



CERTIFICATION REGULATIONS

Published by Acoura

6 Redheughs Rigg, Edinburgh EH12 9DQ

Tel: 0131 335 6600

Fax: 0131 335 6601

Website: www.acoura.com

Email: info@acoura.com

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1. Introductory explanation

- 1.1** These Certification Regulations govern all certification services offered by Acoura Certification Limited (Formerly SFQC Ltd) and Acoura Marine Limited (formerly Food Certification International Ltd).
- 1.2** Acoura Certification Limited and Acoura Marine Limited adhere to ISO/IEC 17065 (Conformity assessment -- requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services) and ISO 14065 (The international standard for greenhouse gas validation and verification).
- 1.3** Under ISO/IEC 17065 and ISO 14065, Acoura Certification Limited and under ISO/IEC 17065 Acoura Marine Limited offer certification to a number of Certification Schemes, which contain standards.
- 1.4** An Acoura Certification Limited or Acoura Marine Limited Customer agrees to adhere to the requirements of the Certification Scheme standard and the obligations laid out in section 3 (Scheme Member/Applicant Obligations).

2. Acoura Certification Systems

- 2.1** Acoura Certification Ltd and Acoura Marine Ltd, hereon in referred to as Acoura, are independent third-party Certification Bodies operating Certification Systems for a number of Certification Schemes.
- 2.2** The Certification System for products (including services) and processes is an independent third-party system, compliant with ISO/IEC 17065, for determining product conformity against Scheme Standards. The Certification System may require examination of the product, the production process, the production environment, and the production, storage and distribution facilities and, where appropriate, assessment of the quality system records. Certification after initial assessment is followed by continuing assessment, audit, inspection or surveillance. Certified members receive a Certificate of Conformity and authorisation to use an appropriate Scheme Certification Mark.
- 2.3** The Certification System for validation and verification activities is an independent third party system, compliant with ISO14065, for auditing projects that aim to sequester carbon through woodland creation. The Certification System requires the examination of the design and management requirements of woodland creation and the carbon sequestration and emissions of the woodland. Certified members initially receive a Validation Opinion Statement with projects then verified normally at 5-yearly intervals, when they then receive a Verification Opinion Statement.

3. Scheme Member/Applicant Obligations

All certified Scheme applicants/members/clients (thereafter referred to as members) agree to:

- 3.1** Comply with all the requirements detailed in the appropriate Scheme Standards and not make any false statement or declaration in the course of certification.
- 3.2** Provide access announced or unannounced to Acoura assessment staff (and, where appropriate, accompanying authorised personnel) for the purpose of assessment of the member's product/project, the process, the production environment, the production,

storage and distribution facilities and records against the requirements of the Scheme Standard.

- 3.3** Notify Acoura of any significant changes to the ownership or management structure of the unit/site producing certified product/validated/verified product or changes in the facilities or methods of production/management, which may affect the certification granted.
- 3.4** At all times ensure compliance with all legislation that relates to the appropriate scheme sector. Where reference has been made to legislative requirements within the Scheme Standards, certification does not imply that all aspects of the referenced legislation have been met.
- 3.5** Immediately notify Acoura of any prosecutions or failure to comply with relevant industry related legislation which may breach Scheme requirements or of any failure to comply with Scheme Standards of which the member is aware of at time of application or becomes aware of relating to the operation of their business or personnel/staff involved with the operation of their business.
- 3.6** Maintain a system for the recording and actioning of complaints received in relation to the products/projects certified.
- 3.7** Pay the necessary fees determined for the Scheme.
- 3.8** Notify Acoura of all units/businesses owned by the member, whether participating or not in the Certification Scheme.
- 3.9** Inform Acoura if receiving any other services or certification from any other company within the Acoura www.acoura.com or Lloyd's Register Groups www.lr.org
- 3.10** Not bring the Scheme, the Scheme Owner or Acoura into disrepute. Not use its certification to make statements that Acoura considers to be misleading or unauthorised.
- 3.11** Agree that upon suspension, withdrawal or termination of certification, will cease to make claims of certification, validation, or verification for the product, process, or system.
- 3.12** Adhere to the requirements set out in part (4) below.

4. Use of Licenses, Certificates and Marks of Conformity

- 4.1** Licenses, Certificates and Marks of Conformity (including but not limited to: passports, schedules and other official Scheme documents or mechanisms) remain the property of Acoura and must be returned or destroyed upon request.
- 4.2** Incorrect use of references to the Scheme or misleading use of Licenses, Certificates, Marks of Conformity indicating a product is certified, may result in the member being suspended or certification withdrawn.
- 4.3** Copies of certification documents must be reproduced in their entirety or according to the Scheme regulation.

4.4 Claims made in, and logos used in, advertising, brochures, websites and other public documents must meet the requirements of those specified in the Scheme Standard.

5. **Acoura Obligations**

As the certifying body for a Scheme, Acoura undertakes to provide for members of a Scheme the following:

5.1 an independent assessment of the member's product/project, the process, the production environment, the production, storage and distribution facilities and records to ascertain for certification purposes compliance with the requirements of the Scheme Standard.

5.2 Timely notification of any changes to the Scheme Standards.

5.3 A Certificate or Statement and authorisation to use the designated Scheme Mark following Certification.

5.4 Confidentiality of all information regarding the member/applicant's business obtained during the course of an assessment, unless required to do so by law, during an audit by an external body, e.g. scheme owner or Accreditation Bodies, or with the express permission of the member. (Please also note Regulation 10.)

6. **Role of Acoura Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)**

6.1 Where appropriate, Acoura appoints a TAC to advise on technical matters relating to the issue, maintenance and withdrawal of Certificates.

6.2 The composition of a Scheme TAC is available from the Acoura office.

7. **How to join a Scheme**

7.1 Application information and scheme standards are available on the Acoura website or on request from the office.

7.2 Application to join a Scheme must be made on the appropriate application form available from the Acoura website or office and be accompanied by the appropriate payment. Fees are shown on current application forms and, if necessary, are available from the Acoura office. A separate application is required for each production or processing unit/site. An acknowledgement on receipt of an application form and the membership fee is sent to the applicant.

7.3 Unless otherwise notified, all memberships shall be due for renewal annually. Acoura shall notify existing members of their renewal fee prior to the renewal date.

8. **Assessments**

8.1 Acoura appointed auditors will carry out all assessments. Member's product/project, the process, the production environment, the production, storage and distribution facilities and records shall be assessed annually or at an interval determined by Acoura. Applicants shall be contacted to arrange a suitable date for an assessment within 4 weeks of Acoura receiving the application. Unless otherwise notified, re-assessment visits shall be by appointment. When arranging assessments, if the initial prospective date is unsuitable, then a further date must be arranged. Failure to agree to an

appointment within the required timescale could lead to suspension of membership until a visit is completed. Spot-checks may be carried out by auditors. These may be unannounced.

- 8.2** The assessment shall be conducted against the current issue of the relevant Scheme Standards and related documents. At the time of the assessment, a check shall be made that records and circumstances support the declaration of the calculation of the membership fee, if appropriate.

9. Certification Decisions

- 9.1** Following consideration of the assessment report by Acoura, the member shall be notified in writing of the outcome of the assessment and, where appropriate, the certification category awarded. This letter shall include, if appropriate, notification of any non-compliances requiring corrective action and, where appropriate, timescale for completion. A Certificate or Statement shall also be issued along with Certification Scheme Mark, e.g. stickers or passports, where appropriate.
- 9.2** A Certificate granted to an approved member is valid from the date of issue with its maintenance being subject to the member continuing to meet the requirements of Scheme Standards and Certification Regulations.
- 9.3** A Statement is issued to a validated/verified project with an expiry date for a maximum of five years initially.
- 9.4** The Certification Scheme Mark may only be used in an approved form and only on products which are subject to the Certificate of Conformity issued to the producer concerned.
- 9.5** A member may be suspended from the Scheme for failing to meet the requirements of Scheme Standards or Certification Regulations. A member may withdraw voluntarily at any time, having paid all outstanding fees. In cases of suspension or withdrawal the Certificate or Statement is no longer valid, the Certification Scheme Mark can no longer be used by the member and no refund of membership fees will be made.
- 9.6** A member that has not provided satisfactory corrective action in line with the individual requirements of the Scheme Standard will be not-approved or suspended or withdrawn and will be required to reapply, if they wish to continue with the scheme.

10. Membership Categories

- 10.1** An explanation of membership categories for each Scheme is available from the Acoura office.

11. Amendments to Scheme Standards & Certification Regulations

- 11.1** The Scheme Standards are subject to a formal review by the appropriate Scheme Owner on a regular basis. Approved members shall be notified (through publications, electronic media or other means) of any amendments to the Scheme Standards and conditions that may affect them
- 11.2** Certification Regulations may be altered at any time. Acoura shall provide (through publications, electronic media or other means) updated Certification Regulations as

soon as reasonably practicable. The most current issue of Certification Regulations is available from the Acoura office and website at www.acoura.com

12. Approved Lists

- 12.1** Acoura may make available to Scheme Owners and authorised parties, on request, an up to date list of all members and the products for which they hold approval or projects validated/verified.
- 12.2** Any member who does not wish to have their membership details circulated on the list must notify the Scheme office in writing.
- 12.3** Regardless of action taken under 11.2, the Scheme Owner may notify those with a commercial interest, that a member's certification has been withdrawn.

13. Right of Decision Review and Appeal

- 13.1 Review.** A member has the right to request a review of a decision on certification taken by Acoura by lodging notice of request for review in writing stating appropriate grounds to the Scheme Manager within 14 days of being notified of the decision against which the review is being made. The Scheme Manager shall refer the review to the appropriate Acoura TAC or competent individual and the decision will be reviewed. The member shall be informed in writing of the decision made within 14 days of receipt by the Scheme Manager of the review documentation. During the period of review the original Acoura certification decision will stand.
- 13.2 Appeal.** If a member wishes to appeal against the review decision, they shall do so in writing to the Acoura Board within 14 days of receipt of the review decision, giving details of the grounds for appeal. The Acoura Board shall acknowledge receipt of the appeal within 7 days and shall advise the member of the appeal process, including the formation of an independent committee to investigate and the time scale for dealing with the appeal. Acoura reserves the right to charge the costs of appeal to the appellant should the appeal fail. During the period of appeal the original Acoura certification decision will stand.

14. Suspension and reinstatement

- 14.1** Acoura shall be entitled to suspend a Certificate and/or membership of a Scheme should it become aware of breaches to any requirements specified in (3) Member/Applicant Obligations or (4) Use of Licenses, Certificates and Marks of Conformity.
- 14.2** Acoura shall be entitled to suspend membership/application immediately if it is notified of (or becomes aware of) a prosecution relating to a member's business or if notified of (or becomes aware of) a breach of relevant industry related legislation. If the member is subsequently convicted of an offence in relation to a member's business, Acoura shall be entitled to suspend membership/application with immediate effect, to accept undertakings from the member or to take no further action.
- 14.3** If Acoura accepts undertakings from the member, membership/application shall be reinstated subject to satisfactory compliance with the member's undertaking. If Acoura decides to take no further action membership/application shall be reinstated with immediate effect.

14.4 Acoura handles suspensions of this nature in accordance with its Membership Suspension Policy. This is available on request from the Acoura office.

15. Complaints

15.1 Complaints Related to Product. The responsibility for complying with the requirements of the Certification Scheme as defined in the Scheme Standards and for complying with statutory requirements rests absolutely with the member/applicant. Therefore, any complaint about a product/project or any complaint arising from possible infringements of the law shall be dealt with by the Member/Applicant concerned. Complaints of this nature coming directly to Acoura shall be referred to the Member/Applicant concerned for appropriate corrective action to be taken. Members/applicants are required to maintain a record of all complaints and any subsequent action taken and make this available to auditors during assessment visits.

15.2 Complaints concerning the Certification Scheme. Written complaints concerning the operation of the Certification Scheme shall be dealt with in accordance with Acoura's Complaint Procedure. Acoura shall:

- Acknowledge the complaint.
- Investigate the complaint and the responsible manager shall advise the complainant in writing of the outcome of the investigation.
- Inform the Board of Acoura of the complaint and the outcome of the investigation at its next meeting

15.3 Complaints Related to Scheme Members. Acoura handles all complaints relating to Scheme Members in accordance with its Complaints Policy. This is available on request from the Acoura office.