



**Sustainability**  
Standard™

# **SUSTAINABLE FOOD GROUP SUSTAINABILITY STANDARD**

**Training Center General Requirements**

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Sust Stnd Training Center General Requirements, v2.0	January 01, 2025	Valid until further notice
<b>To be used in conjunction with</b>		
Sust Stnd Trainer Handbook for Approved Training Centers, v2.0		
<b>Replaces</b>		<b>Applicable to</b>
TC-SFG-23 Training Center General Requirements, v1.0		Approved Sustainability Standard Training Centers

**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](mailto:certification@sustainablefoodgroup.org).

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## 1.0 Introduction

- i. The Sustainable Food Group Sustainability Standard™ Certification is a private scheme that incorporates mandatory and optional requirements for the certification of food and non-food crop products (“crops”) at an international level.
- ii. For proper execution of the Sustainability Standard scheme, it is necessary that certain parties, including, but not limited to, third-party auditors, second-party or internal auditors and clients obtain training on the scheme operation and auditing procedures. In the interest in increasing the availability of such training events, Sustainable Food Group (SFG) has developed an official Training Center (TC) program. In this program, organizations other than the Scheme Owner having the necessary resources and expertise may be approved to conduct training events for the above-mentioned parties.
- iii. These General Requirements detail the Sustainability Standard Training Center process, including duties and expectations of Training Centers and of the SFG in the process of TC establishment and operation.
- iv. Two types of training may be offered by approved Training Centers:
  - a) Sustainability Standard Auditor Training: For third-party auditors of approved Certification Bodies who will be conducting on-site and desk audits of organizations seeking or maintaining Sustainability Standard certification. This training is also suitable for personnel who will be conducting internal Group assessments (i.e., internal audits) as part of the requirements for Group certification.
  - b) Sustainability Standard Client Training: For clients interested in gaining a greater understanding of the Sustainability Standard requirements, normative documents and audit procedures.
- v. Approved Training Centers may combine auditor and client trainings so long as these trainings are marketed as such and both Training Objectives are incorporated in the training.

## 2.0 TC Personnel Requirements

- i. **Point of contact:** The TC shall appoint at least one person to be the official Training Center Representative who shall act as the main point of contact, send records of attendance, clarify technical issues, inform SFG of any updates in TC logo, name, website, and ability to meet requirements and perform training events up to the standards outlined in this document.
- ii. **Trainer capacity:** The TC shall have one or more trainers approved to offer Sustainability Standard training events. These trainers shall be approved prior to any advertising or marketing of trainer services.

## 3.0 Trainer and Training Center Conduct Requirements

- i. **Commercial interest:** The TC shall be free from any commercial interest in the companies or products applying for certification.
- ii. **Confidentiality:** The TC shall maintain the confidentiality of all client-specific information except as required by this standard or by law.
- iii. **Consultancy:** Trainers shall not provide either written or verbal consultancy (i.e., guidance in exchange for payment) to trainees or other parties interested in achieving or maintaining

Sustainability Standard certification outside of Sustainability Standard training events. See point (iv) below.

- iv. **Conflicts of Interest:** Trainers shall only carry out training where no conflicts of interest exist with any trainees. This includes, but is not limited to, having a financial interest in a trainee or contracting with a trainee for other consulting work.
  - a) TC personnel shall declare any potential conflicts of interest to the TC management and shall decline from performing a training where any conflict of interest exists.
- v. **Impartiality:** Trainers shall be impartial when training and show no prejudice or favor for any party over another. A trainer shall not endorse, promote or denigrate a product or service, and shall train according to Sustainability Standard audit compliance criteria. A trainer shall not accept any gifts or direct financial rewards from Trainees before, during or after carrying out Sustainability Standard training.
- vi. **Self-promotion:** Trainers shall not promote or try to sell their own or their employer's services while conducting Sustainability Standard trainings.

#### 4.0 Training Center Oversight

- i. To ensure quality and consistency across all Training Centers, SFG will operate a Training Center Integrity Program (hereafter, "Integrity Program").
- ii. The Integrity Program will include, but is not limited to, the following:
  - a) Attending training events to observe content delivery and trainer conduct. Attending trainings will occur as needed, at least once per year.
  - b) Review of TC records and practices, such as training attendance records and participant certificates generated.
  - c) Review of trainee feedback submitted via the Training Evaluation Participant Survey, which is available to all training participants following each training event and is intended to evaluate trainer efficacy.
- iii. SFG reserves the right to add additional oversight as necessary.

#### 5.0 Trainer Evaluation and Approval

- i. Trainer evaluation and approval shall include review of all the following qualifications by Sustainable Food Group:
  - a) Education
    - 1) Trainers shall have a post-high school diploma, degree, certificate or equivalent (minimum course duration of two (2) years) in a discipline related to the scope of Sustainability Standard certification (food, agriculture/agronomy, sustainability, biology, environmental science, etc.)
  - b) Experience
    - 1) **Work experience:** It is preferred that a trainer have five (5) years of work experience in sustainable agriculture and/or sustainability best practices in the food or agriculture industry. At a minimum, they shall have at least two (2) years of related work experience in the agricultural industry.
    - 2) **Audit experience:** It is preferred that a trainer have two (2) or more years of auditing experience with sustainability certifications. At a minimum, trainers

- shall have three (3) years of experience auditing one or more reputable certification schemes.
- 3) **Training experience:** Prior experience in conducting training events on the topic of sustainability, sustainable agriculture, food safety or a related topic (one or more trainings conducted). Formal training may stand in for this requirement if experience is lacking.
- c) Formal auditor training
    - 1) Recognized training in audit techniques with a minimum of a one-day practical inspection course setting out basic principles of auditing / inspection.
    - 2) Integrated Pest Management and nutrient management training, either as part of formal qualifications or through successful completion of a formal course.
    - 3) Approved Sustainability Standard Trainer Onboarding hosted by either the Scheme Owner or an Approved Training Center
      - Trainers shall communicate their preference for a training session hosted by the Scheme Owner or an Approved Training Center. If attending a training hosted by the Scheme Owner, schedule the training sessions with the Scheme Owner as part of the onboarding process. If attending a training by an approved Training Center, provide the Scheme Owner (SFG) with the date and time of the training as well as evidence of registration. Trainers shall attend an Auditor Training; Client Trainings are not accepted for this qualification.
      - Trainers that are already approved auditors are only required to attend Part 1 of the Trainer Onboarding, as defined by the Scheme Owner.
  - d) Exam
    - 1) All trainers shall pass the Sustainability Standard online exam (“the exam”) to be initially approved and subsequently shall retake the exam when there is a new version of the Scheme or as required by the Scheme Owner (no more than once every three years).
    - 2) Trainers that are already approved auditors for the Sustainability Standard and have passed the Auditor Exam within six (6) months of the Trainer Evaluations form submission are not required to take the exam again. The prior exam fulfills the exam requirement of training onboarding.
- ii. In addition to meeting the trainer qualifications, the trainer shall also complete the following prior to approval:
    - a) Sign the Trainer Agreement
    - b) Receive and review a copy of the Trainer Handbook from SFG
  - iii. Following initial approval, trainers shall be approved to conduct Sustainability Standard Auditor Training, Sustainability Standard Client Training, or both.
  - iv. Trainer qualifications shall be reexamined annually by the Scheme Owner according to the following maintenance criteria:
    - a) Has the trainer conducted at least one Sustainability Standard training per year, as well as multiple trainings for other schemes?

- b) Has the trainer made an effort to stay up to date on sustainability and auditing topics, including attending relevant events and/or holding membership in a relevant professional association?
- c) Has the trainer attended all mandated Sustainability Standard Training events (i.e., for new versions of the audit standard) and successfully passed corresponding versions of the exam?
- d) Have participant survey results shown continued evidence of a clear and effective training approach by the trainer, or, if this not the case, do participant surveys show an improvement in the trainer's effectiveness over time?
- e) Have training observations by SFG as part of the Integrity Program shown no issues in content presented or conduct of the trainer, or, if such issues have been observed, have they been corrected within a reasonable timeframe after being notified?

## 6.0 Training Expectations

- i. **Training objectives:** Trainers shall train towards the objectives of the specified training service being offered. If the training is advertised as auditor training, then the focus of the training shall be on training the attendees to audit the Sustainability Standard; if the training is advertised as a client training, the training shall be focused on explaining the Sustainability Standard to operations interested in achieving certification.
- ii. **Length:** Training events shall include at least two (2) sessions and may be extended to a third. Regardless of the number of training sessions, the minimum cumulative length of sessions shall be four (4) hours. Trainings may be on one day or over the course of two days.
- iii. **Format:** Training events may be conducted in person or virtually.
  - a) Private training events are allowed so long as the approved Training Center and trainings adhere to all other requirements defined in these General Requirements. Only Section 8.ii. Promotion requirements do not apply, though Training Centers are expected to publicly advertise the availability of private training events generally.
- iv. **Language:** Training events may be conducted in Spanish, English or both, depending on the primary language of the Training Center and/or trainees. The Scheme Owner will provide initial training for Training Centers in English and will provide training materials in both English and Spanish.
- v. **Materials:** SFG shall provide the TC the training materials, including, but not limited to PowerPoint slides and exam questions. TC shall only use the training materials for the purpose of conducting Sustainability Standard training events. TC is responsible for distributing relevant materials to trainees before or during training events.
  - a) If TC wishes to make changes to any materials provided by SFG or to create supplementary materials for use during training, the following guidelines shall be followed:
    - 1) All changes shall be reviewed and approved by SFG in writing prior to use.
    - 2) All new materials shall be reviewed and approved by SFG in writing prior to use.
    - 3) TC may not make any statements on behalf of SFG.
    - 4) The Sustainable Food Group logo shall continue to appear once per slide in all training PowerPoints. In all instances, the logo shall include the trademark

- indication (™) and shall maintain the original height to width ratio and original color scheme. In all uses of the SFG logo, all logo elements must be present and easily legible.
- 5) All uses of the Sustainability Standard logo shall include the trademark indication (™) and shall maintain the original height to width ratio and color scheme. In all uses of the Sustainability Standard logo, all logo elements must be present and easily legible.
  - 6) TC may not make substantive edits to the content of training materials in regard to Scheme operation and requirements such that the materials are inconsistent with the Scheme normative documents. TC may edit formatting, e.g., to align with TC branding.
- vi. **Training records:** Trainer or another TC representative shall take attendance of trainees at all sessions of the training. These records shall be used by the TC for sending out certificates and shall be shared with SFG within five (5) business days of a training event occurring.
  - vii. **Trainer evaluation survey:** Every trainee shall be given the opportunity to fill out a post-training survey, the Training Evaluation Participant Survey, created by the Scheme Owner, which shall include but not necessarily be limited to questions about the efficacy of the training, the training materials and the trainer's performance. Survey results are sent directly to the Scheme Owner via the online form. The Scheme Owner shall share survey results with the Training Center for the purposes of training and trainer improvement and review results as part of the Training Center Integrity Program.
  - viii. **Training size:** To promote a responsive and interactive educational environment for Sustainability Standard training events, it is recommended that one (1) trainer be present for every 25 trainees. If TC wishes to have a greater number of trainees per trainer, justification shall be provided in writing to SFG.

## 7.0 Certificate Types and Generation

- i. **Certificates:** There are three (3) types of training certificates awarded in relation to the Sustainability Standard.
  - a) **Trainer certificates:** generated by SFG and awarded to a trainer once onboarding has occurred, the exam is passed and all other trainer requirements are met. This is an official certification indicating the trainer's ability to conduct Sustainability Standard training events.
  - b) **Client certificates:** generated by TC for training participants using a fillable PDF provided by SFG. These certificates may only be granted following the completion of all sessions of the Sustainability Standard Client Training for trainees that have been present for all sessions. This certificate indicates a trainee's understanding of the Sustainability Standard but does not grant any abilities or certifications under the Scheme.
  - c) **Auditor certificates:** generated by the auditor exam platform for auditors. This is an official certificate indicating that the auditor has attended training from the Scheme Owner, a Training Center or a lead auditor for a CB and that they have passed the auditor exam and met all other auditor qualification requirements as outlined in the Sustainability Standard General Regulations and as evaluated by the CB. This certificate



designates their official ability to conduct Sustainability Standard audits under an approved Certification Body.

## 8.0 Training Scheduling, Promotion and Logo Use

- i. **Notice to Scheme Owner:** TC shall notify SFG in advance of training dates. Ideally, a schedule will be provided quarterly of upcoming training events for the calendar quarter. When this is not possible, TC shall give at least two (2) weeks of notice to SFG prior to a training event occurrence.
- ii. **Promotion requirements:** TC shall list all training events on their website, which shall be linked to from the SFG webpage of approved training centers. The information on the TC site shall include the following for each training event:
  - a) Training type
  - b) Location
  - c) Time and Date
  - d) TC contact information and/or a means of registering for the event
- iii. **Logo and Trademark Use:** The Sustainability Standard™ trademark and logo may only be used with written permission from the Scheme Owner, signified by a signed and active License Agreement, for Training Centers and Certification Bodies (CBs), and a signed and active Sublicense Agreement for clients/auditees.
- iv. **Logo and Trademark Acquisition:** The Sustainability Standard™ logo shall always be obtained by the TC from the Scheme Owner. This will ensure that it contains the exact corporate color and format. Certified operations shall obtain the logo from their CB.

## 9.0 Sanctioning of Training Centers

- i. **Suspension:** A TC shall be suspended if:
  - a) The TC does not pay the agreed fees.
  - b) The TC improperly uses the Sustainable Food Group or Sustainability Standard logos.
  - c) An issue is discovered by the Training Center Integrity Program
  - d) The TC does not abide by the requirements of the General Regulations, License Agreement or other Scheme requirement.
- ii. **Revocation:** A TC shall have its approval revoked if:
  - a) Evidence of fraud is found.
  - b) The TC declares bankruptcy.
  - c) A suspension related issue is not adequately resolved.

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