Global Organic Textile Standard certification process

Standard in force available on http://www.global-standard.org or sent on request.
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1/ International Working Group - GOTS Technical committee

GOTS has been created by the following International Working Group (IWG) members:

- International Association Natural Textile Industry (IVN), Germany www.naturtextil.com
- Soil Association (SA), England www.soilassociation.org
- Organic Trade Association (OTA), USA www.ota.com
- Japan Organic Cotton Association (JOCA), Japan www.joca.gr.jp

The IWG has installed a Technical Committee which is coordinated by the Technical Director and further consists of one textile expert appointed by each member of the IWG.

According to its terms of reference the Technical Committee has the following main functions/authorities:

- Generating revisions of the standard GOTS
- Supervision of accredited certifiers to ascertain certifier's adherence and consistent interpretation of the GOTS
- Supervision of certified companies and products regarding compliance with the GOTS

Update and information

ECOCERT GREENLIFE will inform regularly the operators undertaking to respect the standard GOTS about the terms and updates of the standard, and about any provisions issued by the IWG.

The Global Organic Textile Standard as well as the labeling and licensing guide, and the manual with official interpretation are available on the web site: http://www.global-standard.org

The list of operators GOTS certified by ECOCERT is available upon simple request to ECOCERT and it is also possible to consult the database of GOTS certified operators on the Global Standard Web site (see address above).
2/ GOTS Certification steps

Summary diagram of the steps in the certification process.

A. Application Review

1. Request Information about the GOTS certification

2. Sending - Quote form GOST, - List of products to be certified, - Certification process

3. Resend to Ecocert the completed files for an approval request or any information updates:
   - Quote form GOTS
   - List of products to be certified

4. Study of your involvement/renewal request
   - If your application is admissible, send quotation and conditions of sales
   - Otherwise, we inform you in writing

B. Involvement

5. Involvement (send back the signed quotation)

C. Documentation Review

6. Documents review: delivery of forms and data collection in order to prepare the audit

7. Transmission of the needed information to documents review (approval of chemical inputs, other processing aids, labelling...)

8. Audit feasibility study (complete application, auditor available...) and assignment to the auditor,

9. Audit on site
   - noting of discrepancies
   - proposed appropriate correctives actions
   - jointly signed audit report
   - samples possibly taken

D. Initial Approval Audit

10. Audit report review and delivery of conclusions
    - Evaluation of appropriateness of proposed corrective actions
    - Study of documents provided and if need be, decision to conduct
    - Additional audit (back to step 9)

E. Application processing and certification decision

11. Delivery of additional informations for resolution of the last discrepancies

12. Certification decision
    - Awarded, rejected, continued (conditionally or unconditionally) suspended withdrawn.

F. Monitoring

13. Monitoring
    - Annual contract review: back to step 3.

You must inform ECOCERT Greenlife of any change to processes, chemical inputs, labeling... → back to step 3

Certificate sent out
A. Steps 1 to 4 – GOTS certification request

You read the GOTS standard and formalize your certification request by filling the provided Quote form GOTS and the list of products to certified, that you send back to ECOCERT GREENLIFE in order to receive a cost estimate. You must declare all the production sites entering in the process including the subcontractors uncommitted with ECOCERT GREENLIFE for certification but having an activity relating to products to certify.

ECOCERT GREENLIFE will check that a certification for your products is possible according to the GOTS standard. If not, ECOCERT GREENLIFE will inform you by writing.

On the basis of your application, ECOCERT GREENLIFE will establish an annual quote. This quote will be sent to you along with the general terms and conditions of sale.

B. Step 5 – Involvement : Signature of the quotation

Your involvement comes into effect by signing the quotation.

By signing the quotation, you undertake particularly to:
- Know the general conditions of sales
- Know the standard and the certification process,
- Respect all the criteria of the standard, the GOTS certification process, ECOCERT labeling guide, and any provisions to GOTS certification program provided by the IWG, and also the applicable regulation
- Declare all the sites concerned by the products to be certified (including the subcontractors uncommitted with ECOCERT GREENLIFE for certification but having an activity relating to products to certify.)
- Accept all necessary audits (announced or not) in all sites concerned by products to certified,
- Accept that possibly samples be taken for analysis,
- Accept that the auditor may have access to accountability, evidence elements and corresponding registrations,
- Be charged for any supplementary audit required by ECOCERT GREENLIFE
- Allow for access ECOCERT GREENLIFE and the responsible authorities to all premises, vehicles, data and other facilities, which ECOCERT GREENLIFE considers it best professional judgment to be related to the controlled Products, regardless of whether those are owned by or used for the Client Company
- Authorize ECOCERT GREENLIFE to exchange information related to the certification of its Products with other GOTS approved certification bodies or with the responsible authorities, in order to verify information, especially the certification status of the certified products as part of its ongoing evaluation
- Record the claims concerning the certified products and submit them to ECOCERT GREENLIFE.
During the year, you must communicate by mail to ECOCERT GREENLIFE:
- Any request to certify a new product, even if it belongs to an already certified product line.
- Any modification affecting organization or production tools possibly questioning the compliance of already certified products (for instance: processing aids change, working with a not yet certified subcontractor...).

C. Steps 6 to 7 - documents review

Your file will be allocated to a certification officer, who will be your first point of contact. This officer will send you the forms needed to prepare for your approval audit that are specific to your business.

All the dyes and other processing aids, cleaning products must be declared and submitted to ECOCERT GREENLIFE for validation according to the safety data sheets, technical sheets, pre-inquiry questionnaire or positives lists of GOTS approved chemical inputs.

The labeling and communication projects must be submitted to ECOCERT for validation prior any use. These one must be developed in compliance with the GOTS labeling guideline.

D. Steps 8 & 9 – Initial approval audit

Audits are conducted on all sites carrying out operations on products covered by the certification. ECOCERT GREENLIFE conducts audits on the basis of a defined inspection plan, specific to your business.

An auditor is assigned to conduct your approval audit. Approximately ten days before the audit date, the auditor will propose an audit plan and remind you of the documents to be made available (by sending a ‘notification of visit’). The audit plan and these documents are determined by virtue of ECOCERT procedures, on the basis in particular of your role in the product’s development, manufacture or distribution process and of any third parties involved in the said process.

During the audit, the auditor will check the compliance of the operator and their products with the criteria in the standard. During the audit closure meeting, you will be given a report to sign. It includes a summary of the checks carried out and any discrepancies noted. It is your responsibility to suggest your corrective actions, giving the associated implementation timeframes. These proposed remedial measures must be appropriate and comprehensive so that the certification process may continue. Should this not be the case, we will ask you to propose a new action plan. Corrective actions are typically made official during the audit closure meeting.

During audits, samples may be taken. They are then sent anonymously to one of our partner laboratories for analysis. The cost of these analyses, plus management fees, will be added to the invoice.
E. Steps 10 to 12 – Processing of the audit report – Certification decision

The auditor will forward the audit report and your proposed corrective actions to the certification department for examination by your certification officer. After checking the relevance and completeness of the application, the certification officer will send you the conclusions from his/her review of the report, including possible penalties relating to each discrepancy. These conclusions may be supported, if necessary, by analysis results.

The certification officer indicates discrepancies as resolved on the basis of evidence gathered (in documents or on-site observation, as the case may be) and adherence to penalties.

Once your application is fully compliant, the certificate(s) corresponding to the compliant product(s) will be sent to you.

REMINDER:
Likewise, you are not allowed to put your products on the market with any reference to the certification that once you hold a valid certificate for the concerned products.

F. Steps 13 – Monitoring

In subsequent years, on the basis of an updated preliminary questionnaire, ECOCERT GREENLIFE will update your annual quote after reviewing the application (steps 3 and 4).

IMPORTANT:
It is your responsibility to immediately inform ECOCERT GREENLIFE of any change in the manufacture, production, composition, labeling of products and list of products to be certified.

If any modification concerns the declared points in the quote form (for instance: product number, number of subcontractors ...), the process restarts at the step 3 in order to take them into account.

To monitor certification, we implement the inspection plan which consists of various evaluation measures, in-depth audits, follow-up, additional and supplementary audits. The auditor checks that the corrective actions defined to deal with previous discrepancies have been put in place and are effective. Steps 6 to 12 are reiterated under this certification monitoring process.

REMINDER:
Likewise, you are not allowed to put your products on the market with any reference to the certification that once you hold a valid certificate for the concerned products.
3/ Corrective plan and penalties

Throughout the certification process, your certification officer will make use of the corrective action plan combined with the standard to deal with discrepancies. Each potential instance of non-compliance is listed and categorized depending on its seriousness. Any noted discrepancy will give rise to a request for corrective action, the effective implementation of which will be verified.

Several types of treatment can be assigned to a discrepancy according to its gravity. The fraudulent or expected character of a discrepancy, as well as the notion of first infringement or recidivism in the incompliance, will be taken into account in the way to respond to discrepancies. Depending on the seriousness of observed discrepancies, corrective actions may be required, a conditioned certificate may be issued or else a sanction may be imposed.

A. Minor discrepancies

1. Request for corrective actions

A request for corrective actions does not hinder certification of the products in question, but if effective action is not taken within the defined timescales, this may result in conditional certification or a penalty.

2. Pending certification/ Conditional certification

The issue of a new certificate will be pending if awaiting the delivery of documents or the completion of an additional audit.

B. Major discrepancies

APPLICATION OF PENALITIES:

In the event of a major discrepancy, repeat offences, or accumulated discrepancies, penalties will be applied:

1. Formal demand:

Compliance must be ensured within the timeframe allowed. Once this time has passed, the outcome is automatic rejection, suspension or withdrawal of the certificate.

2. Refusal, suspension or withdrawal of certificate (affects products):

Certain major discrepancies or repeat or accumulated discrepancies may result in suspension of the certificate. The terms and conditions and the duration of suspensions will be defined in the corrective action plan or, if necessary, proposed by the Certification Supervisory Committee.
Refusal of certification equates to declining a product application for certification. Certification may only be granted after examination of an additional audit report at the applicant’s expense. If the product is already certified, we talk about the withdrawal of the product.

**IMPORTANT:**
A product that has had certification rejected, withdrawn or suspended cannot be marketed with reference to the certification. This ban also applies to any other communication materials.

**ATTENTION:**
The suspension or the withdrawal of the certificate implies the end of validity of the certification document. All non valid documents have to be resent to ECOCERT GREENLIFE and you are also obliged to inform your own customers about the end of validity of the certificate.

**4/ Claim and appeal**

**A. Claim:**

You can file a claim by sending a mail to ECOCERT GREENLIFE regarding:
- The compliance of your products with the concerned standard,
- The quality of ECOCERT GREENLIFE service provision or any other cause of discontentment

ECOCERT GREENLIFE systematically answers all claims.

**B. Appeal:**

You can formulate an appeal by sending a mail to the certification department, regarding a certification decision, and within 15 days following the receipt of the mail informing you of this decision. This one will be treated by the certification service upon receipt of the mail.

If you are not satisfied after your first use, you could send a second appeal to the Supervisory Certification Committee. This second appeal is billed and must be done within 15 days. The resort requests do not suspend decisions made previously.
5/ Suspension of activity

In the event that you plan to suspend your business activities (halt manufacture, or sale of the ECOCERT GREENLIFE certified products), we offer you the option of suspending our service for one or two half-year periods, with our contract remaining in force during this time. We must be notified of this arrangement before the start of the half-year during which you wish to place your business on hold.

Your certification documents are no longer valid during this period. You are therefore no longer permitted to manufacture or sell products certified by ECOCERT GREENLIFE. No reference to certification wording and/or ECOCERT GREENLIFE is permitted, regardless of the communication materials (labeling, website, communication documents, etc.).

At the end of this on-hold period, the certification process restarts at Step 1 - application review, followed by an initial approval audit as for any initial application.

6/ End of contract

If you wish to disengage and stop our certification services, you have to notify it to us in writing according to the advance notice planned in the general conditions of sales. The end of your contract, at the end of the advance notice, will lead to the end of validity of your certificate.

Consequently, from this moment on, you can not put your products on the market with any reference to the certification or to ECOCERT GREENLIFE.

In case you would have stock of certified products to be sold after the expiration date of your certificate, you have to indicate us how long would it take to sell the whole stock. From this moment, your contract will be prolonged but you will not be authorized to produce any new products and you will be allowed to sell your stock of certified products with an annual control as "distributor", charged at the appropriate rate. The contract and the certificate will stay in force until the date considered as necessary to sell the whole stock of certified products.

During any such contract extension period, you may no longer MANUFACTURE new product with any reference to the certification and/or ECOCERT GREENLIFE.
7/ Lexicon

CERTIFICATE: Attestation of conformity issued by ECOCERT GREENLIFE stating for each product that it complies with GOTS standard and that allows the manufacture and the sale of the product. Unless otherwise defined by ECOCERT GREENLIFE, the certificate is valid until the end of semester + one year following your in-depth audit within a validity period of 16 months maximum. Renewal of the certificate depends upon the ongoing certification process concerning the operator.

OPERATOR: any physical or moral person who requesting certification following GOTS standard for one or more products in the aim of commercialization.

STANDARD: Technical document defining the characteristics that a product must show (criteria or requirements), the terms and conditions of inspection for compliance with these characteristics and the terms and conditions for communication regarding the certification.