

Guideline for Certification Bodies, Auditors, Evaluators and Certifiers

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Note: For easier readability, the male form is used in the text for personal designations. Nevertheless, the information refers to members of both genders.

This Guideline describes the requirements that must be met by certification bodies and auditors, evaluators and certifiers for purposes of VLOG auditing and certification.

VLOG certificates will only be recognised if the requirements of this Guideline are met by the auditors, evaluators and certifiers and the certification body, and the certification body is recognised by VLOG.

In addition to the requirements to be met by certification bodies, auditors, evaluators and certifiers, this Guideline also details the approval process for certification bodies.

The list of recognised certification bodies is posted on the VLOG homepage (<https://www.ohnegentechnik.org/zertifizierer/>).

1 Certification Bodies

1.1 Requirements for Certification Bodies

1.1.1 Accreditation

The certification body must demonstrably hold a valid accreditation according to ISO/IEC 17065 in at least one standard for the food and feed industry/ agricultural business.

1.1.2 Quality Management

The certification body's quality management system must describe, ensure, implement and document the following items with respect to VLOG certification/the VLOG Standard:

- **Organisation and responsibility within the certification body**
 - The head of the certification body and the contact person for VLOG and at least one deputy for each must be listed by name.
- **Independence and objectivity of the certification body and the auditors for the activity**
 - The certification body must ensure the independence and objectivity of its certification activities.
 - The certification body must provide sufficient staff to ensure independence and objectivity.
The business and staff must act independently and have had no family/private ties to the businesses to be audited (for at least the last 2 years preceding the audit). Staff members may not have any business relationship with the business to be audited.
- **Auditing and certification**
 - The performance, documentation and evaluation of the audits and certifications must follow the procedure described in the VLOG Standard. In case of suspicious activities of a

VLOG-certified business¹, the certification body will perform additional unannounced audits addressing the suspected problem and will notify the VLOG Head Office.

- **Handling of complaints and protests**

- A documented procedure for handling internal and external complaints and objections from customers, standard owners, authorities or other third parties has been introduced, which incorporates VLOG certification.
- A documented procedure for handling deviations and suspicious activities with respect to VLOG-certified businesses has been introduced.

- **Crisis management**

- A documented crisis management system has been set up, which incorporates VLOG certification.
- The Crisis Management Officers for VLOG are listed by name.

- **Qualifications of auditors/evaluators/certifiers**

- The staff employed by the certification body must have the qualifications described in Chapter 2.
- The certification body must describe the requirements for qualification as an auditor/evaluator/certifier in its quality management system and in the relevant training and professional qualification documents.
- The certification body must review and confirm the technical qualifications and expertise of the auditors/evaluators/certifiers, and only use qualified and trained staff.
- As part of this review, the certification body must conduct at least one witness audit of auditors in each **qualification area**² ~~stage~~ within five years. This witness audit can also be conducted as part of a combined audit with other quality standards.

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- **Auditor training in the VLOG audit procedure provided by the certification body**

- Participation in an internal VLOG training course
- Participation in a VLOG-approved initial training course
- Before independently conducting VLOG routine audits:
 - **Every Auditor perform at least 2 VLOG audits under the control and guidance of an experienced and qualified VLOG auditor and** ~~At least 2 VLOG routine audits as lead auditor and~~
 - **Attend an experienced and qualified VLOG auditor for** ~~at least 2 VLOG routine audits as co-auditor or attendant~~

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¹ The following suspicious activities may constitute grounds for an audit:

- Information from the industry
- Discrepancies noted during certificate monitoring at the business
- Cross-checks
- Current food scandals
- Information from VLOG

² The following 3 qualification areas exist:

Agricultural business, agricultural business group organisation
Logistics (feed), feed manufacturing, matrix certification
Food processing, logistics (food), retail

- These audits must be conducted at the ~~stages~~ **qualification areas** in which the auditor will conduct VLOG audits | changed
 - ~~If the Auditor performs who are to conduct~~ VLOG audits at multiple ~~stages~~ **qualification areas, he** must successfully complete at least 3 VLOG routine audits per ~~stage~~ **qualification area, of which he is supervised and act as lead auditor of** in at least one audit **by an experienced and qualified VLOG auditor.** | changed
 - The certification body must promptly discuss all training audits with the attending auditor, document and evaluate them, and devise any appropriate measures.
 - If new ~~stages~~ **qualifiaction areas** are added, auditors must successfully complete at least 3 VLOG routine audits at the new ~~stage~~ **qualification area, and will be supervised by an experienced and qualified VLOG auditor** ~~act as lead auditor of at least one audit.~~ | changed
 - After training has been completed, the certification body will decide whether the auditor is authorised to conduct VLOG audits independently. This decision must be documented.
- **Evaluator/certifier training on the VLOG audit procedure provided by the certification body**
 - Participation in an internal VLOG training course
 - Participation in a VLOG-approved initial training course
 - After training has been completed, the certification body will decide whether the evaluator/certifier is authorised to evaluate/certify VLOG audits independently. This decision must be documented.

Additional for certifier³:

- Every certifier must attend 5 routine audits in at least one quality standard (e.g., QS, GLOBAL G.A.P, IFS, GMP+, Öko, etc.) before conducting independent VLOG-certifications.

1.1.3 Staff Registration with VLOG

Initial recognition of the certification body:

The certification body must register all VLOG auditors with VLOG (notification sheet) before they conduct independent VLOG audits.

The certification body must register all VLOG evaluators and VLOG certifiers with VLOG (notification sheet) before they independently evaluate/certify VLOG audits.

Maintaining the recognition of the certification body

Following the recognition, the certification body must provide an overview of the personnel (auditors, evaluators and certifiers) to be assigned to VLOG certifications in the following year (notification sheet) by the end of the respective year (i.e. 31 December xxxx).

1.1.4 Contract with Non-Exclusive Auditors

The certification body must sign a contract with all non-exclusive or self-employed auditors, in which auditors agree to the terms of the VLOG Integrity Programme and to inclusion in the penalty procedure.

³ Applies to certifiers who certify VLOG audits for the first time after 01.01.2020.

1.1.5 Four-Eyes Principle

The “four-eyes” principle must be used for audits and certification according to the VLOG Standard. Auditor are not permitted to make final decisions on certification for audits they performed in person.

The certification body must have sufficient staff for evaluating and certifying VLOG audits. Evaluation and certification may be performed by the same person.

1.1.6 Handling of Documents

All documents, including training materials, which prove the qualifications of the certification body's personnel and the auditors must be available at the certification body and provided to VLOG if requested.

The certification body must retain all documents and records documenting the certification decision-making process so they can be submitted to VLOG upon request.

If documents are not available in English or German, they must be conveyed to VLOG in English or German, upon request by VLOG. The translation costs shall be borne by the certification body.

1.1.7 Internal Training

Before participating in VLOG-approved initial training, the relevant auditors, evaluators and certifiers must participate in an internal VLOG training⁴ course provided by the certification body.

The certification body must consistently provide internal VLOG training to all VLOG auditors, evaluators and certifiers at least once a year and on an “as-needed” basis.

The internal training must at least cover the relevant general and stage-specific requirements of the VLOG Standard, the requirements for auditors and certification bodies, the use of the “VLOG geprüft” and “Ohne GenTechnik” seals and the sequence of the VLOG certification process. These topics may also be integrated into other ISO/IEC 17065-based training courses.

The certification body must create a training programme to qualify auditors, evaluators and certifiers and must maintain documentation of their participation in an internal training course. This is the prerequisite for participating in a VLOG-approved external initial or advanced training course.

For auditors, evaluators and certifiers operating in more than one qualification area in the VLOG system and attend stage-specific external VLOG training, the certification body shall ensure that the content of the other relevant stages that are not covered by the external training is communicated to staff.

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1.1.8 Transmission of Audit Documents to VLOG

The certification body must upload the audit results/audit documents designated in Table 1 to the VLOG ECERT database in German or English, no later than eight weeks after the VLOG audit.

Instructions regarding the VLOG certification body portal, including the annexes, are available at the following link: <https://www.ohnegentechnik.org/anleitungen-ecert/>.

⁴ Training may consist of individual instruction.

Table 1: Overview of the Audit Documents to be Submitted to VLOG

Audit type/Stage	Audit Documents to be Submitted
Individual certification (initial or routine audits)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current facility description • Completed VLOG checklist(s) • VLOG certificate • Other certification-related documents, if necessary (e.g. list of raw materials or products, summary of traceability etc.)
Group certifications (initial or routine audits)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current group description • Completed VLOG checklist of group organiser • VLOG certificate • Members list • Upon request by VLOG, the certification body must promptly make available to VLOG the following documents in German or English⁵: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - audit documents of the group members - Current list of members
Matrix certification: (initial or routine audit)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current matrix description • Completed VLOG checklist of matrix organiser • VLOG certificate • Site list • Upon request by VLOG, the certification body must promptly make available to VLOG the following documents in German or English⁵: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - audit documents of the matrix members and matrix sites - Current list of sites
Expansion audit/follow-up audit/audits for cause:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VLOG checklist • VLOG certificate, if applicable • Other certification-related documents, if necessary

1.1.9 Participation in the VLOG Certification Bodies' Meeting

The certification body must participate in the annual VLOG certification bodies' meeting. The certification body delegates a decision-maker (e.g. certifier) to the VLOG certification bodies' meeting.

⁵ The certification body must cover the translation costs.

1.2 Recognition of Certification Bodies

The application for VLOG recognition and the supporting documents must be submitted directly to VLOG in German or English.⁶ VLOG will examine the documents submitted and inform the applying certification body of the result of the examination.

In the event of recognition, VLOG will issue a certification-body-specific VLOG recognition number and include the certification body in the list of VLOG-recognised certification bodies.

Certification bodies that already have VLOG recognition as of 31 December 2019 or that are listed as VLOG recognised certification bodies must receive a new recognition within one year (i.e. by 31 December 2020). The documents identified in Chapter 1.2.3 must be submitted to VLOG to maintain recognition.

1.2.1 Documents to be Submitted for Initial Recognition as of 1 January 2020

The certification body must submit the following documents for initial recognition by VLOG:

- Accreditation certificate in accordance with ISO/IEC 17065 (certified translation⁷ into German or English if the certificate was issued in a different language)
- Application for VLOG recognition of certification bodies (master data sheet)
- Notification sheet for auditors, evaluators and certifiers⁸
- Training certificate indicating successful completion of VLOG-approved VLOG training for at least one auditor and one evaluator/certifier
- Signed Recognition Agreement in duplicate (with the originals sent by regular mail)

1.2.2 Maintenance of Recognition

Recognition of the certification body will be maintained under the following conditions:

- Submission of the current accreditation certificate in accordance with ISO/IEC 17065 on the certification body's own initiative within four weeks of (re-)issuance
- Notification of changes to the master data for the certification body (e.g. contact person) on the certification body's own initiative
- Participation in the annual VLOG certification bodies' meeting
- Submission by the end of the year (i.e., 31 December xxxx) of an overview of the planned VLOG personnel assignments for the following year (auditors, evaluators and certifiers)

1.2.3 Maintenance of Recognition by a Certification Body Already Recognised by VLOG

The certification body must submit the following documents until 31.12.2020 to maintain its recognition if it was already recognised by VLOG as of 31 December 2019:

- Accreditation certificate in accordance with ISO/IEC 17065 (certified translation⁵ into German or English if the certificate was in a different language)
- Application for VLOG recognition of certification bodies (master data sheet)
- Notification sheet for auditors, evaluators and certifiers⁸

⁶ VLOG or the service provider assigned by VLOG will request any missing or incomplete documents/evidence from the applying certification body. If the documents are incomplete after a second follow-up request, the application may be rejected.

⁷ The certification body must cover the translation costs.

⁸ Either one notification sheet per person or an overview of all persons must be submitted as notification of auditors, evaluators and certifiers

- Signed Recognition Agreement in duplicate (with the originals sent by regular mail)

1.2.4 Documents to be Submitted for Renewing Recognition as a Certification Body

The certification body must submit the following documents to renew its recognition by VLOG:

- Accreditation certificate in accordance with ISO/IEC 17065 (certified translation⁹ into German or English if the certificate was issued in a different language)
 - Application for VLOG recognition of certification bodies (master data sheet)
 - Proof of implementation of the corrective measures established by VLOG and the certification body for purposes of recognition renewal
 - Signed Recognition Agreement in duplicate (with the originals sent by regular mail)
 - Additional documents and/or evidence, if necessary
 - Consent to a fee-based integrity audit within six months after recognition renewal
-

2 Auditors, Evaluators and Certifiers

2.1 Requirements for Auditors

2.1.1 General Requirements

- Non-exclusive or self-employed auditors must sign an agreement with the respective certification body in which they agree to the terms of the VLOG Integrity Programme and to inclusion in the penalty procedure.
- Auditors must comply with the audited business's and the certification body's procedures for non-disclosure of information and records.
- Auditors must provide the certification body with all relevant information regarding their qualifications.
- Auditors must comply with the Code of Conduct and the auditing principles of DIN EN ISO 19011.
- Auditors may not conduct audits of businesses, producers or producer groups for which they provided consulting services within the last two years or with which they have and/or had a business, personal and/or family relationship.
- Auditors may not carry out routine audits in the same business on more than three sequential occasions

2.1.2 Training and Professional Experience

The auditors assigned to VLOG certification must have the training or technical qualifications related to agriculture, feed or food as specified in Table 2. Credit may be given for at least 2 years of relevant professional experience at the respective stage or sub-stage, irrespective of the qualifications listed in Table 2. The certification body will decide whether to recognise the professional experience of its personnel and justify its determination in writing.

⁹ The certification body must cover the translation costs.

Table 2: Necessary qualifications for VLOG auditors, evaluators and/or certifiers

Stage/sub-stage Qualification	Logistics		Feed production		Matrix certification	Agriculture		Agricultural group organisation	Food processing/preparation	Retail - Sale of bulk food of animal origin
	Trading, handling, storage, drop shipping, private labelling of feed	Trading, handling, storage, drop shipping of food	Feed production	Mobile grinding and mixing facilities	Matrix organiser	Animal farming and plant-based production	Animal transport/livestock trade	Group organiser	Food processing, preparation	Retail group certification
Graduate engineering /Bachelor's/ Master's degree in agricultural sciences or equivalent	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X*	
Degree from a two-year agricultural college	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X*	
Completion of a master craftsman's exam in agriculture	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X*	
Professional training in an agriculture-related business (including miller, compound feed technician) + special knowledge	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X*	
Veterinarian + special knowledge		X				X	X	X	X	X
Graduate engineering /Bachelor's/ Master's		X					X	X	X	X

		Logistics		Feed production		Matrix certification	Agriculture	Agricultural group organisation	Food processing/preparation	Retail - Sale of bulk food of animal origin	
Qualification	Stage/sub-stage	Trading, handling, storage, drop shipping, private labelling of feed	Trading, handling, storage, drop shipping of food	Feed production	Mobile grinding and mixing facilities	Matrix organiser	Animal farming and plant-based production	Animal transport/livestock trade	Group organiser	Food processing, preparation	Retail group certification
		degree in food technology/chemistry, food technologist									
	Graduate engineering /Bachelor's/ Master's degree (univ./college) in ecotrophology		X					X	X	X	X
	Graduate engineering /Bachelor's/ Master's degree in biology (+ special knowledge of each area)						X	X	X		
	Professional training in the food processing industry		X					X	X	X	X

X*exclusively includes auditing, evaluation and certification of packing centres for eggs

added

2.1.3 Auditing Experience

For Initial Recognition:

Auditors must have conducted at least 10 complete audits in at least one quality standard accredited under ISO/IEC 17065 (e.g., QS, GLOBAL G.A.P, IFS, GMP+, Öko, etc.) in the past two years at various businesses/facilities for each reported ~~stage~~ **qualification area** (agricultural business/agricultural business group organisation, logistics (feed)/feed manufacturing/matrix certification, logistics (food)/food production/retail). Auditors must have acted as lead auditor or co-auditor in at least five of these audits. Training audits according to 1.1.2 can be taken into account here.

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For Maintenance of Recognition

VLOG auditors must successfully complete at least 5 VLOG routine audits per year in the **qualification area** agricultural business/**agricultural group organisation** ~~stage~~ during the VLOG training certificate's period of validity (Note: This also includes QA audits with the VLOG supplementary module).

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During the VLOG training certificate's period of validity, VLOG auditors must successfully complete at least 3 VLOG routine audits, respectively, in the **qualification area** logistics (feed)/feed manufacturing/matrix certification,, logistics (food)/ food production/processing/retail ~~stages~~ at various facilities¹⁰ (Note: This also includes QA audits with the VLOG supplementary module).

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2.1.4 Training on the VLOG Auditing Procedure by the Certification Body

The certification body has to train auditors on the VLOG auditing procedure in accordance with Chapter 1.1.2.

2.1.5 Training

Auditors must hold a valid VLOG training certificate (cf. VLOG training concept).

If an auditor operates in the VLOG system in more than one qualification area (e.g. agriculture and feed production and attends a stage-specific external VLOG training (e.g. agriculture), the auditor receives the contents of the other relevant qualification areas that are not part of the external training (e.g. feed production) from the certification body.

added

Before participating in a VLOG-approved initial training course, auditors must participate in an internal VLOG training course provided by the certification body (cf. Chapter 1.1.7).

The auditor must participate in an internal VLOG training course provided by the certification body at least once per year (cf. Chapter1.1.7).

2.2 Requirements for Evaluators/Certifiers

The following requirements apply to certification body personnel who carry out the evaluation of auditing documents and/or make certification decisions.

¹⁰ For certification bodies that have less than 3 VLOG certified companies per qualification area contracted, the required audits do not have to be carried out at different companies.

2.2.1 General Requirements

- Evaluators/certifiers must comply with the audited business's and the certification body's procedures for the confidential treatment of information and records.
- Evaluators/certifiers must comply with the Code of Conduct and the auditing principles of DIN EN ISO 19011.
- Evaluators/certifiers may not evaluate/certify businesses, producers or producer groups for which they provided consulting services within the last two years or with which they have and/or had a business, personal and/or family relationship.

2.2.2 Training and Professional Experience

Evaluators/certifiers assigned to VLOG certification must have the training or technical qualifications related to agriculture, feed or food specified in Table 2.

Credit may be given for at least 2 years of relevant professional experience at the respective stage or sub-stage, irrespective of the qualifications listed in Table 2. The certification body will decide whether to recognise the professional experience of its personnel and justify its determination in writing.

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2.2.3 Training in the VLOG Auditing Procedure by the Certification Body

The certification body must train evaluators/certifiers in the VLOG auditing procedure in accordance with Chapter 1.1.2.

2.2.4 Training

Evaluators/certifiers must hold a valid VLOG training certificate (cf. VLOG training concept).

If an evaluator/ certifier is in the VLOG system for in more than one qualification area (e.g. agriculture and feed production) and attends a stage-specific external VLOG training (e.g. agriculture), the auditor receives the contents of the other relevant qualification areas that are not part of the external training (e.g. feed production) from the certification body.

added

Before participating in a VLOG-approved initial training course, evaluators/certifiers must participate in an internal VLOG training course provided by the certification body (cf. Chapter 1.1.7).

The evaluator/certifier must participate in an internal VLOG training course provided by the certification body at least once per year (cf. Chapter 1.1.7).

2.3 Registration of Auditors, Evaluators and Certifiers

Certification bodies must register their personnel directly with VLOG in accordance with Chapter 1.1.3 and 1.2. VLOG will check the submitted documents for completeness and inform the relevant certification body of the results of its examination. In case of the initial recognition of a certification body, all auditors/evaluators/certifiers must be registered with VLOG before they can be assigned tasks in the VLOG system.

In addition to the notification sheet, certification bodies must submit the following documents at the request of VLOG or have them inspected by VLOG during VLOG Integrity audits:

- CV of auditor/evaluator or certifier

- Proof of technical qualifications/professional training
- Proof of internal VLOG training course(s)

Additional documentation for auditors:

- List of audits¹¹ (list of at least 10 audits in at least one recognised quality standard (e.g., QS, GLOBAL G.A.P, IFS, GMP+, Öko, etc.) within the last two years)
- Proof of training in the VLOG auditing procedure (List of all VLOG co-audits and lead audits¹²)
- List¹² of all successfully completed VLOG audits

Additional documentation for evaluators/certifiers:

- Proof(s) of internal VLOG training course(s)
- Proof of training in the VLOG auditing procedure (List¹² of all VLOG co-audits)

3 Fees

The recognition of a certification body and the maintenance thereof in accordance is subject to fees in accordance with the VLOG Fee Schedule.

The recognition fee is payable even if the application is rejected.

4 Applicable Documents

- Current version of the “Ohne Gentechnik” Production and Certification Standard
- VLOG training programme in the current version
- Recognition Agreement
- Application for VLOG recognition of certification bodies in the version valid at the time
- Notification sheet for auditors, evaluators and certifiers in the version valid at the time
- VLOG Guideline for dealing with breaches in the version valid at the time¹³
- VLOG Fee Schedule for membership and VLOG recognised businesses in the current version

5 Glossary

All terms not defined in this Guideline have the same meanings as in the Glossary for the “Ohne Gentechnik” Production and Certification Standard.

Co-auditor: auditor who does not perform the lead function in the audit or who acts as an observer.

~~**Lead auditor:** auditor who performs the lead function in the audit (audit leader).~~

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Non-exclusive auditor: VLOG auditor who works for more than one VLOG-recognised certification body.

Witness audit: audit in which the auditor is monitored by the relevant VLOG-recognised certification body.

¹¹ Must at a minimum include the following information on the audited business: name, address, site and site address, if applicable, audit date and quality stage

¹² Must at a minimum include the following information on the audited business: name, address, site and site address, if applicable, audit date and VLOG stage

¹³ Currently being edited and will soon be published.