SRP ASSURANCE SCHEME 2.0 FAQ

What is the SRP Assurance Scheme?

The SRP Assurance Scheme and 'SRP-Verified' on-pack Label are based on the SRP Standard for Sustainable Rice Cultivation and provide a system for supply chain actors to procure SRP-Verified rice and make sustainability claims for rice produced using proven, climate-smart sustainable best practices. Launched in September 2020, the system helps boost incomes for smallholder farmers and enhances their market access.

Independent third-party audits provide supply chain actors with a robust and credible framework to de-risk their supply chains, while the on-pack SRP-Verified Label empowers consumers to choose products that directly support efforts to boost farmer livelihoods while reducing the social and environmental impact of rice farming.

How will the SRP Assurance Scheme 2.0 work?

Version 2.0 of the SRP Assurance Scheme provides an updated framework for third-party assessment of compliance with the SRP Standard for Sustainable Rice Cultivation and the SRP Chain of Custody Standard and applies to all related assurance activity from 1 January 2024. It supersedes and replaces version 1.3 of the Assurance Scheme, which ceases to apply from the same date.

The Scheme can also serve as a performance and improvement tool for those who are not proceeding immediately to third-party verification.

What has changed in Version 2.0?

Version 2.0 introduces important changes to our verification process, resulting in large measure from user feedback. These changes are designed to enhance the efficiency, transparency, and cost-effectiveness of the scheme, and further strengthen our alignment with global best practices under the ISEAL Assurance Code. From 1 January 2024 the Assurance Scheme will be overseen and managed directly by the SRP Secretariat rather than via an external Assurance Service Provider. The Secretariat will directly engage with Conformity Assessment Bodies (CAB) to implement the Scheme and has established the SRP Assurance Platform to manage audits and monitor data directly.

When will the Assurance Scheme 2.0 become effective?

The Assurance Scheme 2.0 will be effective from 1 January 2024, Current Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) will enjoy a six-month transition period, that includes calibration training for qualified auditors.

What is a Conformity Assessment Body?

A Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) is an entity authorized by SRP to issue a third-party verification statement confirming specified compliance requirements have been fulfilled by the supply chain actor. This terminology replaces the term 'Verification Body' in Version 1,3 of the Assurance Scheme.

What steps should an existing Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) take to ensure compliance and effectiveness?

Existing Verification Bodies (VBs) need to re-register as CABs under Version 2.0, and also need to sign a new License and Registration Agreement (LRA) directly with SRP before 31 December 2023 to ensure continuity of their authorization status. Also, new agreements between the CAB and Contracting Parties (producers or producer group and participating operators) must be signed in order to undertake SRP Verification Audits.

What is the process for applying to become a Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) for SRP?

An entity seeking to participate in the SRP Assurance Scheme as a third-party Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) should complete the SRP CAB Application Form and provide any required supplementary documentation.

Are there changes to the three levels of assurance?

The terminology pertaining to assurance levels has been revised to ensure clarity, and differentiate assurance (based on independent third-party audits) from internal or second-party assessment:

- **Internal assessment**: assessment of compliance with the SRP Standard for Sustainable Rice Cultivation performed by peers, members of an IMS Team or an appointed external party (other than an approved CAB) on behalf of the producer.

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- **Second-party assessment**: assessment activity performed by an entity or a person linked to the producer or producer group being assessed.
- **Third-party assessment**: assessment activity performed by an approved CAB that is independent of the producer or producer group being assessed.

The Assurance Scheme 2.0 focuses primarily on third-party assessment as a basis for claiming SRP Standard compliance. Internal assessment remains part of the process for the third-party assessment, which will allow sustainability claims and on-pack label use. It is important to note that without engagement of CABs, internal assessments alone is insufficient to allow SRP claims or use of the SRP-Verified on-pack label. The rules, requirements and permitted claims under second-party assessment are covered by additional rules currently under development.

From 1 January 2024, all third-party assessments will be registered on the SRP Assurance Platform managed directly by the SRP Secretariat. Producers or producer group and participating operators verified through third-party assessments are eligible to make SRP claims and use the SRP-Verified on-pack label in accordance with the SRP Assurance Scheme 2.0 and provisions stipulated in the [SRP Brand Manual & Claim Guidelines](#).

How is the Assurance Scheme 2.0 fee structured?

The fee structure covers assurance for both the SRP Standard for Sustainable Rice Cultivation (Farm Standard) and the SRP Chain of Custody Standard (value chain assurance). For details, please refer to the SRP Assurance Scheme Fee Structure, available at the SRP website – or [download here](#).

Why is SRP not using an external Assurance Service Provider?

To streamline and simplify the system for our users, and based on user feedback, SRP will integrate oversight and management of the Assurance Program directly under the SRP Secretariat. This includes data management via the new SRP Assurance Platform database system. This has been made possible by boosting Secretariat technical capacity and learning from our experiences since launch.

What is the SRP Assurance Platform?

The Platform is a portal and web-based database for data entry, storage and analysis, based on the ChainPoint framework. The SRP Assurance Platform will be hosted and managed directly by the SRP Secretariat and will support overall oversight of CABs and registered participants in the SRP Assurance Scheme.

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Who is responsible for overseeing and managing the Assurance Scheme within SRP Assurance Scheme 2.0?

All aspects of the Assurance Scheme will be managed directly by the SRP Secretariat, with the SRP Standard & Assurance Manager serving as the primary contact.

What is the process for existing qualified SRP Authorized Trainers and auditors to maintain their qualifications under Version 2.0?

SRP training modules are currently being updated to align with Version 2.0 and will be shared with Authorized Training Providers.

The SRP Secretariat will organize and host two pilot refresher sessions followed by exams before 31 March 2024. This offers flexibility in scheduling for trainers who can participate according to their respective schedule. These sessions will be available free of charge to Authorized Trainers and In-house Trainers only.

Following the Pilot Sessions, Authorized Training Service Providers are encouraged to arrange their own independent training sessions to offer training on Version 2.0, to be completed by 30 June 2024.

Authorized Trainers, In-house Trainers and auditors are all expected to calibrate and pass the refresher exam by 30 June 2024 (within six months of launch of Version 2.0), either through the SRP Pilot Session (Authorized Trainers and In-house Trainers) or by participating in training courses offered by any of SRP's Authorized Training Service Providers. Successful Trainers and Auditors will receive a new certificate of recognition.

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