



Cotton made in Africa (CmiA) Verification Process



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Based on the framework of the CmiA Verification, the CmiA Verification documents have been developed by the AbTF with specific contributions by its members and further experts and in cooperation with PricewaterhouseCoopers Aktiengesellschaft Wirtschaftsprüfungsgesellschaft.



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1. Introduction

1. The document describes the complete verification life cycle from the engagement of the verifier to the submission of the final report.
2. The objective of this document is
 - To clarify roles and responsibilities of the affected parties, such as Verification Management, the verifier and the Managing Entity.
 - To provide insights into the process of the on-site verification visit and to give an indication of the expected timeframe.

2. Engagement of the verifier

3. The verifier is selected by Verification Management to perform the verification of a Managing Entity from the list of trained and registered verifiers. Prior to the selection a request for proposal is sent to at least 3 potential verifiers if available at least 2 months prior to the deadline of the verification. It includes an indication about the size of the CmiA Unit, the geographic requirements as well as specifications about data to be collected for the impact assessment.
4. The selection criteria of the verifier may include without order of priority,
 - Qualification
 - Price and effort estimate
 - Geographic distance
 - Track record

NOTE: Verifiers may also be proposed by the Managing Entity subject to assessment by Verification Management. Nevertheless the Verifiers have to be registered once.

5. The selected verifier receives the standardised engagement letter, including a confidentiality agreement.
6. The Verification Management sends a verification notification to the Managing Entity of the CmiA Unit to inform about the upcoming verification. The Managing Entity should be advised that key staff is available at the time of the verification. The duration of verification should be indicated.
7. The verification management sends out the verification notification together with the management brief. The Managing Entity needs detailed information on the proceedings, requirements and expectations which are summarised in the management brief. In addition, a document request list is sent out to the Managing Entity, listing potential documents that should be available on site, or need to be sent prior to the verification respectively.
8. **Recommended engagement templates:**
 - Request for proposal (RFP)
 - Engagement letter
 - Verification notification and management brief

3. Preparation of verification

9. The engaged verifier receives the latest verification report, the latest inter office memorandum as well as the self assessment from verification management (not applicable for initial verification) at least 1 month prior to the verification.
10. The verifier gets in contact with the Managing Entity in order to inform about the upcoming verification visit and to clarify organisational details and logistics at least 3 weeks prior to the verification.
11. Documents that should be provided by the Managing Entity to the verifier *prior* to the verification include:
 - The self assessments undertaken since the last verification
 - The last verification report (not relevant for initial verification)
 - The impact assessment' baseline study
 - The management plan
 - Progress reports relevant to specific criteria, if available
 - Information on any major incidents or complaints
12. If documents are not available, the Managing Entity should provide an appropriate explanation on the document request list.
13. The documents are submitted by the Managing Entity to the verifier at least 3 weeks prior to the verification on-site.
14. The verifier conducts the formal review of the documents. The Verifier then analyses the delivered documentation to plan and prepare for the verification visit.
15. Based on the additional information from the CmiA Unit, the Verifier defines the verification plan. The plan includes the following details:
 - Schedule of the verification visit (dates and timing)
 - Individuals from management and stakeholders to be required for the opening meeting or an interview, if possible to be specified before verification on-site
 - Initial questions arising from the document review



16. The proposed plan is to be submitted to Verification Management for review at least 2 weeks before the verification visit.
17. One week before the actual visit, the Verifier submits the verification plan to the Managing Entity.
18. **Recommended preparation templates and tools:**
 - Verification report
 - Inter office memorandum
 - Self assessment, including information on size and structure of CmiA Unit
 - Document request list
 - Verification plan

4. Performance of verification

19. Once on site, the verifier conducts the opening meeting with the responsible management as well as relevant stakeholders if required. The objective of the opening meeting is to inform about the objectives and to clarify open questions on the proceedings of the verification visits. Standard items such as those listed below will have to be covered on the agenda as a minimum requirement:
 - Presentation
 - Objectives of the verification visit
 - Clarification of roles and responsibilities
 - Proceedings and agreement on the planned schedule
 - Expectations and requirements of the verifier as well as the managing entity
 - Recent events, issues, incidents related to or affecting the criteria or the sustainability matrix
 - Other open issues or questions
20. The Verifier shall now have enough information to lead/undertake the subsequent management interview. It makes sense to open the management interview with a brief description of the CmiA Unit and an overview of the business model or campaign cycle. The duration of the management interview depends on the size of the CmiA Unit as well as the level of complexity (e.g. number of farmers, business model) and the accessibility of information. It might be necessary to come back with specific questions to management in the course of the ongoing verification.
21. During the management interview comfort is to be gained on the management capacities as well as the overall awareness and control. The verifier may use the management interview questionnaire as support.
22. Following the management interview, the verifier examines the available/provided documents to collect supporting evidence for the interview results and to build a first opinion. This opinion should reflect the verifiers' level of comfort and helps the verifier to structure subsequent verification work.
23. Ideally, all the above-mentioned activities take place on day one and two of the site visit.
24. From day two onwards the field checks are to be performed. The Verifier should obtain sufficient supporting evidence for the confirmation of the Self Assessment.



25. **Recommended performance templates and tools:**

- Opening meeting agenda
- Management interview questionnaire
- Verification report template

5. Reporting results of verification

26. Concluding the strategic and operational verification, the verifier documents and summarises the verification results. Continuously, the verifier needs to check if reasonable comfort with the verification results is achieved. Otherwise, further action steps are required (e.g. additional interviews, field checks etc.).
27. The reporting of the verification results requires the organisation of the evidence into the following categories:
 - Critical findings (supported with sufficient evidence per criteria tested)
 - Risks identified
 - Observations from field checks and interviews
 - Potential Improvement opportunities identified
 - Progress with regard to the management plan
28. The Verifier uses the respective tables in the verification report template to document the verification trail as well as the results.
29. On the closing of the last day on site a final meeting with the managing entity will take place to present and discuss the verification results, i.e. the findings, observations and risks, potential improvement opportunities as well as the ratings to obtain a mutual agreement. The results of the meeting are to be documented and form part of the verification report.
30. The verifier completes and signs the verification report as well as a declaration of completion. The managing entity signs the declaration of completion.
31. The verification report, the declaration of completion and the inter-office memorandum are sent to the Verification Management. The Managing Entity receives the declaration of completion as well as the verification report.
32. The Managing Entity fills in a quality questionnaire of the verification to be sent to the Aid by Trade Foundation (optional).
33. **Recommended reporting templates and tools:**
 - Report template, including declaration of completion



- Inter office memorandum
- Quality questionnaire of verification