GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING ASSESSMENT PLANS RELATED TO CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

References in the accreditation manual regulations

1. Preamble

In accordance with the Minister's regulations, the Conseil des appellations réservées et des termes valorisants (CARTV) is responsible for preparing an accreditation manual that sets out the standards and criteria against which it will assess applications for accreditation (Section 10 of the *Act respecting reserved designations and added-value claims).*

The procedure for reviewing accreditation files is outlined in the CARTV's *Internal Regulations Pertaining to Accreditation*. During the file review, if the applicant body is deemed able to properly carry out its certification program, all documentation concerning the assessment plans is submitted for review to the Accreditation Committee. The entire evaluation is based on the criteria adopted by the Board or, if applicable, by the accrediting authority to which the certifying body has applied.

Whether it concerns a food name, a mention, an allegation or a reserved designation for a product, the evaluation of assessment plans that correspond to certification requirements included in specification manuals allows the Accreditation Committee to recognize the certifying bodies' capacity to manage certification programs and verify the compliance of products with specification manuals.

The assessment plan allows the certifying body to provide proof that it will control the certification requirements using the appropriate method. It enables the CAEQ to ensure that the certification protocol proposed by the certifying body guarantees compliance with the specification manual approved by the CARTV or any other competent authority or even a private specification manual.

The certifying body must develop and adopt an assessment plan in cooperation with the Committee or the equivalent organ in the organization, that enables "the participation of all parties significantly concerned in the development of policies and principles regarding the content and functioning of the certification system".

4.2.1e)

References in the accreditation manual regulations

2. Purpose and scope

The *Guidelines for Assessment Plans related to Certification Requirements* outline the overall organization of assessment plans and the elements that must be included in order to demonstrate the suitability of the certification program application that has been submitted by a certifying body regarding a specific accreditation scope or an accreditation scope extension.

The purpose of assessment plans is to describe the elements to be controlled and the control methods to be used for all specification manuals (procedures, frequency, responsibilities, etc.).

Assessment plans must also transparently establish the operating rules concerning the granting, refusal, maintaining, extension, suspension and withdrawal of certification.

In the CARTV documents, the term "inspection plan" is a synonym of "assessment plan".

3. References

- *Act Respecting Reserved Designations and Added-Value Claims (A-20.03)*
- *Regulation Respecting Reserved Designations (*c. A-20.02, r.1)
- *Internal Regulations Pertaining to Accreditation for Certifiers*
- *ISO/IEC Guide 65: 1996 – General requirements for bodies operating product certification systems*

4. Definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following definitions have been added:

- Assessment plan: see assessment plan
- Inspection plan: see assessment plan

References in the accreditation manual regulations

Assessment plan (Plan de contrôle)*:*

Document that matches the specification manual and that outlines, for each commitment (requirement, criteria, etc.) set out in the specification manual, the methodology used to evaluate and inspect the operations – and, if applicable, the resulting products – run by a company that applies for the certification of its product(s).

It is an essential document that ensures the authenticity of products prepared in accordance with the standards set out in the approved specification manuals and that bear reserved designations.

First party control (Contrôle de première partie)*:*

Inspection carried out by the operator (company, farm, etc.) to ensure that its own operations and, if applicable, the resulting products, are compliant with the requirements of an approved specification manual.

Point (or element) to be controlled (or control point or control element) (Point à contrôler)*:*

Requirement set out in the specification manual that exerts an influence on the product's characteristics and that must therefore be controlled.

Second party control (Contrôle de deuxième partie)*:*

Inspection carried out by an entity having an interest in the operator's operation. An inspection of this type is generally carried out by a client who assigns its own auditors or through an external firm to which the on-site audit has been subcontracted. It may also be carried out by an organization that has been established to manage and put to use the approval specification manual or even by a cooperative, through inspection carried out by a body on the numerous operation sites of its members, within the framework of a management system, to guarantee that their operations and, if applicable, the resulting products, are compliant with the requirements of an approved specification manual.

Target value (Valeur cible)*:*

Value associated with a point to be controlled that specifies the limit (qualitative or quantitative) to be attained in order to be compliant with the specification manual.

References in the accreditation manual regulations

Third party control – product evaluation (Contrôle de troisième partie – évaluation du produit)*:*

Inspection carried out by the certifying body in operators (companies) that apply for the certification of the product to verify that the operations and, if applicable, the resulting products are compliant with the requirements of an approved specification manual.

Third party control – management system evaluation (Contrôle de troisième partie – évaluation de système de management)*:*

Inspection carried out by the certifying body in organizations that manage a quality management system (see second party control) for companies that make products in accordance with an approved specification manual.

5. Assessment plans

Assessment plans describe the various control levels and specify the methods required for each element to be controlled.

Assessment plans also contain the various plans needed for certifying products according to the requirements included in a specification manual: evaluation, and qualification plans, admission plans (if necessary), monitoring and correction plans.

5.1 Different control levels

Assessment plans specify the elements in the specification manual subject to first party control, second party control (where applicable), and third party control, and describe the methodology used for the control.

5.2 Control methods

4.3

According to the characteristics of each of the elements to be controlled, an appropriate control method is specified in the assessment plan. The certifying body determines the control method that is most suitable for the elements to be controlled.

References in the accreditation manual regulations

Examples of control methods: 10.3
- interviews with the operator or its staff
- visual inspections of the elements to be controlled
- examination of forms, procedures, records or other reference documents
- visits to buildings and inspection of animals
- samplings for analysis
- traceability tests
- etc.

5.3 Assessment plan components 4.3

All assessment plans must at least contain a description of the evaluation and control methodology and outline the following steps of the certification process:

- an evaluation, admission (for second party control) and qualification plan in order to establish the procedures for granting certification (Section 6 - Evaluation, admission and qualification plans) 4.3 a)

- a monitoring plan in order to establish the procedures for maintaining and extending certification (Section 7 – Monitoring plans) and 4.3 a)

- a correction plan in order to establish the conditions governing the suspension or partial or complete withdrawal of certification (Section 8 – Correction plans). 4.3 b) et c)

6. Evaluation, admission and qualification plans

6.1 Evaluation plans 10

Any involvement of an operator in a certification process begins with an initial evaluation, which enables the certifying body to assess the operator's capacity to conform to the specification manual for the reserved designation.

Evaluation plans outline the procedure for the certifying body's first visit that must assess the operator's future capacity to comply with the specification manual that applies to the designated product. They specify the elements that will be controlled during the initial evaluation, and the methods that will be used to assess operators that are applying for certification. 9.2 4.1.3

References in the accreditation manual regulations

When the initial assessment is conclusive, the operator is then qualified (licensed by the certifying body) according to the qualification plan (Section 6.3) by issuing a certificate that authorizes it to use the designation, description or claim specified in the approved specification manual.

The following table may be used to describe the evaluation methods for each element:

Elements to be controlled	Target value	Methods used	Documents	Responsible parties
Specification manual requirements	Value described in the specification manual	Visual inspection, analysis, document review, tests, etc.	Forms, procedures, records, etc.	Certifying bodies, applicant groups, operators, etc.

6.2 Admission plans

If a second party control is provided for, the admission plan allows the certifying body to recognize the controls carried out by an organization, as part of third party control system evaluation. In this case, to limit the frequency of the third party control for companies enrolled in the certification program, the certifying body verifies, based on the admission plan, the implementation of measures carried out by the body (often the organization that has been established to manage and put to use the approved specification manual). If this management system evaluation is suitable, the certifying body may then "admit the applicant group," i.e., recognize and attest to its second party control capacity.

6.3 Qualification plans

12.1.1, 12.1.2

Qualification plans outline the certification decision procedures. Based on the evaluation process carried out with operators, they determine the minimum conditions required for operators to be qualified following the granting of certification. For example, qualification plans stipulate tolerance thresholds for incidences of non-compliance with the remedial requirements.

4.6.2

7. Monitoring plans

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Monitoring plans specify methods used to monitor qualified operators and to maintain their certification. They specify the elements of the specification manual that must be monitored and the frequency of monitoring controls

4.1.3

References in the accreditation manual regulations

(planned or unexpected). 13.1 4.5.3

The following table may be used to describe the control methods for each element:

Elements to be controlled	Target value	Method used	Document	Responsible parties
Specification manual requirements	Value described in the specification manual	Visual inspection, analysis, document review, etc.	Forms, procedures, records, etc.	Certifying bodies, applicant groups, etc.

Note: This may be the same table as the admission/qualification plan table.

8. Correction plans

4.3 b) et c)

4.5.3 k)

Correction plans outline the procedure to be followed when deviations from the specification manual requirements are detected. They also outline the types of sanctions provided for, including the conditions for suspending or partially or completely withdrawing certification.

4.6 4.6.2

Correction plans guarantee the impartiality of certifying bodies' decisions pertaining to sanctions that they apply. They provide transparency with operators that are applying for certification. To do so, correction plans provide:

11.1 b)

- For each certification requirement, an enumeration of the potential deviations and rating of their scale;
- Rules for applying sanctions based on the number, type and seriousness of deviations identified.

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8.1 List of potential deviations and rating of their seriousness

Correction plans provide an as exhaustive list as possible of potential deviations for each element to be controlled. For each of these potential deviations, correction plans also provide a scale to rate their seriousness.

4.5.3 k)

References in the accreditation manual regulations

Examples of scales of a deviation seriousness scales:

- Minor, major, critical
- A, B or C
- Number of demerit points, etc.

8.2 Rules for applying sanctions

Correction plans establish the specific rules for applying sanctions based on the number, type and seriousness of deviations identified. The term sanction does not only refer to the suspension or withdrawal of certification. Possible sanctions may be the downgrading of a product, a warning, etc. 4.5.3 k)

Example of rules to be applied:

- 3 major incidences of non-compliance = withdrawal of certification
- 1 critical incidence of non-compliance = immediate suspension of certification
- 1 major incidence of non-compliance = downgrading of a product lot
- 3 minor incidences of non-compliance = warning

END OF GUIDELINES