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1. **PREAMBLE**

The GLOBALG.A.P. members aim to have inclusive benchmarking, to recognize and support local initiatives, and to form common and effective Good Agricultural Practices (G.A.P.) in order to simplify the certification process for producers and decrease unnecessary duplication of audits and costs.

The GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking procedure was developed in order to share common objectives with other certification system owners (CSO) around the globe with respect to safe and sustainable production based on Good Agricultural Practices and to build trustful and transparent partnerships. The GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking process compares G.A.P. certification systems worldwide with the GLOBALG.A.P. System, which includes certification rules (General Regulations) and Control Points and Compliance Criteria (CPCC) of any of its (sub)-scopes.

The benchmarking process begins with an application by the certification system owner, followed by a documentary desk review, a peer review and, for initial applicants, an on-site assessment. The desk review and the on-site assessment are conducted by a technical expert and the findings are evaluated by an independent benchmarking committee.

The core activity of the benchmarking process is the identification of convergences and divergences of the applicant certification system in the frame of the GLOBALG.A.P. System. It is possible that the applicant systems go beyond GLOBALG.A.P. in some requirements, especially when it comes to specifications to local producers, but only the aspects covered by the GLOBALG.A.P. System will be compared.

Being benchmarked means going through the benchmarking process in which the certification systems are compared. Benchmarked certification systems that prove full coverage of the GLOBALG.A.P. System will be recognized as equivalent, benchmarked certification systems that cover the GLOBALG.A.P. System requirements to a large extent, but leave some exceptions, will be recognized as resembling.

The owners of resembling schemes may develop additional requirements (e.g. normative documents) that bridge the gap to the GLOBALG.A.P. System. These additional requirements, called Supplements, allow the producers certified under the resembling scheme together with the Supplement to have a GLOBALG.A.P. recognition of equivalence.

With these different levels of recognition and the transparency delivered, producers and retailers are able to ensure that their expectations are fulfilled even if the GLOBALG.A.P. System is not fully addressed. The transparency of the system allows an easy identification of the differences between GLOBALG.A.P. and the applicant systems, so stakeholders can decide whether these differences play an important role for their businesses.

2. **INTRODUCTION**

This document describes the benchmarking rules for any certification system owner seeking comparison of their scheme or checklist (see below) with any of the sub-scopes of the GLOBALG.A.P. System and recognition according to their conformity with the GLOBALG.A.P. System.

2.1 **Benchmarking Categories**

There are two categories of applicant certification systems that differ only in the extent of their application for benchmarking. Both shall follow all the steps of the benchmarking procedure as described in this document. These categories are:

a) **Scheme**: Certification system using own G.A.P. and scheme management rules (e.g. inspection frequency, independent auditing by qualified auditors) that are compared against GLOBALG.A.P. Control Points and Compliance Criteria (CPCC) and General Regulations (GR) respectively.
b) **Checklist:** Certification system using the GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulations (GR) as scheme management rules and own G.A.P. requirements or Control Points and Compliance Criteria (CPCC) that are compared with GLOBALG.A.P. ones.

**Fig. 1. Benchmarking Categories**

![Diagram of Benchmarking Categories]

### 2.2 Recognition Levels

There are two recognition levels depending on the full or partial conformance of the applicant checklist/scheme with the GLOBALG.A.P. System. These levels are:

a. **Equivalent:** Applicant schemes or checklists that fully conform with the GLOBALG.A.P. System (GR and/or CPCC). Depending on the benchmarking category (see above) these are:
   i) **Equivalent Schemes:** Schemes with own G.A.P. requirements and scheme management rules that are recognized by GLOBALG.A.P. as fully conforming with the GLOBALG.A.P. Control Points and Compliance Criteria (CPCC) and General Regulations (GR).
   ii) **Approved Modified Checklists (AMC):** These are modified checklists with own G.A.P. requirements that are recognized by GLOBALG.A.P. as fully conforming with the GLOBALG.A.P. Control Points and Compliance Criteria (CPCC) and which use the GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulations (GR) as scheme management rules for certification.

Equivalent schemes and AMCs are authorized to use the GLOBALG.A.P. logo as indicated in the GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulations.

b. **Resembling:** Applicant schemes with own G.A.P. requirements and scheme management rules that, after the benchmarking process, have been found to conform with the GLOBALG.A.P. System (GR and CPCC) to a large extent, but leave some exceptions. To qualify as resembling, at least all GLOBALG.A.P. CPCC that refer to food safety shall be included in the applicant scheme, and for the sub-scopes Flowers & Ornamentals and Plant Propagation Material (PPM) fundamental G.A.P. requirements shall be included.
   i) These schemes are displayed on the GLOBALG.A.P. website showing transparently their resembling status and the GLOBALG.A.P. requirements that are not covered (CPCC and/or GR).
   ii) Scheme owners may develop Supplements (see 2.3.) that would cover the missing requirements and therefore allow their producers to obtain GLOBALG.A.P. recognition of equivalence.
   iii) Scheme owners can use the GLOBALG.A.P. Database to register their producers even when equivalence is not achieved. In any case, the status of equivalence or resemblance of their certification will be clearly identified online and the requirements
that are not covered will also be displayed in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database linked to their registered producers.

iv) Scheme owners are not entitled to use the GLOBALG.A.P. logo or any GLOBALG.A.P. claim.

v) Scheme owners shall use the word ‘resembling’ only with an additional explanation, note or disclaimer stating that this means only a partial compliance with GLOBALG.A.P.

Fig. 2. Recognition Levels

2.3 Supplements

a) In GLOBALG.A.P. Benchmarking, a Supplement is an optional module that fulfills specific requirements not covered by a resembling scheme in order to fully conform with the GLOBALG.A.P. System and, therefore, obtain recognition of equivalence (e.g. missing requirements in the applicant G.A.P. or in the scheme management rules). The certification of a resembling scheme with its respective Supplement implemented will be recognized as GLOBALG.A.P. equivalent.

b) A resembling scheme cannot have more than one Supplement, i.e. equivalence to GLOBALG.A.P. shall be reached through the recognized resembling scheme and one Supplement which covers all the not fully conforming requirements (exceptions) with respect to the GLOBALG.A.P. System.

c) The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall assist the resembling scheme owners on how to proceed to create a Supplement, in the event that these are willing to cover these not fully conforming requirements in order to facilitate GLOBALG.A.P. equivalent status for their certified producers.

d) Supplements can be developed in parallel to the benchmarking process if the scheme owner intentionally leaves some differences to the GLOBALG.A.P. System, or after the benchmarking process, when the not fully conforming requirements for the GLOBALG.A.P. System will have been identified.

e) Supplements developed by the scheme owner after the recognition of a resembling scheme shall go through the benchmarking process as detailed in this document.

f) Supplements can only be owned by the same owner of the respective resembling scheme.

g) Supplements shall be agreed between the scheme owner and the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat, which may decide on the need of a trial period prior to recognition.

h) Once approved by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat, any Supplement is open for implementation and producers can be certified under the resembling scheme together with the Supplement as GLOBALG.A.P. equivalent.

i) Producers certified under a resembling scheme together with the respective Supplement may use the GLOBALG.A.P. logo as indicated in the current version of the GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulations.
2.4 Implementation and Transition Period

a) After the publication of these Benchmarking Regulations, all new applicants and/or Version 4 recognized checklists/schemes interested in obtaining GLOBALG.A.P. recognition for Version 5 will have to follow the process explained here.

b) **Transition period for currently benchmarked checklists/schemes:** Checklists/schemes recognized under GLOBALG.A.P. IFA Version 4 interested in obtaining the recognition for GLOBALG.A.P. IFA Version 5 will be given 18 months to finalize the transition, starting on the day of release of these GLOBALG.A.P. Benchmarking Regulations (01 July 2015).

c) Certificates issued after the given transition period (01 July 2015 until 31 December 2016) will not be recognized as equivalent/resembling if the re-benchmarking has not been successfully completed for GLOBALG.A.P. IFA Version 5. This also applies for certificates that are issued during the transition period, but whose validity starts after the transition period will have ended.

3. REQUIREMENTS FOR APPLICANT CHECKLISTS/SCHEMES

3.1 Requirements for Applicant Checklist/Scheme Owners

Checklist/scheme owners applying for GLOBALG.A.P. recognition and those who obtain it shall:

a) Be a legal entity with clearly defined organizational structure, activities and responsibilities. The organization shall be able to describe its ownership, organizational structure and activities and how they are financed to determine long-term viability.

b) Have sufficient provisions in place to cover any liability that might originate from its activity as stipulated in the relevant provision of the agreement (Approved Modified Checklist’s Owner Agreement - AMCO, Equivalent Certification Scheme Owner Agreement - ECSO or Resembling Certification Scheme Owner Agreement - RCSO). Additionally scheme owners shall oblige each provisionally or finally approved CB to have a professional liability insurance that covers any claims that might originate from its activity.

c) Have been operational for a period of twelve months prior to the date of application. During this period, certificates shall have been issued to at least 10 producers. A checklist/scheme is deemed to have become operational on the date on which the first accredited certificate was issued by a certification body.

d) Use the term G.A.P. only with three dots (e.g. in the name of the legal entity or the checklist/scheme).

e) Not carry out or participate in any activities that could entail conflict of interests or could bring themselves and/or GLOBALG.A.P. or the benchmarking procedure and recognition into disrepute.

f) Sign the contractual agreements with FoodPLUS GmbH (GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat) and be in compliance with them at all times.

g) Agree on the GLOBALG.A.P. Data Access Rules.

h) Inform the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat in the event of any changes in the checklist/scheme owner’s organization that could affect the status of the recognition.

i) Inform the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat prior to the inclusion of any changes in the checklist/scheme normative documents where a part of the benchmarking cross-reference checklist is concerned.

j) Notify the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat annually about the management of the checklist/scheme and the certification activities. This annual notification shall mainly consist of the update of the information provided during the application and shall be made using a template provided by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat.

k) Only make claims regarding the equivalence in relation to the sub-scope(s) and level for which recognition has been granted by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat.

l) Only allow claims of their certified producers in case that producer fulfills all the requirements (technical and contractual) of the checklist/scheme recognized by GLOBALG.A.P.

m) Not use GLOBALG.A.P. recognition in such a manner as to bring GLOBALG.A.P. into disrepute and shall not make any statements regarding its status which GLOBALG.A.P. may consider misleading or unauthorized.

The checklist/scheme owner shall inform the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat in a timely manner of any circumstances that could end in disrepute and take the adequate preventive measures.
n) Not allow products produced under the recognized checklist/scheme to be advertised or promoted in a way that would discredit or tend to discredit the safety of other products on the market or the reliability of official controls.

o) Ensure that GLOBALG.A.P. logo, trademark or any equivalence claim must never appear on the product, consumer packaging of the product or at the point of sale.

p) Be allowed to create an own logo/claim on the product that can be used always in accordance with the clauses above.

q) Cease the use of all marketing elements that contain any reference to GLOBALG.A.P. (e.g. logo, trademark, name and checklist/scheme rules) and withdraw them if necessary, when the recognition of the checklist/scheme is suspended or withdrawn.

3.2 Requirements for Applicant Checklist/Scheme Normative Documents

Applicant checklists/schemes must consist of a set of normative documents that includes G.A.P requirements (CPCC) and, in the case of schemes, also certification rules (GR). This set of documents shall:

a) Have sufficient provisions to ensure that ownership of normative documents is protected (e.g. copyright by an identified legal entity or have made an application for such copyright, registered trademark).

b) Follow the principles of ISO 17065 to ensure that certification bodies (CBs) can be accredited against such a standard for the scope of the applicant checklist/scheme.

c) Have been developed and maintained with the participation of technical competent representatives of direct stakeholders, user organizations (market participants that currently do or potentially will implement or demand the checklist/scheme such as producers, food manufacturers, retailers, etc.), or has been subject to formal review by such parties.

d) Have been subjected to stakeholder consultation during its development. The checklist/scheme owner shall ensure that effective communication for consultations is possible.

e) Be clear and precise in its wording and structure to facilitate accurate and uniform interpretation.

f) Be publicly available and open for inspection/audit and/or certification to any and more than one CB complying with the scheme requirements, without restriction by membership or any other limitation. The levying of a reasonable fee for the purchase of the checklist/scheme, a license fee for its implementation or a training requirement for the use of the checklist/scheme will not be regarded as a restriction or limitation.

g) Include a certificate template that specifies all the information to be displayed in the certificates issued by the CBs, and which shall include all the information stated in the GLOBALG.A.P. paper certificate template (see also Chapter 6.2 a), applicable only for schemes.

h) Be kept updated regarding technical changes or any other change implemented by GLOBALG.A.P. Time frames for implementation shall normally not exceed three months unless otherwise agreed with the checklist/scheme owners depending on the changes to be introduced.

4. BENCHMARKING PROCESS

4.1 Introduction

a) The following rules define the process that GLOBALG.A.P. stakeholders developed to determine the recognition level of an applicant checklist/scheme and its normative documents to GLOBALG.A.P. Control Points and Compliance Criteria and General Regulations where applicable. This benchmarking process shall be followed by all applicant checklists/schemes and coordinated by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat.

b) The benchmarking process consists of the following steps:
Fig. 3. Benchmarking Process

Timeline:

- Application by Checklist/Scheme Owner
- Application Review
- Independent Technical Review
- Peer Review
- On-site Assessment (only for Initial Application)
- Benchmarking Committee Review
- GLOBALG.A.P. Review
- Recognition

**c)** The estimated timeline for regular applications is approximately a minimum of 20 weeks for re-benchmarking (without on-site assessment) and approximately a minimum of 26 weeks for initial applications. The duration of each step may vary from this depending on factors like the completeness of the submitted documents and the extent of the discussions during the process.

**d)** The official language used throughout the process shall be English. All the documents, including the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking cross-reference checklists, shall be filled out in English and in the original language where applicable.

**e)** The applicant shall demonstrate that a competent translator has been used in case the original normative documents are not in English.

**f)** If there are justified doubts concerning the competent English translation, GLOBALG.A.P. may request the proof that a competent translator has carried out the translation in order to ensure accuracy of content or may engage the service of a professional translator to validate the translation provided by the applicant checklist/scheme owner. The applicant checklist/scheme owner shall cover the costs of this validation.

**g)** GLOBALG.A.P. shall ensure that the procedure is implemented under the principles of independence, impartiality, technical competence and transparency.

**4.2 Application Review**

**a)** The objective of the application review is to ensure that the checklist/scheme owner provides GLOBALG.A.P. with all the necessary information and documents to prove conformity with the requirements for checklist/scheme owners as preparation for the following steps of the benchmarking process.

**b)** As a first step the applicant checklist/scheme owner shall:

ii) Download from the GLOBALG.A.P. website, fill out and forward to the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat the relevant GLOBALG.A.P. application documents that include:
   a) Completed Application Form and Agreement for GLOBALG.A.P. Benchmarking Procedure including annexes.
   b) A clause-by-clause comparison of the G.A.P. requirements using the GLOBALG.A.P. Benchmarking cross-reference checklist for Control Points and Compliance Criteria. This checklist is used for the comparison of the GLOBALG.A.P. Control Points and Compliance Criteria with the applicant’s G.A.P. requirements.
   c) For schemes only: A clause-by-clause comparison of the scheme’s certification rules using the GLOBALG.A.P. Benchmarking cross-reference checklist for General Regulations. This checklist is used for the comparison of GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulations with the applicant’s scheme management rules.

c) The information will be reviewed by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat. In case any amendment is requested, the applicant shall submit to the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat further supporting information and/or documents before the application can proceed to the next step.

d) Once the application review has been successfully completed, the benchmarking process will continue with the independent technical review.

4.3 Independent Technical Review

a) The objective of the Independent Technical Review (ITR) is to evaluate the normative documents cross-referenced in the benchmarking checklists submitted by the applicant.

b) During the application review, the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat will appoint a benchmarking assessor who shall review the benchmarking cross-reference checklists. The benchmarking assessor shall comply with the requirements defined in Annex 1.

c) The checklist/scheme owner can request that GLOBALG.A.P. replaces the assigned assessor based on valid and well-founded justifications. The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat will decide on the appropriateness of this request.

d) The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall support the benchmarking assessor during this review in order to facilitate the process and may appoint a second reviewer to follow a four-eye principle.

e) The benchmarking assessor shall document all the findings in the benchmarking cross-reference checklist(s).

f) The applicant shall submit clarifications or propose amendments to any technical or formal deviations in a timely manner. This shall be done using the benchmarking cross-reference checklist(s) until the benchmarking assessor agrees that the deviations have been addressed or that they need to be evaluated by the Benchmarking Committee.

g) After having finalized the ITR, the benchmarking assessor prepares a summary of the technical review, listing all points that have not been found to be equivalent, to be evaluated later on by the Benchmarking Committee.

The benchmarking process will then continue with the next two steps: the peer review and, applicable only for initial applications, the on-site assessment.

4.4 Peer Review

a) The objective of the peer review is to compile the input of the interested GLOBALG.A.P. member organizations who may evaluate the benchmarking cross-reference checklists together with all supporting documents.

b) The benchmarking cross-reference checklists are uploaded to the GLOBALG.A.P. Benchmarking Extranet where access will be granted to all interested GLOBALG.A.P. members to participate in the process of peer consultation.

c) The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall ensure that the checklist/scheme owner answers all the comments received in the GLOBALG.A.P. Benchmarking Extranet, where the applicant and interested GLOBALG.A.P. members can have live communication during the peer review.

d) The peer review period shall take a maximum of 4 weeks. In the event that no comments or notice of intention for submitting comments are received from any GLOBALG.A.P. member within the first 2 weeks of peer review, the process will be finalized.

e) At the end of the peer review, the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat verifies that all comments by the GLOBALG.A.P. members have been addressed by the applicant. A summary of the peer review will be presented to the Benchmarking Committee for evaluation.
f) After closing the peer review, the application will move on to the next step of the benchmarking process: the on-site equivalence assessment, in case of an initial application, and the Benchmarking Committee review, in case of a re-benchmarking process.

4.5 On-site Equivalence Assessment (only for initial applications)

a) The objective of the GLOBALG.A.P. on-site equivalence assessment is to verify the implementation of the applicant’s normative documents.
b) GLOBALG.A.P. will assign a benchmarking assessor who complies at least with GLOBALG.A.P. auditor qualification requirements (see Annex 1) to undertake the on-site verification. This assessor may not be the same person who carried out the independent technical review and, in any case, shall have no conflict of interest with the assessed checklist/scheme.
c) The on-site equivalence assessment consists of a producer audit carried out in parallel by a CB auditor and a GLOBALG.A.P. assessor. The objective is to evaluate the equivalence of the G.A.P. criteria (CPCC) and its interpretation, not the performance of the CB auditor.
d) For schemes only: In the event that the applicant scheme allows producer group certification (Option 4), the QMS section shall be part of the assessment.
e) At least one on-site assessment shall be carried out per sub-scope for which recognition has been applied.
f) The benchmarking assessor shall validate the applicant benchmarking checklists (in the version as after finalization of the independent technical review) on-site using the GLOBALG.A.P. checklists and shall produce a detailed assessment report with the summary of all the diverging points with clear justifications. The applicant shall address all the issues raised in this report in order to progress to the next step.
g) The results of the on-site assessment shall be evaluated by the Benchmarking Committee in the next step of the process.
h) For checklist/scheme owners that ask for re-benchmarking of their checklist/scheme there will be no mandatory on-site equivalence assessment as part of the benchmarking process, but the checklist/scheme shall be subjected in the first year of its recognition to at least one audit per recognized sub-scope by the GLOBALG.A.P. Certification Integrity Program (CIPRO). However the checklist/scheme owner can request that GLOBALG.A.P. carries out an on-site equivalence assessment as part of the re-benchmarking process.

4.6 Benchmarking Committee Review

a) The objective of the Benchmarking Committee review is to evaluate the report that summarizes the results of the technical review, the peer review, and the on-site assessment (if applicable), and to make a recommendation about the recognition level (equivalent or resembling) to the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat.
b) The benchmarking assessor supported by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat prepares the report for the Benchmarking Committee.
c) For each application, the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall appoint the members of the Benchmarking Committee. The Benchmarking Committee members shall comply with the requirements defined in Annex 2.
d) The structure of the Benchmarking Committee shall ensure that the following parties are represented in each committee meeting:
   i) GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat representative.
   ii) GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking assessor(s).
   iii) Between three and six appointed technical experts of which at least two shall be GLOBALG.A.P. members. The committee members shall represent future users of the checklist/scheme, retailers or producer companies. GLOBALG.A.P. Technical Committee members, independent consultants (e.g. GLOBALG.A.P. Farm Assurer) and accreditation body representatives may be members of the Benchmarking Committee.
e) The checklist/scheme owner may, based on valid and well-founded justifications, request that the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat replaces an assigned Benchmarking Committee member. The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat will decide on the appropriateness of this request and on the replacement of committee members.
f) The Benchmarking Committee members may require further clarifications on the applicant checklist/scheme normative documents and/or for the issues raised by the benchmarking
asseror(s). The applicant shall address these in a timely manner in coordination with the 
benchmarking assessor and/or the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat.
g) After the Benchmarking Committee finalizes the review and after approval of the Benchmarking 
Committee report, which includes a recommendation on the recognition level, the applicant will 
progress to the next step of the benchmarking process: the GLOBALG.A.P. review.

4.7 GLOBALG.A.P. Review

a) The objective of the GLOBALG.A.P. review is to evaluate the recommendation made by the 
Benchmarking Committee for approval.
b) Should the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat raise new comments on the Benchmarking Committee 
report, the applicant shall address them in coordination with the benchmarking assessor and/or 
the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat.
c) The recognition level is decided by the GLOBALG.A.P. Chief Executive Officer. After the 
decision has been taken the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall:
    i) Communicate the decision in writing to the applicant. This communication shall contain 
clear justifications for the decision taken in case the recognition level does not coincide 
with the level the checklist/scheme owner applied for or recognition is refused.
    ii) Assist the applicant in a cooperative manner in the event that the organization would like to 
make use of their right to appeal the decision, which shall be according to the appeal 
procedure as described in this document.
d) Before recognition is granted, the checklist/scheme owner shall sign the agreement (ECSO, 
AMCO or RCSO) with FoodPLUS GmbH.

d) Before recognition is granted, the checklist/scheme owner shall sign the agreement (ECSO, 
AMCO or RCSO) with FoodPLUS GmbH.

4.8 Recognition

a) GLOBALG.A.P. recognition of equivalent or resembling is granted to schemes that have 
successfully finalized the benchmarking process. Checklists may be granted recognition only of 
equivalent.
b) Only certificates issued on the basis of inspections that are carried out after the recognition of 
equivalent checklists/schemes and resembling schemes with the corresponding Supplements 
and registered in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database will be recognized by GLOBALG.A.P. as 
equivalent.
c) In the event that the checklist/scheme owner operates in parallel more than one 
checklist/scheme (e.g. one is GLOBALG.A.P. equivalent and another has not been submitted to 
GLOBALG.A.P. for Benchmarking), the different checklists/schemes shall be identified in a 
manner that clearly distinguishes them so that confusion in the market is avoided.
d) The identity of a resembling scheme shall not be designed, appear and/or communicated in a 
way that it might suggest that it is GLOBALG.A.P. equivalent.
e) The decision of recognition shall be communicated in writing and published on the 
GLOBALG.A.P. website. It shall also be communicated to all stakeholders after the submission 
of the original version of the final normative documents.
f) In the event that the scheme is recognized as resembling to the GLOBALG.A.P. System, the 
exceptions that do not conform with the GLOBALG.A.P. System will be displayed on the 
GLOBALG.A.P. website in a transparent way.
g) The final version of the checklist/scheme owner’s normative documents, which are to be used 
for certification, shall be forwarded to the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat within two weeks of 
recognition and will be published on the GLOBALG.A.P. website with the consent of the 
checklist/scheme owner.
h) The benchmarking checklist(s) shall be made available to stakeholders upon request.
i) The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat recommends translating the final version of the normative 
documents into English. In case an external party requests evidence of the equivalency of any 
other text than the one in the benchmarking cross-reference checklist, the checklist/scheme 
owner shall provide an English translation of the relevant part.
j) Equivalent checklists/schemes shall:
    i) Prove ISO 17065 accreditation by at least one certification body for the scope of the 
recognized checklist/scheme within the first six months after recognition. This period can 
be extended if there is a justifiable reason. The accreditation shall be issued by an 
adcreditation body (AB) that is signatory of the International Accreditation Forum Multilateral 
Recognition Agreement (IAF MLA) for
product certification (or minimum MLA level 4), and has signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with FoodPLUS GmbH. The current list of ABs that have signed the MoU is displayed on the GLOBALG.A.P. website under the following link: http://www.globalgap.org/uk_en/what-we-do/the-gg-system/certification/list-of-accreditation-bodies/

ii) Have a minimum of 10 certified producers for the recognized checklist/scheme after the first year of recognition.

k) Failure to comply with any of these two requirements shall be seen as a limitation for equivalence and recognition will be withdrawn. Exceptions can be granted on a case-by-case basis by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat if the checklist/scheme has valid accredited certificates.

l) A CB without ISO 17065 accreditation for the equivalent checklist/scheme may only certify a maximum of 20 producers if this CB already has any other ISO 17065 accreditation or 5 producers if the CB does not yet have any ISO 17065 accreditation.

m) Checklist/scheme owners shall, at minimum, carry out annual reviews of the operation of their checklist/scheme and take any necessary action to ensure compliance with GLOBALG.A.P. Benchmarking Regulations. These reviews shall be communicated to GLOBALG.A.P. in order to ensure that the basic data are kept up to date.

5. CERTIFICATION BODY REQUIREMENTS (FOR SCHEMES ONLY)

The following requirements are not applicable for Approved Modified Checklists’ certification bodies that shall sign the GLOBALG.A.P. License and Certification Agreement (LCA)).

Recognized schemes shall:

a) Have an application and approval procedure in place for certification bodies (CBs) that certify the scheme so that they may become formally recognized by the scheme owner. This procedure shall be in line with the one described in the GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulations Part III.

b) Ensure that they have contractual arrangements with any certification body they approve to operate their scheme and ensure that their CBs comply with the requirements of the scheme owner's normative documents equivalent to GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulations. These “scheme CBs” shall sign contracts with at least the same and/or equivalent requirements as in the GLOBALG.A.P. License and Certification Agreement (LCA).

c) Ensure that their certification bodies are accredited within six months of recognition to ISO 17065 issued by an accreditation body that is signatory of the IAF MLA for product certification (or minimum MLA level 4 for the benchmarked scheme) and has signed the MoU with FoodPLUS GmbH. This period can be extended if there is a justifiable reason.

d) Ensure that the accreditation document issued by the AB clearly states:
   i) The extent of the accreditation sub-scope(s) the CB has been approved for
   ii) The scheme’s normative documents and its versions
   iii) Limitation to Option 3 - certification of individual producers (if applicable)
   iv) Territorial limitation (if applicable)

e) Ensure that in the event that one of their certification bodies has had its accreditation withdrawn or suspended, the scheme and GLOBALG.A.P. are informed of this action together with the circumstances that motivated the sanction.

f) Ensure that their certification bodies have in place an agreement with the producers that the CB is informed of any food safety prosecution, significant regulatory food safety non-conformity or any product recall relating to food safety and that their certification bodies have procedures in place to ensure integrity of certification after notification.

g) Ensure that during the non-accredited period their certification bodies follow the provisions established about the maximum number of non-accredited certificates that can be issued, which is 20 certificates if the certification body already has an accreditation for product certification and five certificates without such an accreditation. See GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulations Part III for more information.

h) Ensure that their certification bodies shall notify the scheme owner and GLOBALG.A.P. of any relevant change to ownership and management in a timely manner, and agree with GLOBALG.A.P. and the certification bodies on any action necessary to guarantee impartiality.
and independence in the certification activities.

i) Implement the sanctions against non-compliant certification bodies proposed by the GLOBALG.A.P. Integrity Surveillance Committee (ISC) or have a documented system in place to ensure the enforcement of sanctions by the scheme owner, which shall be in line with the CB sanctioning procedure in the GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulations.

6. VALIDATION OF BENCHMARKED CERTIFICATES

6.1 Registration of Producers in the GLOBALG.A.P. System

a) The owner of an approved modified checklist or an equivalent scheme shall ensure that all producers participating in the benchmarked certification system are registered in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database.

b) Registration of producers and producer groups in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database shall follow the rules as described in the GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulations.

c) Owners of schemes that do not want to provide all the data as required for registration of producers in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database will not be recognized as equivalent, but can only opt for recognition as resembling.

d) Producers who are not registered in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database will not be recognized as equivalent.

e) The owner of a resembling scheme can use the GLOBALG.A.P. Database as a tool to register its producers. This will not mean that the certificates of such schemes are considered as GLOBALG.A.P. equivalent.

f) Producers who are certified in accordance with resembling schemes and who are registered in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database will not be visible to the public, but only to market participants and selected users with specific observer status for the specific scheme.

g) Producers seeking registration in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database shall be in line with the GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulations and be registered in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database as: i) Option 1: individual producers. ii) Option 2: producer groups.

h) The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall reserve the right to only confirm to the public the validity and content of the certificates issued in accordance with recognized equivalent checklists/schemes and resembling schemes if they have been properly entered in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database.

i) Option 4: producer groups.

6.2 Certificates of Equivalent Checklists/Schemes

a) The content of the certificates issued by the approved certification bodies of any equivalent checklist/scheme shall be in line with the GLOBALG.A.P. certificate template.

b) GLOBALG.A.P. certified producers that have been sanctioned by their certification body cannot apply for registration to any of the GLOBALG.A.P. checklists/schemes recognized as equivalent (including resembling + Supplement) until the sanction has been lifted.

c) Producers certified under a recognized checklist/scheme that have been sanctioned for not complying with a requirement that has its equivalent in the GLOBALG.A.P. System, cannot apply for registration under generic GLOBALG.A.P. or under any other GLOBALG.A.P. equivalents.
recognized checklist/scheme until the sanction has been lifted.

d) Producers are not allowed to hold certification for a given product under GLOBALG.A.P. and an equivalent checklist/scheme or under more than one equivalent checklist/scheme (e.g. GLOBALG.A.P. IFA and AMAG.A.P. at the same time for the same product). Exceptions to this rule must be discussed with and confirmed in writing beforehand by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat. The checklist/scheme owner shall apply for these exceptions.

7. **GLOBALG.A.P. INTEGRITY PROGRAM**

a) Recognized equivalent checklists/schemes shall be subject to periodical surveillance under the GLOBALG.A.P. Certification Integrity Program.

b) Resembling schemes can voluntarily opt for the implementation of the GLOBALG.A.P. Integrity Program in their system.

c) Equivalent checklist/scheme owners shall ensure their participation and the participation of their certification bodies and producers in the GLOBALG.A.P. Integrity Program.

d) The activities of the Integrity Program may include the re-assessment of producers certified against the recognized checklist or scheme by an approved Certification Integrity Program assessor using a generic GLOBALG.A.P. Checklist and office assessments of the approved certification bodies.

e) These assessments shall focus on the maintenance of the recognized status and on the performance of approved certification bodies.

f) If the activities of the Integrity Program detect technical or formal deviations regarding the normative documents, these shall be discussed with the checklist/scheme owner in order to obtain clarifications and to agree on the appropriate amendments and timeline for their implementation.

g) In the event that the Integrity Program detects low certification body performance, the GLOBALG.A.P. Integrity Surveillance Committee (ISC) will decide on sanctions for the certification body and the follow-up activities; or in the case of recognized schemes, the scheme owner can decide to sanction to the CB and follow-up itself. This decision shall be made guaranteeing independence and impartiality principles, shall be in line with GLOBALG.A.P. sanctioning procedure as described in GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulations and shall be communicated in a timely manner to GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat.

h) The frequency and the number of integrity assessments to be conducted shall be decided after a risk assessment, with consideration given to the recommendations made by the Benchmarking Committee.

i) The risk assessment shall consider, among other things, the existence of an own integrity program implemented by the scheme owner, the scope of the certification activities, the types of certification (individual/group), the products certified, the number of certification bodies and the number of producers participating in the system and the results of the benchmarking process.

j) The checklist/scheme owner shall actively cooperate with GLOBALG.A.P. in the event that the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat considers it necessary to evaluate the certification system of the checklist/scheme owner.

k) In the event that the checklist or scheme owner does not cooperate with GLOBALG.A.P. in a transparent way in the implementation of the Integrity Program, does not respect the agreed timeframes to respond to the deviations detected during the integrity activities, or the sanctions imposed by the scheme owner on its approved CBs are insufficient to eliminate the risks of bringing into disrepute the scheme owner or GLOBALG.A.P., the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall follow the conciliatory process described in Chapter 9 “Contractual Infringements” of these Benchmarking Regulations.

8. **MAINTAINING RECOGNITION**

8.1 **Modifications or Updates of the Benchmarked Checklists/Schemes**

a) Checklist/scheme owners shall inform the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat of any change to the recognized normative documents before they are implemented. If and where applicable, the proposed changes shall be communicated using the relevant cross-reference benchmarking checklist(s).
b) In the event that the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat is not informed before the implementation of changes in the recognized checklist/scheme, the recognition status shall be suspended until the process described below is completed.

c) The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall assign a benchmarking assessor to review the changes and evaluate whether they affect the recognition level. Re-evaluation fees may apply based on the time necessary for the review as agreed between the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat and the checklist/scheme owner.

d) Any discrepancy found by the benchmarking assessor shall be communicated in writing to the checklist/scheme owner who shall clarify or propose amendments to these discrepancies within a reasonable time frame.

e) The benchmarking assessor shall prepare a written report including a recommendation to the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat on the maintenance or non-maintenance of the recognition level. The participation of a Benchmarking Committee may also be considered, depending on the extent and nature of the changes introduced.

f) The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall communicate in writing to the checklist/scheme owner if the proposed changes affect the recognition level.

g) If the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat decides that some of the points impede the maintenance of the recognition:

i) The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall communicate this in writing to the checklist/scheme owner justifying the decision.

ii) The checklist/scheme owner must choose between the following options within two weeks after having received the official communication:

a) Amend or delete in its normative documents the changes in conflict.

b) Appeal the decision as defined in Chapter 9 of this document.

c) Renounce GLOBALG.A.P. recognition in writing.

iii) If after the appeal process the decision is that the recognition level cannot be kept:

a) The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall communicate the decision to the applicant in writing with clear justifications.

b) The recognition shall be suspended until the checklist/scheme owner proposes new clarifications or implements amendments that have the approval of the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat.

c) In the event that the checklist/scheme owner refuses to make any amendment or the cause of suspension is not solved within six months after the issuance of the suspension, the approval shall be withdrawn.

iv) If after the appeal process the decision is that the checklist/scheme can maintain its current recognition level, be it equivalent or resembling, this shall be communicated in writing to the checklist/scheme owner.

8.2 Modifications or Updates of the GLOBALG.A.P. Scheme

a) The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall communicate in writing all official changes to all GLOBALG.A.P. recognized checklist/scheme owners.

b) Official changes made to GLOBALG.A.P. normative documents must be appropriately included in the recognized normative documentation of the checklist/scheme in a time frame that shall normally not exceed three months unless otherwise agreed by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat and the checklist/scheme owner.

c) The checklist/scheme owner is responsible for supplying the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat with written evidence demonstrating the adequate modification of the G.A.P. requirements (control points and compliance criteria) and certification rules (where applicable). These evidences may include a completed cross-reference benchmarking checklist for the modified items.

d) The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall decide whether a benchmarking assessor needs to carry out an additional evaluation (at extra cost to the checklist/scheme owner) or not. If so, the steps described in Chapter 8.1 c)-g) shall be followed.

9. CONTRACTUAL INFRINGEMENTS

a) If a checklist/scheme owner has been found guilty of an infringement of these Benchmarking Regulations or of the agreement with FoodPLUS GmbH, the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall start the following communication and conciliatory process with the checklist/scheme owner.
before initiating the process for the termination of the agreement. Terms of termination described in the agreement between the checklist/scheme owner and FoodPLUS GmbH remain binding.

i) **First meeting:** In the event of minor infringements the checklist/scheme owner shall be requested to attend a meeting in the GLOBALG.A.P. office or to participate in a telephone conference (or other means) in order to agree on a solution of the infringement. This meeting shall take place within two working weeks after either party has raised a request. The outcome of this meeting shall be the determination of the extent of the corrective actions that the checklist/scheme owner shall enforce. Implementation of agreed corrective action needs to be proven within a maximum period of 28 calendar days. Failure to do so shall lead to the calling out of a second meeting for consideration of withdrawal of the awarded recognition level.

ii) **Second/extraordinary meeting:** In the event of major infringements or failure to implement the corrective actions agreed upon during the first meeting, the checklist/scheme owner shall be requested to attend a meeting in the GLOBALG.A.P. office or to participate in a telephone conference (or other means), which shall be moderated by a Benchmarking Committee member. This shall be done within a reasonable time period. The outcome of this meeting shall be the agreement of corrective actions to prove enforcement of implementation within a reasonable period defined by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat and the evaluation of the need for a temporary suspension until the corrective actions are implemented.

iii) Failure to comply with the agreements made and/or to implement the corrective actions within the time period set, shall initiate a recommendation to the GLOBALG.A.P. Board to suspend or withdraw the recognition.

iv) **Board consultation:** The GLOBALG.A.P. Board can agree upon temporary suspension or definitive withdrawal of recognition. Cancellation of the agreement between the checklist/scheme owner and Food PLUS GmbH will apply immediately if appropriate.

b) Major infringements are those that threaten the integrity of the GLOBALG.A.P. System or could bring GLOBALG.A.P. into disrepute.

c) In the event of termination of the agreement between the checklist/scheme owner and Food PLUS GmbH, the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat and checklist/scheme owner shall coordinate effective measures for the withdrawal of the certificates issued under the scope of the benchmarked checklist/scheme.

d) Suspension/withdrawal of recognition of the checklist/scheme owner and the description of the reason that led to that decision shall be published on the GLOBALG.A.P. website and communicated to all GLOBALG.A.P. members and provisionally/finally approved CBs.

e) Where approval has been suspended/withdrawn certificates issued for the respective checklist/scheme will not be displayed in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database as equivalent.

10. **GLOBALG.A.P. APPEAL PROCEDURE**

a) The checklist/scheme owner has the right to appeal against the decisions made in relation to the benchmarking process.

b) In the event that the checklist/scheme owner wants to appeal to any decision made by GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat:

i) The checklist/scheme owner shall submit a written appeal to the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat detailing the reasons of the disagreement within two weeks after the decision has been communicated.

ii) The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat shall request that a Benchmarking Committee conducts an impartial investigation of the circumstances that led to the appeal. The members of this Committee shall be different from the ones who participated in the evaluation of the benchmarking application.

iii) The results of the evaluation by the Benchmarking Committee shall be put forward to the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat, which will make a final decision that shall be communicated in writing to the checklist/scheme owner.

iv) In the event that the appeal is finally rejected, the checklist/scheme owner shall cover the costs derived from the appeal process.
v) In the event that the checklist/scheme owner does not agree with the decision made by the appeal committee, a further appeal shall be submitted within two weeks after communication of the decision. This second appeal shall be evaluated by the GLOBALG.A.P. Board.

11. COSTS

a) All GLOBALG.A.P. fees are listed in the GLOBALG.A.P. fee table that is available on the GLOBALG.A.P. website.

b) The fees related to benchmarking shall cover the costs derived from the benchmarking process and the maintenance of the recognition status, including the database support and the Certification Integrity Program.

c) The applicant checklist/scheme owner shall be charged for the benchmarking process according to the most recent fee table. In the event that extra verification elements need to be carried out to verify equivalence or resemblance, additional fees may apply.

d) Annual fees apply to producers who are certified under a benchmarked checklist/scheme and who are registered in the GLOBALG.A.P. Database. In the case of checklists, these fees are invoiced directly to the provisionally/finally approved certification bodies. In the case of schemes, these fees are invoiced to the scheme owner.

12. ABBREVIATIONS, DEFINITIONS AND REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

12.1 Abbreviations

AB | Accreditation Body
AMC | Approved Modified Checklist
AMCO | Approved Modified Checklist’s Owner Agreement
CB | Certification Body
CIPRO | Certification Integrity Program
CFM | Compound Feed Manufacturing
CPCC | Control Points and Compliance Criteria
CSO | Certification System Owner
ECSO | Equivalent Certification Scheme Owner Agreement
G.A.P. | Good Agricultural Practices
GGN | GLOBALG.A.P. Number
GR | General Regulations
IAF | International Accreditation Forum
IFA | Integrated Farm Assurance
ISC | Integrity Surveillance Program
ITR | Independent Technical Review
LCA | License and Certification Agreement
MLA | Multi-Lateral Agreement
MoU | Memorandum of Understanding
PPM | Plant Propagation Material
RCSO | Resembling Certification Scheme Owner Agreement

12.2 Definitions

**Scheme:** A certification system using own G.A.P. and scheme management rules (e.g. inspection frequency, auditing by qualified auditors, audit review, certification decision making process) that are compared with GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulations (GR) respectively.

**Checklist:** A certification system using the GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulations (GR), but using own G.A.P. requirements or Control Points and Compliance Criteria (CPCC) that are compared with the GLOBALG.A.P. CPCC.

**Equivalent:** Schemes or checklists that fully conform with the GLOBALG.A.P. System (GR and/or CPCC).
Resembling: Schemes that, after the benchmarking process, have been found to conform with the GLOBALG.A.P. System (GR and/or CPCC) to a large extent, but leave some exceptions.

Supplement: Optional module that fulfills specific requirements not covered by a resembling scheme in order to fully conform with the GLOBALG.A.P. System and therefore obtain recognition of equivalence.

12.3 Reference Documents

a) GLOBALG.A.P. Approved Modified Checklist’s Owner Agreement in its current version
b) GLOBALG.A.P. Benchmarking Cross-Reference Checklists in its current version
c) GLOBALG.A.P. Data Access Rules in its current version
d) GLOBALG.A.P. Equivalent Certification Scheme Owner Agreement in its current version
e) GLOBALG.A.P. Fee Table in its current version
f) GLOBALG.A.P. General Regulations, Version 5
g) GLOBALG.A.P. Integrated Farm Assurance Control Points and Compliance Criteria, Version 5
h) GLOBALG.A.P. License and Certification Agreement in its current version
i) GLOBALG.A.P. Resembling Certification Scheme Owner Agreement in its current version
j) GLOBALG.A.P. Sublicense and Certification Agreement in its current version
ANNEX 1 BENCHMARKING ASSESSOR QUALIFICATIONS

1. GLOBALG.A.P. Benchmarking Assessor
   a) Benchmarking assessors appointed by GLOBALG.A.P. for participation in the benchmarking process must be able to provide evidence of their qualifications and experience.
   b) The requirements for Fruit & Vegetables, Plant Propagation Material, Combinable Crops and Flowers & Ornamentals are equivalent, except for 3.2. a) and b) which are not applicable for Plant Propagation Material and for Flowers & Ornamentals.

2. Formal Qualifications
   a) At least a post-high school diploma or equivalent (minimum course duration of two years) must have been obtained in a discipline related to the scope of the applicant checklist/scheme.
      OR
   b) A post-high school diploma with a minimum duration of two years in a food related discipline AND a minimum of six years working experience either in a practical capacity on farm/site or in a technical production management role in the relevant scope of certification (Crops and/or Livestock and/or Aquaculture).

3. Technical Skills and Qualifications
   3.1 Lead Assessor Training and Experience
      a) Practical auditing experience of at least 10 days in management systems (e.g. ISO 9000, ISO 14000, ISO 22000, OSHAS 18000), BRC food, IFS food, previous GLOBALG.A.P. Option 2 or Option 4 audits, producer group audits of organic growers or others). This does not include witnessing or observing of audits, but includes being witnessed or observed as auditor-in-training.
      b) Successful completion of a Lead Assessor training course based on ISO 19011 principles that must have a minimum duration of 37 hours, and must be externally recognized by the industry. The certificate must specify the course content and duration. Successful completion must be indicated on the certificate.
      c) The Lead Assessor training course must cover applicable standards on quality auditing, auditing techniques, focus of the audits (psychological aspects and communication) and reporting, and it must also include a practical case study.

   3.2 Food Safety and G.A.P. Training
      a) Training in HACCP principles either as part of formal qualifications or through the successful completion of a formal course based on the principles of Codex Alimentarius (the formal course may be an internal training). The training course shall have a minimum duration of 8 hours. Duration and content shall be indicated on the evidence available for this requirement (course certificate, evidence of training included in formal qualifications, etc.).
      b) Food hygiene training either as part of formal qualifications or through the successful completion of a formal course (the formal course may be an internal training). The food hygiene training course shall have a minimum duration of 8 hours. Duration and content shall be indicated on the evidence available for this requirement (course certificate, evidence of training included in formal qualifications, etc.). The food hygiene training course must cover site management, water, organic fertilizer, equipment, facilities and personal hygiene, and it must also include practical case studies. Already approved benchmarking assessors have one year transition period after publication of GLOBALG.A.P. Benchmarking Regulations Version 5 to complete this training.

Both trainings in points a) and b) can be carried out together in the same formal course (minimum duration 16 hours).
c) For Compound Feed Manufacturing (CFM) standards: Feed Hygiene training is also acceptable as an alternative.
d) For Crops checklists/schemes: plant protection, fertilizer and IPM training either as part of formal qualifications, or through the successful completion of a formal course.
e) For Livestock and Aquaculture checklists/schemes: basic veterinary medicine and stockmanship training including animal health and welfare issues.
f) For Aquaculture checklists/schemes: basic experience in food processing (to review/inspect Aquaculture Base 11, 13 and 15).
g) For CFM Standard: knowledge of the relevant regional/national feed legislation applicable to the scope of activity.

3.3 Technical Knowledge
a) Knowledge of the scope for which the applicant checklist/scheme is seeking recognition.
b) Knowledge of the GLOBALG.A.P. Scheme (General Regulations as well as Control Points and Compliance Criteria).
c) Knowledge of accreditation and certification processes and procedures.

3.4 Benchmarking Knowledge
The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat will brief the benchmarking assessor on the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking procedures and the relevant normative documents, prior to the appointment to any process (if needed).

3.5 Experience
A minimum of five years of full-time experience in the agricultural industry gained after finishing post-high school studies. Experience shall involve at least two years working in the respective scope in areas such as production and/or quality assurance.

3.6 Communication Skills
Good written and oral communication skills in English to facilitate effective communication with the applicant checklist/scheme owner, the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat, and the Benchmarking Committee members.

4. Key Tasks of Benchmarking Assessors
a) Carrying out the Independent Technical Review (ITR) consisting of the evaluation of the benchmarking cross-reference checklist(s) submitted by the checklist/scheme owners to evaluate equivalence with the respective GLOBALG.A.P. normative documents.
b) Communicating and issuing timely and accurate reports of their activities to the checklist/scheme owner and the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat.
c) Conducting on-site assessments of checklist/scheme owners in the frame of the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking process.
d) Evaluating changes introduced in already recognized checklists/schemes.

5. Code of Conduct / Confidentiality
The benchmarking assessors shall:
a) Keep themselves abreast of developments, issues and legislative changes pertaining to the benchmarking procedures and the relevant scope.
b) Keep confidential all the information related to the benchmarking process and not use it in their own or their company’s interests.
c) Avoid any kind of consultancy activities to the checklist/scheme owner and any potential situation of conflict of interests and of lack of independence and/or impartiality with the specific applicant checklist/scheme.
d) Sign a confidentiality, impartiality and conflict of interest agreement with the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat prior to being appointed to any benchmarking process and act according to it.

The benchmarking assessor shall inform the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat of any circumstance that could compromise this agreement, so that measures to guarantee the
integrity of the process can be taken.

e) The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat can decide at any time on the removal and/or substitution of the benchmarking assessor, especially in the event that compliance with the above-mentioned requirements is jeopardized or not given.
ANNEX 2 BENCHMARKING COMMITTEE MEMBER QUALIFICATIONS

GLOBALG.A.P. will appoint the Benchmarking Committee members from independent representatives of GLOBALG.A.P. members who volunteer and who comply with the requirements defined below.

1. Formal Qualifications
At least a post-high school diploma or equivalent (minimum course duration of two years) must have been obtained in a discipline related to the scope of the applicant checklist/scheme.

2. Technical Skills and Qualifications

2.1 Technical Knowledge
a) Working knowledge of the scope for which the applicant checklist/scheme is seeking recognition.
b) Knowledge of the GLOBALG.A.P. Scheme (General Regulations as well as Control Points and Compliance Criteria).
c) Knowledge of accreditation and certification processes and procedures.

2.2 Benchmarking Knowledge
Knowledge of the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking process, which could be complemented via direct briefing provided by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat.

2.3 Experience
A minimum of five years of full-time experience in the agricultural industry gained after finishing the respective post-high school studies.

2.4 Communication Skills
Good written and oral communication skills in English to facilitate effective communication with the other members of GLOBALG.A.P. Benchmarking Committee and the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat.

3. Key Tasks
a) To participate in the meetings called by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat.
b) To evaluate the report and the supporting documentation provided by the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat after the independent technical review, the peer review and, if applicable, the on-site assessment, and to have the possibility to make a judgment on compliance or non-compliance of each requirement, and in the event that it is considered necessary, to also challenge or to question the judgment of the GLOBALG.A.P. benchmarking assessor and to request more evidence of compliance.
c) To recommend to the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat the approval and the recognition level of the applicant checklist/scheme.
d) To evaluate appeals and give recommendations to the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat in the event of an appeal.

4. Code of Conduct / Confidentiality
The Benchmarking Committee members shall:
a) Keep confidential all the information related to the benchmarking process and not use it in their own or their company’s interests.
b) Sign a confidentiality, impartiality and non-conflict of interest agreement with the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat prior to becoming a member of the Benchmarking Committee and act according to it.

The Benchmarking Committee members shall inform the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat of
any circumstances that could compromise this agreement, so that measures to guarantee the integrity of the process can be taken.

c) The GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat can decide at any time on the removal and substitution of the committee members, especially in the event that compliance with the above-mentioned requirements is jeopardized or not given.