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

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GLOBALG.A.P. has opened the third public consultation on its new Environmental Sustainability Solution

GLOBALG.A.P. third 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. The third and final round of public consultation closed on 20 December 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.

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

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practices.

The ESS addresses the following areas:

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

GLOBALG.A.P. held a first round of public consultation in 2023 to collect preliminary feedback on the concept, principles, criteria, and general implementation rules. The second round consulted on the overall implementation framework, and also asked 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?

This third and final round of public consultation on the draft ESS is separated into two sections:

The first is a chapter on the overall operating “Framework Implementation Steps”, common to all producers, and covering four principles:

- The situational assessment where the producer selects priority topics for implementation, according to the opportunities and risks relevant to their situation.
- Selection of metrics (indicators) relevant to the producers’ priority topics.
- Continuous Improvement Plan for the producer, to address the selected topics.
- Enablers that can help to achieve the producer’s targets (e.g. training opportunities and potential partners).

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The second section has six chapters covering the principles and criteria for each of the thematic modules: water, biodiversity, greenhouse gases, footprinting, soil health (agricultural regeneration), and food loss.

The aim of the ESS approach is to create a tailored solution that can be adapted according to regional, and market/producer-specific situations. The objective is not to overburden farmers, while still enabling them to meet requirements.

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.

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 will affect producers and operators (especially small-scale) in low- and middle-income countries.

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Sustainability solutions must have the flexibility to be context-specific so that they promote good practice, and avoid unintentional market access barriers or disadvantages.

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.

The third and final round of public consultation closed on 20 December 2024.

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

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Sources

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