

Terms and Conditions for Verification Certificate.

*Note: This protocol is applicable for all Trustea Certificate holders before and after of Date of Release.
Date of Release: 15/01/2024*

TERMS & CONDITIONS

This VC is valid for two years from the date of issue. Failing to fulfil the following conditions will lead to either suspension or cancellation of the certificate:

1. System Assurance Audits (SAA)

1. The trustea Secretariat and/or the CB may at any time carry out SAA, during the validity period of the verification certificate without any advance notice.
2. Non-conformities noticed during SAA will be treated like non-conformities found in regular audits and the same processes, timelines and consequences will apply to non-conformities as found in the regular audit.
3. It is mandatory to comply with the notice of SAA unless it is justified on account of force majeure –strike, natural calamity, fire, disease outbreak, civil disorder, etc. which will be mutually agreed. In any other circumstances, if the entity does not accept the SAA notice, it will be considered willful non-compliance and lead to immediate cancellation of the Verification Certificate.
4. Major NCs noticed during SAA are to be closed within 90 days from the date of audit. During this period, the VC will remain suspended. Failure to close the NCs within 90 days will lead to the cancellation of the VC for one year.
5. If any NC s relating to Zero Tolerance code criteria points are noticed during the SAA, the VC shall stand cancelled forthwith for one year. The Zero Tolerance code criteria points are: 2.3, 6.2, 8.9, 9.4, 9.5, 9.18, 9.7, 9.8, 9.9, 9.10, 9.11, 9.13, 9.20, 10.2

2. Logo Usage:

The trustea logo is a proprietary single graphic unit and must not be altered from its original specified form under any circumstances.

The VC holders are to use of trustea organization Logo for the below-noted purposes only:

1. Depiction on the wholesale tea packs/bags trustea tagline on the side panels of the packet.



2. Official Stationary Items used to promote marketing relationships
- iii. At the entrance to the verified tea garden/factory

The logo is not authorized for use on any product, packaging used for retail sale or labels to be used in the promotion of any products. For more details on this, please visit <https://trustea.org/uploads/guidelines/16892307971.pdf>

3. Internal Audit

1. An Internal Audit must be carried **out at least four weeks before the expiry of twelve months** from the date of issue of the verification certificate. It will be carried out as a self-assessment under the responsibility of the verified organisation. The self-assessment shall be against the complete checklist which shall be provided by the certification body.
2. The organisation shall notify the Certification Body (CB), copying the trustea secretariat, of the planned internal audit date and audit plan at least one week before the starting the audit.
3. Once the audit is completed, the Internal Audit Report (IAR) must be submitted to the CB, copying the trustea secretariat, within two months.
4. The unit would have designated personnel trained in trustea Cod, they can access the e-learning module and obtain a certificate on trustea website or use this link- <https://trustealms.org/>. In case of a new appointment, the designated person needs to avail trustea training within two months from the first day of joining.
5. The CB on receiving the IAR shall review the same and inform the organisation as to the acceptance or otherwise of the report and the Secretariat shall be kept informed to that effect.
6. In the event of IAR being found to be not acceptable, (not reaching the minimum score required for the given year) the CB shall advise the organization to carry out the required corrective actions and submit the report within the specified time period, which shall not exceed 90 (ninety) days.
7. The verification certificate shall be withdrawn by the CB if the organization fails to carry out the internal audit within due time and forward the IAR to the CB within two months, or if the internal audit is delayed more than 120 days from the due date.
8. Internal Audits must be carried out by qualified internal auditors or subcontracted to an external certification body, different from the certification body responsible for the external verification audits.
9. Internal auditors shall have at least the following qualifications:
 - i. Five years of experience in the tea industry; plus
 - ii. At least one of the following:
 - a. Three years of experience in a quality control role in food or agriculture; or
 - b. Having attended trustea internal auditor training.

4. Renewal Audit

1. The CB shall send a renewal notice to the verified organisation at least four months prior to certificate expiration.
2. The Verified Organization should apply for renewal of verification at least three months before the expiry of the verification.

3. The CB then carries out a full External Verification Audit, ideally at least four weeks before the expiry of the old verification certificate.
4. When the performance of the verified organisation does not meet the verification requirements, the CB shall not issue a new verification certificate to the Organization.
5. The new verification certificate shall be effective from the date of the expiry of the old certificate provided the verification audit has taken place four weeks prior to the expiry of the old VC.
6. In the event of the Renewal Audit taking place less than the prescribed period of 4 weeks prior to the expiry of the old VC, the intervening period gap between the expiry date of the old certificate and the start date of the new one, shall be treated as a period of non-verification. During this period, the verified unit shall not claim verification or use the trustea logo, trademark, verification certificate, or any other type of document that has any relation to trustea verification or make any explicit or implicit reference that suggests it is trustea verified.

5. Appeals against Certification Body decisions

1. An Organisation can appeal against decisions of a CB on formal notice of the decision. The appeal shall state which decision is contested, detailed reasons why the organisation objects and what it thinks should be the correct decision.
2. The CB shall respond within 7 days of receipt of the appeal, replying in detail to the concerns of the organisation and either confirming or revoking the contested decision.
3. If the organisation is not satisfied it should engage in further rounds of trying to resolve the issue directly with the CB.
4. Any appeals will be logged with the trustea secretariat. Both the appealing organisation and the CB have a duty to inform the secretariat, which issues a case number and will log all related correspondence. All correspondence in the matter from both the appealing organisation and the CB shall be in writing (or confirmed in writing if verbal) and copied to the trustea Secretariat by post or e- mail to
5. If either party feels that the issue cannot be resolved bilaterally, or cannot be resolved within an acceptable time, the party may escalate the matter to the trustea Secretariat. The trustea Secretariat will review the case, hearing both sides and make a final and binding decision within one month. The Secretariat reserves the right to pass on the cost of such a review by the trustea Secretariat (time, travel to the field and other expenses) to one or both of the parties, at a level and split at its discretion.
6. An appeals procedure is a mandatory component of the contract between organizations and CBs. The appeals procedure must be in line with the above generic framework.

6. Extension of Scope under an Existing Verification Certificate

A verified organization needs to get the existing VC revised through the CB as and when there is either an increase in the production area by 10% or there is a change in the list of verified sources- small tea growers/suppliers.

7. Communication of information and changes

A verified organization needs to inform the Certification Body, without delay, of any changes that may affect its capability to fulfill the trustea requirements. These include, for example, changes relating to

- a. The legal, commercial, organizational status or ownership,
- b. Organization and management (e.g. key managerial, decision-making or technical staff),
- c. Production sites,
- d. Scope of operations under verification,
- e. Major changes to the production unit and processes, and
- f. Inclusion or exclusion of smallholders or leaf suppliers

8. Credibility

Credibility concerns raised on an entity externally or internally trustea welcomes stakeholder feedback and any feedback from credible sources like government agencies may call for information from the certified entities to establish the veracity of the same. Any update on the guidelines and policies of the trustea program can be accessed at <https://trustea.org/guidelines/>.

With respect to the above tea samples may be selected and collected randomly from the factory following trustea tea sampling procedure maintaining the confidentiality clause by the testing agency or trustea personnel or CB auditors for the compliance check on non-approved chemical usage. This will be done with prior intiation at trustea's cost and the result will be intimated to the entity as per legal and trustea requirements.

The entity must reply within one week to any show-cause notice raised by tSTF to any serious violation of the code requirement or any reported incident that adversely affects trustea standards.

Any data collected during the whole process of certification maybe used for analysing the trends of improvement, the public claim by trustea, and gaps in the program without disclosing the name of any specific entity.

Note: The issuance of the certificate implies that the entity accepts all the terms and conditions mentioned above.
