

GLOBALG.A.P. consultation on new Environmental Sustainability Solution

Published by AGRINFO on 18 Jun 2024; Revised 18 Jul 2024

GLOBALG.A.P. launches second public consultation on its new Environmental Sustainability Solution

GLOBALG.A.P. second public consultation on the proposed Environmental Sustainability Solution: [GLOBALG.A.P. Public Consultation Portal](#)

Update

GLOBALG.A.P. is widely recognised in global markets and is often requested by buyers as a prerequisite to trade. GLOBALG.A.P.'s new Environmental Sustainability Solution (ESS) is due to launch in **2025** as both an add-on and in stand-alone standard format, for fruit and vegetables; flowers and ornamentals; and combinable crops. The introduction of the ESS is a significant development. GLOBALG.A.P.'s second public consultation on the ESS, which closed on 5 July 2024, provided an important opportunity for producers and supply chain operators to review the proposal in detail and provide their feedback to ensure that the ESS meets the needs of all stakeholders, including those in low- and middle-income countries, while promoting environmental stewardship and sustainability. **A third round of public consultation, on the final draft ESS is planned for the fourth quarter of 2024.**

Impacted products

Fruit and vegetables, combinable crops, flowers, ornamentals

What is changing?

GLOBALG.A.P. is in the process of developing a new [Environmental Sustainability Solution](#) (ESS), which is due to launch in 2025. This will be available as both an add-on and as a separate standard. It applies to fruit and vegetables, combinable crops, and flowers and ornamentals.

The ESS framework is still under development, and key topics such as auditing and verification, and group certification, are still to be defined.

The draft principles and criteria include the following topics:

- water
- biodiversity
- greenhouse gases
- regenerative agriculture
- food waste
- metrics
- footprinting.

GLOBALG.A.P. held a first round of public consultation in 2023 to collect feedback on the overall concept, principles, criteria, and general implementation rules. This second round consults on the overall framework. It asks for feedback on the five steps that form the framework:

- 1 The producer conducts an initial assessment for each of the above topics and, according to their circumstances, selects the priorities for their farm from a list of pre-defined risks and opportunities (and adding others that are relevant). Their analysis will consider how their activities affect the environment (e.g. soil health, water quality) as well as how external factors affect the farm (e.g. climate change).
- 2 The producer sets indicators for each of the risks and opportunities they have identified. These will be used to define their starting point, orientate their improvement plan, and assess their progress going forward.
- 3 The indicators are used to establish their starting point.
- 4 Targets are set for each indicator, and enablers are identified (such as advice and training) that will help the producer work towards them.
- 5 The final step is implementation of an action plan to meet these targets.

The consultation also asks for feedback on some key questions:

- Should there be base criteria that are mandatory for all producers, regardless of their circumstances? Should these be different for smallholders and larger farming enterprises?
- How should the economic aspects of sustainability be addressed during implementation of the ESS? This is important to help indicate if the investments required by the ESS would be economically sustainable.
- In the case of producer groups, should the initial assessment be conducted at the individual farmer level, or at the producer group level (given that they may not have the same priorities)?
- When quantitative indicators are difficult to apply, how can they be complemented by the use of qualitative indicators?

A third round of consultation will be conducted on the final draft.

An Environmental Sustainability Working Group has been established to orientate the process. It is considering how the GLOBALG.A.P. Secretariat can further embrace environmental sustainability while avoiding duplication at farm level, exploring harmonisation with existing sustainability programmes, and encouraging the cost-efficient adoption of responsible farming practices.

Why?

This is a time of significant change in the food and farming industry. There is growing awareness among citizens about the environmental and social impacts of their buying practices, and both regulators and industry are increasingly focused on sustainability. In the EU there are major changes to policy and regulations under the [EU Farm to Fork and Green Deal](#). This includes due diligence initiatives that require evidence from companies that their operations (and supply chains) do not result in negative environmental or social impacts. While these new regulations target large EU companies, they have implications for all their trading partners. EU food companies and retailers will also have to collect information from their suppliers outside the EU. Discussions are ongoing to explore what evidence will be provided, and how, including the potential role of private standards and certification schemes.

GLOBALG.A.P. Integrated Farm Assurance (IFA) already includes core requirements relating to environmental sustainability. However, stakeholders in the food industry and retail want to go further, to be able to demonstrate and evidence their practices, so the decision was taken to develop the ESS.

Timeline

The new GLOBALG.A.P. solution for environmental sustainability has been in development since mid-2023. This second round of public consultation has now closed.

A third round of public consultation is planned for the fourth quarter of 2024.

What are the major implications for exporting countries?

The wide international reach of GLOBALG.A.P. means that this consultation offers a key opportunity to have a positive impact on agricultural practices in the transition towards more sustainable food systems. During this consultation, the potential implications of the new requirements need to be fully assessed, particularly where they may disproportionately affect producers and operators (especially small-scale) in low- and middle-income countries.

Sustainability solutions must have the flexibility to be context-specific so that they promote good practice, and avoid unintentional market access barriers or disadvantages. This consultation considers questions such as the cost and sustainability of implementing and verifying new requirements, and differentiating between small- and large-scale producers. Other considerations are also important, such as the local availability of suitably qualified certification bodies, and service providers who can provide the necessary support.

Recommended Actions

GLOBALG.A.P. is widely recognised in global markets, and is often requested by buyers as a prerequisite to trade. The introduction of the ESS is a significant development.

This public consultation is an important opportunity for producers and supply chain operators to review the proposal in detail and provide their feedback. This is the time to ensure that the ESS meets the needs of all stakeholders, including those in low- and middle-income countries, while promoting environmental stewardship and sustainability.

You can send your feedback via the [GLOBALG.A.P. Public Consultation Portal](#).

Background

The GLOBALG.A.P. portfolio of standards offers [farm assurance solutions](#) to agriculture, aquaculture, floriculture, compound feed manufacturing, and the supply chain. The portfolio offers primary solutions that, as standalone standards, provide a basic level of assurance. The following core standards are internationally recognised for primary production and the supply chain: [Fruit and vegetables](#); [Aquaculture](#); [Flowers and ornamentals](#); [Hops](#); [Combinable crops](#); [Plant propagation material](#); [Tea](#). In addition, [Primary Farm Assurance](#) (PFA) is an entry-level standard designed to assess good agricultural practices for local markets in developing and emerging economies.

In addition to the core standards, GLOBALG.A.P. has developed a series of add-ons. These expand the scope of certification to provide more comprehensive assurance on specific topics. Existing add-ons include: [GLOBALG.A.P. Risk Assessment on Social Practice \(GRASP\)](#), [Sustainable Program for Irrigation and Groundwater Use \(SPRING\)](#), and [BioDiversity](#) (among others).

Resources

[GLOBALG.A.P. portfolio of Farm Assurance Solutions](#)

[GLOBALG.A.P. portfolio updates for January 2024](#)

[GLOBALG.A.P. Public Consultation Portal](#)

Sources

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