts stakeholder consultations by means of face to face workshops and online surveys. In addition, readers of UTZ documents are invited to submit comments at any time by getting in contact with UTZ (this is displayed in the cover page of the documents).

The Assurance model of UTZ Certified is reviewed as part of the revision process of the Certification Protocol (approximately every 2 years), as well as part of the overall management plan of UTZ.

¹ <https://utzcertified.org/attachments/article/26584870/EN%20-%20UTZ%20Certification%20Protocol%204.0.pdf>

² Details of this program are described in the CB Monitoring System 2.0 document that can be obtained per request to cbmonitorign@utzcertified.org

³ Certification Protocol, chapter 4.

⁴ <https://utzcertified.org/ndp?article&id=26584847>



The Executive Team (ET) of UTZ Certified regularly analyzes the functioning of the organization in order to assess risks and opportunities, and designs strategies to improve and excel. Recently, the strategy 2015-2019 has been launched as a result of a SWOT analysis conducted by the ET.

UTZ Certified currently has a **Complaints Handling Procedure** in place to allow partners and individuals to submit complaints, at any time, about UTZ Certified or about other actors related to UTZ. This procedure as well as the complaints form can be found on the UTZ website⁵. This procedure is under revision and it will be replaced soon by a new **Grievance Mechanism**.

Personnel Competence

Auditors in the UTZ program are approved on an individual basis by each Certification Body; the requirements for their approval are listed in the Certification Protocol (Chapter 3.1 CB approval requirements).

Auditor evaluation is not defined by UTZ Certified and is assumed to be completed by the CBs. Nevertheless, one of the key performance indicators of the UTZ CB Monitoring Program is dedicated to monitoring the performance of the CB's auditors through shadow audits. The results of these audits can be used for better planning of training activities.

After completion of the shadow audits and the review of the training procedures of CBs during the office audits (both are the core of the CB Monitoring Program), reports are sent to the CB with comments and recommendations for improvement which are frequently linked to training activities for the auditors. In addition, the e-learning platform (under development) will further strengthen the training of auditors and will be used to align knowledge amongst auditors of all approved CBs.

Assessment

The UTZ Certified program is based on 3rd party audits which are conducted by approved CBs.

Audits against the standards must be conducted annually. In addition, CBs must perform surprise audits on 10% of the total number of audits conducted during the previous year to evaluate the performance of the auditors and the members during a non-audit period.

For the UTZ audits, it is up to the CB to decide on the composition of the auditing team, however, the CB must appoint (and have approved by UTZ) a Certifier who will guarantee the 4 eyes principle of the audit by evaluating the result of the auditors in the field. The Certified will be responsible for the certification decision.

There are no specific rules defining how and when knowledge can be shared between the auditor and the auditee, however, the Certification Protocol set rules prohibiting CBs from providing consultancy services to the auditee.

In the UTZ standards, every applicable control point is assessed by the auditors as a compliance or non-conformity; there are no levels in between.

When non-conformities are found by auditors, they must be solved by the auditee within a maximum of 12 weeks after the audit; not respecting this deadline or leaving non-conformities without an appropriate corrective action can

⁵ <https://utzcertified.org/ndp?article&id=26584916>



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eventually guide the CB to suspend the member or cancel the certification. Further details about certification process can be found in the Certification Protocol, Chapter 2 - Certification Process.

The UTZ program has 4 certification options for the Code of Conduct: individual, multi-site, group and multi-group. Individual farms and multi-sites are audited against the Code of Conduct for individual certification, while groups and multi-groups are audited against the Code of Conduct for group certification. The group and multi-group certification options require an annual assessment of the Internal Management System (IMS) and the inspection of the square root of the total number of members.

Oversight

As UTZ certified works through a proxy accreditation, UTZ Certified assesses assurance providers through the CB Monitoring System; a system of shadow and office audits has been implemented for the approved CBs in order to assess competency.

Every six months, the system evaluates each approved CB with a set of indicators and scores CBs accordingly. Scores are used as a planning tool to decide on interventions and future audits.

On-going Scrutiny

Field Development, Market Development, and the Member Support Departments within UTZ Certified are continuously monitoring and supporting certified members. Feedback is given to the Standards & Certification department to be used as input to improve the standards and Certification Protocol.

In addition, a work stream project named Quality of Implementation is also checking the reliability of the certified volumes and investigating potential cases of fraud (as increased yield estimations or double selling).

The person responsible for issues related with any part of the assurance model is Britta Wyss-Bisang.