

## STEPS TO COCOA CERTIFICATION IN WEST AFRICA

STEP	DESCRIPTION
<b>Step 1: Group formation</b>	<p>The target group is sensitized on what certification is, the importance of certification and the need for group formation as an important part of the certification process.</p> <p>Interested members identify with the group through registration. Producers willingly join the group.</p> <p>At this state, the Internal Control System (ICS) team is identified. The ICS team includes the Group Administrator/ICS Manager, Trainers, and Internal Auditors.</p> <p>The Group Administrator/ICS Manager is in charge of the Internal Control System of the group. He/She takes the final decision on the participation of the members to the group.</p> <p>Trainers help the farms to implement the standard. They could be agronomists of the group, Field Supervisors (FSs)/Extension Officers (EOs), Lead Farmers (LFs) etc.</p>
<b>Step 2: Preparation of ICS team</b>	<p>The Group Administrator/ICS Manager develops an ICS manual for the group. The ICS manual operationalizes the certification standard so that it can be implemented by the group members.</p> <p>Several trainings also take place at this step. The Group Administrator/ICS Manager is trained on how to develop the ICS manual.</p> <p>Training of trainers (ToT) sessions are held by accredited external trainers for FSs/EOs/LFs. Trainers are provided with training materials such as posters, manuals, mini-flipchart etc.</p> <p>With some Licenced Buying Companies (LBCs) in West Africa, Field Supervisors provide the second level of training to Purchasing Clerks (PCs) and or Lead Farmers (LFs). The accredited external trainers provide field monitoring during training of LFs and PCs.</p> <p>Internal Inspectors are also trained on certification standard, auditing techniques and how to use the checklist of the group. The Internal Inspectors training is delivered by recognised external trainers.</p>

<b>Step 3: Training of producers</b>	<p>LFs and or PCs deliver farmer training and monitored by Project Managers and or Field Supervisors.</p> <p>Trainers keep record on the all training sessions. Trainers also follow up with the producers to ensure that the certification standard is implemented in the farms.</p>
<b>Step 4: Internal Inspection</b>	<p>Internal Inspectors are local people who are paid to inspect all farms of trained farmers and deliver a report on compliance to certification standard.</p> <p>The report is put on the farmers' file for verification by external auditors. This is monitored by external trainers.</p> <p>Where there are non-conformities, the farmer(s) implement corrective actions. A follow-up is done by the Internal Inspector to ensure that all the corrective actions are taken.</p> <p>Each farm and the ICS is internally audited at least once a year. It is a very important step to generate a process of continuous improvement of the farms and the group.</p>
<b>Step 5: Pre-audit</b>	<p>Pre-audit is conducted by a certification body to assess the group's preparedness for an external audit.</p>
<b>Step 6: External audits</b>	<p>External audit is conducted by accredited certification bodies to verify compliance to certification standard. The ICS and sample farms of the group are audited.</p> <p>Non-compliances may be identified for corrective actions to be carried out.</p> <p>Final decision: Certificate is awarded outright, or</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Certificate is awarded after corrective actions or</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">No certificate</p>
<b>Step 7: Continuous improvement</b>	<p>Both the farms and ICS need to continue improving each year. Action plans are developed each year that defines activities, timeline, responsible persons, tools and resources required. Each year, farms are expected to improve over and above the results of the previous year. The implication is that, the requirements for subsequent years become stricter.</p>