Global Certification and Monitoring Services

QUALITY MANUAL

QMS-19

Table of Contents

SCOPE *3*

1. GENERAL *3*

2. NORMATIVE REFERENCES *3*

3. REFERENCES TO OTHER QMS DOCUMENTS *6*

4. DEFINITIONS *7*

5. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS *9*

5.1. Legal and Contractual Matters **9**

5.2. Management of Impartiality **10**

5.3. Liability and Financing **10**

5.4. Non-discriminatory conditions **11**

5.5. Confidentiality **11**

5.6. Publicly Available Information **12**

6 OPERATIONAL CONTROL *13*

7 RESOURCES *13*

7.1 Personnel **13**

7.2 Resources for Evaluation **15**

8 INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS *16*

9 PROCESS REQUIREMENTS *18*

9.1 Pre-certification activities **18**

9.2 Planning audits **19**

9.3 Initial Certification **20**

9.4 Conducting audits **20**

9.5 Certification decision **22**

9.6 Maintaining certification **23**

9.7 Complaints and Appeals **25**

9.8 Client records **25**

10 MANAGEMENT SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS *26*

10.1 General **26**

10.2 Management system manual **26**

10.3 Control of documents and records **27**

10.4 Management review **27**

10.5 Internal audits **28**

10.6 Corrective actions and Preventive actions **28**

11. QUALITY MANAUAL REVIEW *28*

SCOPE

Global Certification and Monitoring Services (hereinafter GCMS) is a group of companies specializing in the certification of products and systems. GCMS group strive to provide the highest quality of certification services to the clients and to commit for the conformance of its activities with the requirements of regulations and accreditation standards. This manual and all documents related to it are designed to ensure the fair, honest and effective performance of GCMS Group and its personnel who has access to it.

1. GENERAL

GCMS Group develop its management system based on the Option A: General management system requirements as well as the top management has developed documented policies and objectives for its activities showing evidence of its commitment to comply with the requirements of both ISO/IEC 17021 and ISO 17065. GCMS and its top management ensure that the manual and relevant associated documents are accessible to all relevant personnel, understood and maintained at all levels of GCMS activities.

2. NORMATIVE REFERENCES

ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015	Conformity assessment — Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems Part 1: Requirements.
ISO/IEC 17065:2012	Conformity assessment — Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services.
ISO 19011:2018	Guidelines for auditing management systems
ISO/IEC 17021-2:2016	Conformity assessment — Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems Part 2: Competence requirements for auditing and certification of environmental management systems.
ISO/IEC 17021-3:2017	Conformity assessment — Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems Part 3: Competence requirements for auditing and certification of quality management systems.

ISO/IEC 17021-9:2016	Conformity assessment — Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems — Part 9: Competence requirements for auditing and certification of anti-bribery management systems.
ISO/IEC TS 17021-10:2018	Conformity assessment — Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems — Part 10: Competence requirements for auditing and certification of occupational health and safety management systems.
ISO 22003-1:2022	Food safety Part 1: Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of food safety management systems.
FSSC 22000 Scheme Version 6.0 (April 2023)	Food Safety Management System Certification
IAF MD 22:2019	Application of ISO/IEC 17021-1 for the certification of occupational health and safety management systems (OH&SMS)
IAF MD 9:2022	Application of ISO/IEC 17021-1 in the Field of Medical Device Quality Management Systems (ISO 13485)
ISO/IEC 17000	Conformity assessment - Vocabulary and general principles.
ISO/IEC 17020	General criteria for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspection.
ISO/IEC 17025	General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories.
ISO/IEC TR 17026	Conformity assessment – Example of a system for certification of physical products.
ISO 9000	Quality management systems - Fundamentals and vocabulary.
IAF MD 1	IAF Mandatory Document for the Audit and Certification of a Management System Operated by a Multi-Site Organization.
IAF MD 4	IAF Mandatory Document for the Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for Conformity Assessment Purposes.

IAF MD 5	Determination of Audit Time of Quality, Environmental, and Occupational Health & Safety Management Systems.
IAF MD 11	IAF Mandatory Document for the Application of ISO/IEC 17021-1 for Audits of Integrated Management Systems.
R1G	Regulations to be met by conformity assessment bodies
R4G	The use of EGAC accreditation symbol
R5G	Accreditation Process Time Limitations and Response Actions to Findings of CABs
PB19Pd	Technical Requirements for Certification Bodies in Organic Agricultural Production and Processing
GLOBAL G.A.P.	GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations - Rules for certification bodies Version V6, August.24.
	GLOBALG.A.P. general regulations - Rules for Plants Scope Version V6, September.22
	GLOBALG.A.P. registration data requirements Version V6, September.22
	IFA v6 Smart Audit method and justification guideline for fruit and vegetables Checklists Version V6, October 2022
Organic EU	Regulation (EU) 2021/1698 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2018/848 with procedural requirements for the recognition of control authorities and control bodies.

3. REFERENCES TO OTHER QMS DOCUMENTS

QMS 01	Procedure of management of competencies
QMS 02	Sampling Mechanism
QMS 03	Organic Certification Procedure
QMS 04	Audit time calculation procedure
QMS 05	Procedure of management of impartiality
QMS 06	Procedure of Non-conformities Identification and Management
QMS 07	Complaints and appeals management process
QMS 08	Documents and records control procedure
QMS 09	Personnel duties, responsibilities and authorities
QMS 10	Rules for use of logo, certificates and marks of conformity
QMS 11	Procedure of Granting, Termination, reduction, suspension or withdrawal of certification
QMS 12	Internal audit procedure
QMS 13	Management Review Procedure
QMS 14	Organic communication procedure with EU
QMS 15	System certification procedure
QMS 16	Operating procedure for GCMS subsidiaries
QMS 17	Outsourcing mechanism
QMS 18	Terms of Reference for Internal Committees and Units
QMS 19	Quality Manual

4. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions apply for the purpose of this Manual:

- **Certification Scheme**

  The Certification Scheme is the qualification criteria stipulated in GCMS Group's policies and procedures, certification standards and the Certification Agreement.

- **Certification standards**

  The relevant requirements selected by the Client for compliance when filling out the Application for Certification.

- **Client**

  The entity that passed or is undergoing the GCMS Group's Certification Procedure.

- **Conformity**

  Fulfilment by a product or service specified requirements of the Certification Scheme.

- **Continuous Monitoring**

  Regular monitoring of Client's actions, logo usage, Client's reputation, surveillance audits of the Client's production facility and documentation.

- **Evaluation**

  Systematic examination of the extent to which a client fulfils specified requirements.

- **Exception**

  Approved limited non-compliance with applied Standards and/or Procedures.

- **Certificate**

  A document endorsing that identified product or service conforms with the requirements of selected certification standard and certification scheme.

- **Certification Agreement**

  The Certification Agreement is signed between the Client and the GCMS Group before the start of the Certification procedure, stating the rules for the right to use Certificate/ logo and governing the main certification conditions.

- **Logo**

  An approved logo that is granted to the product/service which comply with the standards and selected certification standard and certification scheme.

- **Head Office**

  Headquarter of Global Certification and Monitoring Services, located in Uzbekistan, acting as the Head office for all its subsidiaries, integrating its Quality Management System into the activity of all its subsidiaries.

- **GCMS group**

  Means Global Certification and Monitoring Services and all its subsidiaries acting in accordance with the same rules and procedures under the management of the Head office.

- **Impartiality**

  The presence of objectivity and the absence of conflicts of interests which may influence the certification activities.

- **Qualified Personnel**

  Personnel that have the capability of fulfilling specified requirements and are authorized to perform specified actions.

- **Quality Management System**

  A group of documents stating the Quality Policy, Quality System and Quality Practices of GCMS Group.

- **Subsidiary**

  The official subsidiary of Global Certification and Monitoring Services in any country, acting in accordance with the Quality Management System of the GCMS Group's Head office.

5. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

5.1. Legal and Contractual Matters

5.1.1 Legal Responsibility

- **"Global Certification and Monitoring Services" LLC** is a legal entity registered in the **Republic of Uzbekistan** that can be held legally responsible for its activities.
- **"Global Certification and Monitoring Services" LLC,** is a legal entity registered in the **Russian Federation** that can be held legally responsible for its activities.
- **"Global Certification and Monitoring Services" LLC,** is a legal entity registered in the **Republic of Türkiye** that can be held legally responsible for its activities.
- **"Global Certification and Monitoring Services" LLC,** is a legal entity registered in the **Kingdom of Saudi Arabia** that can be held legally responsible for its activities.
- **"Global Certification and Monitoring Services" LLC,** is a legal entity registered in the **United Kingdom** that can be held legally responsible for its activities.

5.1.2 Certification Agreement

The relevant GCMS subsidiary and its clients enter into a Certification Agreement. A separate Agreement must be signed for each separate category and for each separate certification standard (even if a legal entity is the same). The Agreement is legally binding, outlines the responsibilities of the relevant GCMS subsidiary and the Client and requires that both parties comply with all certification and continuous monitoring responsibilities.

5.1.3 Decision Responsibility for Certification

GCMS subsidiary is responsible for the certification process of each client, while GCMS headquarter in the republic of Uzbekistan retains authority for all decisions on the provision, refusal, renewal, control, expansion/reduction of the scope, suspension, revocation and maintaining of certification for all the clients. All decisions are made by the decision-maker assigned at the headquarter of GCMS group after the certification process or analysis and evaluation of new information received during surveillance audits and/or from external sources.

5.1.4 Logo

Each GCMS subsidiary maintains the control of the use of GCMS group Logo through the Certification Agreement, policies and surveillance of the Logo usage. A separate policy for logo and certificate is developed.

5.2. Management of Impartiality

5.2.1 Managing impartiality effectively is one of the critical aspects in delivering high quality certification services that our clients and the community can rely on. We must understand and manage threats to impartiality to support the objectivity of our actions. GCMS Group is dedicated to and is responsible for undertaking certification activities impartially and eliminating risks to impartiality which arise from its activities and the activities of its personnel. Conflicts of interest can doubt on the accuracy and validity of product certifications and cannot be allowed to influence certification activities.

5.2.2 GCMS Group utilizes a ‘mechanism’ which is designed to safeguard impartiality in the certification process. Individuals involved in the mechanism provide input concerning the GCMS policies, tendencies to be biased and the matters which may affect confidence in certification.

5.3. Liability and Financing

5.3.1 The legal activities of Global Certification and Monitoring Services Head office and its subsidiaries are covered by an insurance agreement. Each GCMS subsidiary has a separate insurance agreement to cover its activity in its geographical location.

5.3.2 GCMS Group supports the certification activities with funds received from its clients. These funds are adequate for covering all required activities to meet the procedures defined in GCMS Group's Quality Manual, hence the financial status of GCMS Group does not compromise its impartiality. If one of GCMS subsidiaries faces financial struggles and cannot finance itself, its activities are financially supported by another GCMS subsidiary by the decision of GCMS Group's Top Management.

5.4. Non-discriminatory conditions

5.4.1 All companies are eligible to apply for certification. GCMS Group does not discriminate against Clients in any way other than outlined in relevant standards to ensure high quality results in certification. The success of GCMS Group depends on the fair and equitable treatment of all Clients.

5.4.2 GCMS Group's services are available to all Clients which activities meet the requirements of Certification.

5.4.3 Access to certification is not conditional upon the size of the Client or membership in any association or group, nor is the certification conditional upon the number of certificates already issued. There are no undue financial or other conditions.

5.5. Confidentiality

5.5.1 GCMS Group and its personnel are legally obligated to keep confidentially all information provided to it by the client, as well as the data, records and information obtained during audits, inspections, surveillance activities and any other means except for information required or considered to be publicly available unless authorized by the Client. GCMS Group shall inform the client in advance about any information it intends to make publicly available unless prohibited by law. All GCMS Group's personnel sign a confidentiality agreement that resides in their personnel files. Confidentiality is maintained using computer passwords, locks on doors filling cabinets as well as observation by GCMS personnel.

5.5.2 Where the law or contractual agreements require information to be made public or disclosed to any other party, the client shall be informed in advance of what information was provided unless the law prohibits such notification.

5.5.3 Any information about the client which was obtained from any outside source shall be treated as confidential.

5.5.4 When any confidential information is made available to other bodies (e.g. accreditation bodies) GCMS Group informs its clients of this action.

5.5.5 Client folders on the GCMS Group's SharePoint as well as the physical folders in the offices of the relevant GCMS subsidiaries can be accessed only by the personnel involved on the certification activities of the subsidiary performing the certification of these clients.

5.6. Publicly Available Information

5.9.1 GCMS Group maintains the following information publicly available on its website through published relevant procedures and documents or is available upon the request:

a. Information about the certification schemes, including evaluation procedures, audit process, rules and procedures for granting, maintaining, extending or reducing the scope of, suspending, withdrawing, maintaining or refusing certification.

b. List of all GCMS subsidiaries.

c. Geographical areas in which GCMS Group operates.

d. Types of certification schemes in which GCMS operates.

e. Description of the means by which GCMS Group obtains financial support and general information on the fees charged to clients.

f. Description of the rights and duties of Clients, including requirements, restrictions or limitations on the use of GCMS Group's name and logo and on the ways of referring to the C=certification granted.

g. Information about procedures for handling requests for information, complaints and appeals.

h. Directory of certified clients as well as expired and withdrawn certification.

i. Complaints and Appeals management process.

6 OPERATIONAL CONTROL

6.1 GCMS has developed a procedure QMS-16 “Operating procedure for GCMS subsidiaries” to support the effective control of certification activities delivered by branch offices in all its geographical location, as well as each one of the branch managers signed an operation agreement between GCMS headquarter and the subsidiary.

6.2 GCMS consider the operational risks from its activities in the risk assessment journal.

7 RESOURCES

7.1 Personnel

7.1.1 Personnel

7.1.1.1 The GCMS Group’s CEO as well as each subsidiary’s manager ensure that GCMS has a sufficient number of qualified personnel to assess and fulfil the requirements defined in this Manual, applicable certification and accreditation standards and in the document deriving the requirements for the qualifications and competencies of the staff.

7.1.1.2 All personnel involved in the Certification activities in each subsidiary shall be practicing with sufficient technical competence.

7.1.1.3 All personnel employed within GCMS Group shall have relevant qualifications for their positions and be competent for the functions they perform, including making required technical judgements defining policies and implementing them. Certification personnel are formally authorized to perform work on project after the successful completion of internal and / or external training courses according to their position. All new GCMS Group’s personnel is required to complete the internal training on standards and certification.

7.1.1.4 Each GCMS Group’s employee signs an employment agreement or a services contract, as well as a confidentiality agreement with the relevant GCMS subsidiary. By signing these documents, employees undertake responsibility to adhere to all GCMS Group’s rules, guidelines, certification standards, to consider any information received as strictly confidential and take all necessary steps to ensure its safety. Also, all employees of the GCMS Group sign a document confirming that they are independent from any commercial and other interests, are not employees, consultants and/or partners of other interested parties, undertake to carry out

their activities impartially, in accordance with the guidelines and requirements of GCMS Group and certification standards and pledge to inform the Top Management of the relevant GCMS subsidiary as well as the GCMS Group's Impartiality Committee of any situations that may lead to a conflict of interest and/or a threat to impartiality. GCMS Group's uses this information as input into identifying risks to impartiality raised by the activities of such personnel or by organizations that employ them.

7.1.1.5 Employees involved in the Certification activities within the GCMS Group are obligated to declare any previous and/or present association on their own part, or on the part of their employer, with a designer, producer or supplier of products to be audited or certified to which they are to be assigned.

7.1.2 Management of Competence

7.1.2.1 GCMS Group has a procedure QMS-01 which defines the required competence criteria and the need for regular training based on the person's position within the organization.

7.1.2.2 GCMS Group's provides its employees with the ability and the recourses for the completion of any external trainings relevant for the employees' functions.

7.1.2.3 The competence and performance of employees in the Certification Unit (including the performance during the on-site audits) is constantly monitored through a Competency Matrix and approved by GCMS Top Management of the relevant GCMS subsidiary and GCMS Group's Impartiality Committee.

7.1.2.4 Personal records are maintained for each employee which contain their name and address; employer(s) and position(s); educational qualification and professional status; employment agreement; experience and training, competence assessment and performance monitoring records; all in the folders of GCMS SharePoint.

7.1.2.5 Competence assessment is regularly performed for all GCMS Group's personnel involved in Certification activities.

7.1.3 Obligations of Personnel

7.1.3.1 GCMS Group requires that all personnel commit themselves to the compliance with the rules and procedures defined in the GCMS Group's Quality Management System, as well as the requirements specified in certification standards.

7.1.3.2 GCMS Group requires all personnel to declare any situations which may cause a conflict of interest to exist. This information is provided in the mechanism for safeguarding impartiality.

7.2 Resources for Evaluation

7.2.1 Internal Resources

GCMS Group follows the available resources and manage them from the available Competency-Matrix and the Authorization sheet, following the requirements of internal and external standards in all its certification activities.

7.2.2 External Resources

7.2.2.1 All external personnel/subcontractors/Partners involved in the certification should:

a. Meet the requirements of GCMS Group certification standards and comply with the provisions regarding impartiality, confidentiality and independence, at the stage of concluding of an agreement with the relevant GCMS subsidiary.

b. Have a written agreement with the relevant GCMS subsidiary by which they commit themselves to comply with applicable policies, and implement processes as defined by GCMS Group. The agreement shall address issues relating to confidentiality and impartiality and shall require the external recourses to notify the GCMS subsidiary of any existing or prior relationship with any GCMS Group's Clients.

c. Not to be connected directly or through another employer with the organization being audited in such a way as to affect their impartiality and compromise the results.

d. They must agree to fulfil all the requirements specified in this Manual, as well as in the documents specified in the Manual.

7.2.2.2 GCMS Group ensures that all activities performed by external resources are managed in a manner which provides confidence in the results, and that all relevant records are available to justify the confidence. GCMS Group bears all responsibility for work completed by external resources and keeps the records for all external resources used (including the evidence of their competence). GCMS Group or any of its subsidiaries never outsource any decisions on Certification, take full responsibility for the outsourced work and maintain responsibility for granting, maintaining, extending, suspension or withdrawal of Certification.

7.2.2.3 In a case of using of any external resources, GCMS Group shall have a list of approved providers of outsourced activities. This also relates to the GCMS Group personnel when providing services for different GCMS subsidiaries.

7.2.2.4 In a case of any breaches in the contract or any requirements by the external resources immediate corrective actions are taken by the GCMS subsidiary regarding the breach.

7.2.2.5 All GCMS Group's Clients are informed in advance in case of using any external resources and a client is provided with an opportunity to object such use or provide a consent to it.

8 INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS

8.1 Publicly information

8.1.1 GCMS maintains publicly accessible and without request, through a website, information related to: Audit processes, Certification processes, Types of certification schemes in which it operates, the use of GCMS name and certification mark and logo, Processes for handling requests for information, complaints and appeals as well as, Policy on impartiality; Geographical areas in which it operates.

8.1.2 Upon request, GCMS provide information for the status of a given certification; the name, related normative document, scope and geographical location (city and country) for a specific certified client.

8.1.3 GCMS ensure that all information provided to its clients and/or to the marketplace are accurate and not misleading.

8.2 Certification documents

8.2.1 GCMS certification document is following the requirements of the applicable schemes as well as considering that some schemes specific certification template.

8.3 Reference to certification and Use of marks

8.3.1 GCMS developed QMS-10 procedure describing the rules for use of license, certificates and marks of conformity.

8.3.2 Certification scheme mention that it is prohibited to use management system standards logo on the product packaging.

8.3.3 All certified clients at GCMS, get a unique Identification number to ensure traceability of their certification status.

8.3.4 GCMS certification agreement with clients, mentions the rules of use of any statement on product packaging. GCMS mention how it can take action to deal with incorrect references to certification status or misleading use of certification documents, marks or audit reports.

8.4 Confidentiality

GCMS emphasis on the protection of the confidentiality of information is mentioned in the certification agreement, as well as all personnel employed at GCMS signed a Statement of impartiality and confidentiality upon their recruitment.

8.5 Information exchange between GCMS and its clients

8.5.1 GCMS Group provides the following information to its clients and potential Clients (in case of any changes the updated information is provided):

a. A detailed description of the entire certification process, including the Application, review of documents, certification audit, surveillance audits, conditions for issuing, refusing, updating, controlling, expanding/reducing the scope, suspension, revocation and renewal of the certificate and all other necessary information.

b. Requirements on the production of products and all requirements for obtaining a Certificate.

c. The pricelist of all certification services including the procedure for determining the price of certification services.

d. GCMS Group's requirements for the Client to comply with all production and certification requirements, the Client's obligation to inform GCMS Group of any changes in the compound and/or production of the certified product, requirements for the arrangement of all necessary conditions for conducting production audits (including providing all the required documentation during the audit), requirements for the Client to compensate the transportation costs and accommodation expenses of GCMS auditors;

e. Template of Certification Agreement, stating the rights and obligations of the Client.

8.5.2 GCMS Group undertakes the responsibility to inform its clients about any changes in the requirements on the production of products and/or the Certification requirements also changes in the design of issued documents (certificate, logo, etc.). GCMS Group is obligated to provide its clients with a reasonable amount of time to implement the necessary changes in the production/documentation. This time frame is pre-agreed with each Client individually in order to find the best solution for both parties.

8.5.3 Based on the Certification Agreement, the Client is obliged to promptly inform GCMS Group of any changes that may affect compliance with the requirements on Certification, including but not limited to:

a. Legal, commercial, organizational structure or ownership of the Client.

b. Client's organization and/or management.

c. Address or production facilities.

d. Scope of activities related to certification.

e. Major changes in the management systems and/or processes.

GCMS Group must take appropriate actions depending on the information received.

9 PROCESS REQUIREMENTS

9.1 Pre-certification activities

9.1.1 GCMS Group strictly follows the requirements of relevant standards in all its activities. Three separate certification procedures were developed at GCMS respectively for system certification (QMS-15), and two other procedures for product certification following Global G.A.P. scheme (QMS-20) and Organic scheme (QMS-03). Moreover,

GCMS developed its certification scheme (CS-02) for product certification following the involved schemes. These procedures are implemented within all GCMS subsidiaries and shared as a part of publicly available information on the GCMS Group's website.

9.1.2 Potential clients who are interested in GCMS certification services, will apply through its website, by filling an application form for product certification (AF-01) or filling an application form for system certification (AF-02). Application form templates content is following the requirements of both standards ISO/IEC 17021-1 and ISO/IEC 17065.

9.1.3 Application review is done by GCMS certification manager where its main responsibilities are:

- Understanding the client's request and gathering all information needed.
- Audit team selection following the client in the procedure (QMS-09) describing Personnel duties, responsibilities and authorities at GCMS.
- Development of audit program for the full certification cycle, with at least a surveillance audit is conducted once a calendar year, and the calculation of audit time based on the specific scheme requirements and following the audit time calculation procedure (QMS-04).

9.1.4 The audit program should cover information related to client, certification cycle, evaluation process, audit objectives, audit risks as well as, the possibilities of multi-site sampling and multiple management systems standards

9.2 Planning audits

9.2.1 Planning audits is done by auditors/inspectors as described in the certification procedure and applied in the template of audit documents (AD) following the requirements of both standards ISO/IEC 17021-1 and ISO/IEC 17065.

9.2.2 The audit plan is communicated to the client with all its content including audit team members.

9.2.3 In the case of multiple sites or certification to multiple standards, the planning for the audit shall ensure adequate coverage of the scope of certification to provide confidence in the certification.

9.3 Initial Certification

9.3.1 The initial certification process shall include two stages audits where the first one is dedicated to assessing client's readiness for the basic requirements of certification, while the second one is dedicated for the full evaluation against all the requirements of the certification scheme. Stage 2 audit cannot be planned unless the objectives of stage 1 audit are satisfied.

9.3.2 The relevant certification procedures: QMS-15, QMS-20, and QMS-03 are describing the specific requirements concerning the initial certification process, for each one of the related certification schemes.

9.4 Conducting audits

9.4.1 **Opening meeting:** The evaluation team conduct the on-site audit/inspection starting with an opening meeting. Instructions for the content of the opening meeting is included in the instructions for Opening Meeting and Closing Meeting (OMCM).

9.4.2 **Communication during the audit:** The audit team leader distributes the tasks among the auditors and keeps reminding the client about the progress of the audit. The audit team lead must inform the client and the relevant GCMS subsidiary about the actions taken in case of making changes to the audit plan, changing the objectives or scope of the audit, and terminating the audit.

9.4.3 **Audit process:** the audit starts with the first part: the review of documents using sampling method to collect information and evidence about the compliance of client's system with the requirements of the declared standards. The second part is the observation of the premises and organization site with possibility of conducting and interview with personnel. For both parts of the audit, different type of evidences is collected by auditors in total transparency with the client representative to use them later in the audit report.

9.4.4 **Product sampling:** GCMS inspector can take and analyze samples for detecting the use of non-authorized products or substances or for detecting possible contamination by non-authorized products or substances. This is applicable mostly for organic production following the legal requirements of EU 2021/1698). More details about this step are described in procedure of sampling mechanism (QMS-02).

9.4.5 **Audit conclusions:** The audit team meets separately to discuss the collected evidences by each auditor, to identify and classify audit results and summarize them in one document.

9.4.6 **Closing meeting:** A formal closing meeting, considering all participants, should be held with the management of the organization and the representative of its departments involved in the system following the instructions (OMCM). The purpose of this meeting, which is conducted by the audit team lead, is to present the audit findings including an explanation of the non-conformances found. Audit findings are classified in three parts: Good practices, Opportunities for improvement (Recommendations) and Non-conformities description with the related clause from audit criteria. All discrepancies found are discussed with the Client to ensure that the evidence collected is accurate and that the details of the discrepancy are clear to the Client. At the same time, the auditors do not comment or suggest the reasons for the inconsistencies and do not propose solutions to correct the inconsistencies found. The closing meeting includes a notification to the client that the evidence collected during the audit is based on sampling method, thus considering the element of uncertainty; the time frame for the client's provision of a plan for the implementation of measures to eliminate nonconformities discovered during the audit; Information on the complaints and appeals process and other steps prior certification.

9.4.7 **Audit report:** The audit team provides the client with a written report on each audit/inspection. The report template is following the specific schemes requirements, summarizing client's information and audit information. Moreover, it describes the conformity assessment status of the client against the requirements of the certification scheme with detailed description of the evidence collected. Audit conclusion will summarize the total status of conformity of the client towards the certification scheme requirements. In addition to that, the report mentions if an additional full audit, an additional limited audit, or documented evidence (to be confirmed during future surveillance audits) will be needed to verify effective correction and corrective actions.

9.4.8 **Non-conformities follow-up:** At the end of the agreed period, the client shall ensure that all the non-conformances detected in the audit were fully removed, in 30 days maximum. The audit team review and approve the measures implemented to eliminate non-conformances and their effectiveness. After that, the audit team makes new recommendations for a certification decision based on the gathered evidence.

9.5Certification decision

9.5.1 **Review:** Audit report and the report of non-conformities are reviewed by a technical reviewer to confirm the respect of the audit procedure and there is no missing document and/or information for the decision-making step.

9.5.2 **Decision:** The decision-maker assigned by the certification manager of GCMS group, reviews all information and results related to the client's certification process, evaluation reports, effective correction of the non-conformities as well as the recommendation on the certification provided by the auditors. Decisions on granting, suspension, revocation, and refusal of certification, as well as expanding or reducing the scope of certification are made by the decision-maker impartially and following the requirements of the related scheme. GCMS procedures (QMS-11) "Procedure of Granting, Termination, reduction, suspension or withdrawal of certification" describes with details the rules of GCMS group related to this step.

9.5.3 **Certification document:** GCMS group has created its own template of certification, following the requirements of ISO/IEC 17021-1 and ISO/IEC 17065, as well as its annex related to the directory of certified products. Other specific schemes have other requirements for the certification document like Global G.A.P. that requires GCMS to issue the certificate from GLOBAL G.A.P. IT systems, while Organic-EU scheme require GCMS to follow the "MODEL OF CERTIFICATE" in the ANNEX VI of the EU regulation 2018/848.

9.5.4 GCMS Group maintains a current directory of every product and/or system certified by each GCMS subsidiary and the ones authorized to use the GCMS Logo. The directory maintains the client's name and address, the detailed description of the certified product and/or system, certification standard, the date of certification and the certificate expiry date. These documents are part of the publicly available information and are available on GCMS Group's website.

9.5.5 The employees of the relevant GCMS subsidiary regularly review the directory and, in accordance with the selected certification standard, send a reminder about updating the certificate to clients by e-mail 6 months before the expiration of the certificate.

9.5.6 If the Client decides not to renew the certificate or does not manage to go through the certificate renewal procedure before the current expiration date, from the moment the Certificate expires, the client does not have the right to use the certificate and/or logo on its commercial channels and must remove all information about the certification from all sources. If the client decides to extend the validity of the certificate, they must go through a full certification procedure to evaluate the continuous fulfilment of all the requirements of the relevant certification scheme, assessing the changes affecting the activity of the client and the scope of certification.

9.5.7 GCMS Group ensures full compliance with IAF ID 3 requirements for the management of extraordinary events or circumstances affecting the certification procedure. When extraordinary events such as natural disasters, war, political instability, pandemics, or other force majeure situations occur, GCMS Group takes the following steps:

- Assesses the potential impact on certified clients.
- Determines the appropriate response including potential postponement, rescheduling, or modification of certification activities.
- Communicates clearly with clients regarding any changes in audit schedules or requirements.
- Documents all decisions and justifications taken in response to the event.
- Ensures that impartiality and the integrity of certification are not compromised.

9.6 Maintaining certification

9.6.1 **Surveillance:** The activity of the client must be constantly monitored. The onsite audits/inspections must be conducted as often as it is specified in the certification agreement (at least once a year) giving due regard to the requirements of the certification scheme to which the certification has been conducted, type of the non-conformances detected, any complaints received from the client. Regular surveillance audits are carried out on the same principle as certification audits, but the audit duration can be shorter, depending on the complexity of the audited organization, the results of previous audits and the established frequency of surveillance audits

9.6.2 Following the procedure (QMS-11), and in a case of minor breaches found during the surveillance audits, the client shall be presented with an official warning and given certain amount of time to eliminate the breach. If the breaches are not eliminated, the certificate is withdrawn, and the client is forbidden to use the GCMS Group logo.

9.6.3 **Withdrawal:** In case of a very serious breach found during the audit, the certificate is withdrawn immediately, and the client is immediately forbidden to use the GCMS Group's logo.

9.6.4 **Suspension:** In a case of suspension or revocation of the certificate, the client is obliged to return the original copy of the issued certificate to the relevant GCMS subsidiary by registered mail within 10 (ten) business days. If certification is terminated (by request of the client), suspended or withdrawn, the relevant GCMS subsidiary takes actions specified in the appropriate documents and makes all necessary modifications to formal certification documents, public information, authorization for the use of logo, etc., to ensure it provides no indication that the product and/or system is continued to be certified.

9.6.5 **Reduction of scope:** If a scope of certification is reduced, the relevant GCMS subsidiary takes actions specified by appropriate documents and makes all necessary modifications to formal certification documents, public information, authorization for the use of logo, etc., to ensure the reduced scope of certification is clearly communicated to the Client and is clearly specified in certification documentation and public information. If certification is reinstated after suspension, the relevant GCMS subsidiary makes all necessary modifications to formal certification documents, public information, authorization for the use of logo, etc., to ensure all appropriate indications, exist that the organization continues to be certified. If a decision to reduce the scope of certification is made as a condition of reinstatement, the relevant GCMS subsidiary makes all necessary modifications to formal certification documents, public information, authorization for the use of logo, etc., to ensure the reduced scope of certification is clearly communicated to the client and is clearly specified in certification documentation and public information.

9.6.6 **Changes**: All changes affecting certified systems shall be assessed and evaluated to ensure the continued compliance with the certification Scheme. Types of changes include:

• Revision of the certification scheme or standards: GCMS certification manager evaluates the changes of the published standards to determine the period for the client to meet the additional requirements if applicable. Each GCMS subsidiary verifies the implementation of changes by its clients and takes actions required by the certification scheme.

• Request for approval of changes to the certified scope (activity) by the client shall be made with a written request and provide documentation showing these changes.

• Unapproved changes to the certified scope (activity), discovered during surveillance audits are treated as non-conformances and shall follow the relevant procedures.

• Request for certification scope extensions shall follow the procedures for initial certification procedure. The decision about changes approval is documented by GCMS and communicated to the client and if applicable, the amendment is done on the certificate document.

9.7 Complaints and Appeals

9.7.1 Clients has the right to submit a complaint against any part of the certification procedure through GCMS emails or the available communication channels available on the website. GCMS Group has a documented procedure for the management of complaints and appeals directed to any of GCMS subsidiaries which provides the requirements for the recording and tracking of complaints and appeals and actions to resolve them.

9.7.2 The Complains and Appeals Committee is responsible for solving the complaints and appeals. GCMS Group is dedicated to the satisfactory resolution of complaints and appeals.

9.8 Client records

9.8.1 GCMS maintain a journal of recording certification process for each client whatever its status: submitted applications, audited, certified, suspended or withdrawn certificate.

9.8.2 A set of folders created for each client and renewed at every new application that cover: Application information; Audit programs; Audit reports; Certification agreement; Sampling; Auditor time determination; Correction and corrective actions; Records of complaints and appeals; Committee deliberations and decisions; Documentation of the certification decisions; Certification documents.

9.8.3 GCMS keep the records on applicants and clients secure through its SharePoint system with limited access granted to only permitted personnel by GCMS top management, to ensure that the information is kept confidential.

10 MANAGEMENT SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

10.1 General

10.1.1 GCMS develops its management system in compliance with the requirements of both ISO/IEC 17021-1 and ISO/IEC 17065. Option A is considered in developing the management system at GCMS based on the structure of ISO/IEC 17021-1.

- General management system documentation (e.g. manual, policies, definition of responsibilities, etc.…)
- Control of documents
- Control of records
- Management review
- Internal audit
- Corrective actions
- Preventive actions

10.1.2 Top management of GCMS group established GCMS quality policies and determined the objectives for its activities. All personnel of GCMS group are aware about these policies and objectives.

10.1.3 GCMS top management assigned a Quality manager with responsibility of implementing and maintaining the quality management system at GCMS, as well as reporting to the top management the performance and any need for improvement.

10.2 Management system manual

10.2.1 This Quality Manual (QMS-19) is considered as a master document governing the GCMS Group's Quality Management System. The Quality Manual outlines the general principles and policies of GCMS Group in regard to the requirements stated in the relevant standards as well as the Certification Scheme. The specific details of certification activities and responsibilities are included in the Quality System procedures. All Quality System procedures are referenced in this document. The entire Quality System is linked as a network, and all Quality System documents can be found this Quality Manual.

10.2.2 All personnel are provided access to the Quality Management System, and they are required to get acquainted with its content soon after hiring. They are encouraged to report any improprieties observed to GCMS top management or the quality manager.

10.2.1 GCMS Group quality manager is responsible for the monitoring of the system and the achievement of the quality objectives through quality mechanisms and the assessment of KPIs (Key Performance Indicators).

10.3 Control of documents and records

10.3.1 GCMS Group has a separate procedure (QMS-08) "Documents and records control procedure", describing the rules for managing internal and external documents within GCMS Group as well as the retention of its records. The documents" registration journal (DRJ) is recording all the internal and external documents with their current version and dates of approval and/or modification.

10.3.2 GCMS Group maintains records on the certification activities for all its clients, including all organizations whatever their status: submitted applications, audited, certified, or with certification suspended or withdrawn. GCMS Group retains all records generated during the certification process of an individual certified product, which provide evidence that all the certification requirements are fulfilled. GCMS Group creates a directory file on the online server as well as the hard copy for each Client. All data, correspondence, notes and records related to the Client are maintained in these files.

10.4 Management review

10.4.1 GCMS Group's Top Management conducts a complete review of GCMS Group's activities and the quality management system, on an annual basis, in accordance with the relevant Management Review Procedure (QMS-13).

10.4.2 The Management review requires inputs collected from all GCMS subsidiaries including:

- Results of internal and external audits.
- Feedback from clients and interested parties.
- Safeguarding impartiality.
- The status of corrective actions.

- The status of actions to address risks.
- Follow-up actions from previous management reviews.
- The fulfilment of objectives.
- Changes that could affect the management system.
- Appeals and complaints.

10.4.3 The outputs from the management review include the decisions and an action plan for the improvements needed for the management system; any resources needed and the revision of GCMS policies and objectives.

10.4.4 The management review report (MRR) is used to record process of management review with all matters discussed during the meeting and approved by the top management.

10.5 Internal audits

10.5.1 GCMS develop its Internal audit procedure (QMS-12) to organize the regular internal audits that are conducted within GCMS Group to verify the compliance of its activities and its quality management system towards the requirements of applicable schemes.

10.5.2 The internal audit is conducted annually, involving all GCMS branches, to ensure that Group's quality management system is effectively implemented and maintained.

10.5.3 Internal audit report (IAR) is recording the results of the internal audits separately for system certification according to ISO/IEC17021-1 and for product certification according to ISO/IEC17065.

10.6 Corrective actions and Preventive actions

10.6.1 GCMS Group developed a procedure "Non-conformities Identification and Management" (QMS-06) to identify, document, and analyze quality management system's non-conformances and implement corrective actions.

11. QUALITY MANAUAL REVIEW

GCMS quality manual is reviewed after any changes in the requirements of external standards and regulations or in case of changes in GCMS accreditation scopes. This current version, all changes and any upcoming updates are approved by GCMS top management.