

VLOG Expansion

Certification Agriculture – Information for Certification Bodies

Conditions and procedure for expansion of the area of application on the basis of a document audit

1 Background

Currently many agricultural businesses are already integrated into the VLOG certification for a specific area of application (e.g. dairy cattle operations for production of VLOG cow milk). In order to give these businesses a simplified option for expanding their “Ohne Gentechnik” production or marketing additional animal categories/products as VLOG certified (e.g. dairy cattle for meat or fattening), going forward the VLOG system will offer the option of expansion certification in agriculture on the basis of a document audit. The sections below explain who can apply for this certification and what requirements have to be met. Furthermore, the procedure and documentation of expansion certification will be explained.

2 What is an expansion certification in agriculture and when can it be done?

Expansion certification is done when the existing VLOG certification or incorporation into the VLOG group certification (e.g., raw milk) of an agricultural business is expanded by adding one or more new areas of application of the VLOG Agriculture Stage. This occurs on the basis of a document audit.

If the agricultural business meets the criteria for the expansion certification in agriculture (see Chapter 3), this certification is possible on a one-off basis between two VLOG group/routine audit and enables the initial certification/approval for individual or group certification of the new area of application. If the agricultural business does not meet the criteria set forth in Chapter 3, the expansion certification cannot be done on the basis of a document audit. In these cases, the new area of application must be certified by means of an on-site expansion audit according to the VLOG Standard, V22.01, Chapter A 3.1 or a routine audit, which may be done at an earlier date (following individual certification according to the VLOG Standard or integration for additional VLOG groups). Alternatively, prior to a planned VLOG routine audit, the agricultural business or an additional group organiser can apply to the VLOG certification body for a supplementary certification or a group audit for the additional area of application.

In the subsequent years, all areas of application of the VLOG certification can usually be verified jointly in an on-site VLOG audit (e.g. cow raw milk and fattening cattle).

3 What criteria must be met for the expansion certification in agriculture?

The responsible certification body decides based on the criteria listed below whether an expansion certification in agriculture can proceed on the basis of a document audit. For this to be the case, all of the following criteria must be met.

Criterion	Expansion certification is possible if all of the following requirements are met
Change of risk category	The risk category of all VLOG areas of application remains the same or is diminished. Alternatively, the risk category can be graded separately for the individual production areas under certain conditions (see Chapter 5.1).
Site/operating unit	Sites/operating units of the new production area have been audited on site or as a remote audit in 2020/2021 by a VLOG-recognised certification body in the previous VLOG-routine audit.
Additional criteria for facilities that have hitherto been organised into a VLOG group or certified:	
Previous on-site audit by the certification body	The group member has already been audited on site by a VLOG-recognised certification body.
Data approval by the previous group organiser	The group organiser agrees in writing to the use of the audit documents (current audit data) for the expansion certification (see Chapter 5).

Examples in which an expansion certification in agriculture is possible:

- A dairy cow facility wants to sell its dairy cows of VLOG quality to the abattoir
- A dairy cow facility wants to sell heifers or bull calves that are the offspring of its VLOG dairy cows to the abattoir/fattener in VLOG quality.

The heifers/bull calves were part of the previously performed VLOG audit and are located at a site that was previously VLOG-audited.

- A dairy cow facility wants to have its fattening pigs VLOG certified at the same site. The pig fattening was part of the previous VLOG audit, is included in the risk management/risk analysis of the facility, and the risk category of the facility has not worsened due to the inclusion of pig fattening into the VLOG certification, or the criteria for the various risk categories are met (see Chapter 5.1).

Example in which an expansion certification is not possible:

- A dairy cow facility wants to have its bull fattening certified at another site that was not audited in the previous VLOG routine audit.

4 How is an expansion certification done?

Different procedures (see Chapters 4.1 to 4.3) apply depending on how the new area of application is to be certified.

To achieve the greatest synergies for all system partners, optimally an agricultural business is audited/certified for all areas of application by a VLOG-recognised certification body for the (different) group organisation(s) or individual certification. If this is not desired for organisational reasons, different certification bodies can also perform the audits/certifications. In this case, a written provision governing the data exchange between the certification bodies and group organiser(s) is necessary.

System	<u>Group certification + individual certification</u>	<u>Group certification + group certification</u>	<u>Expanded individual certification</u>
Description	The business has hitherto been part of a VLOG group organisation. The scope of the VLOG area of application is to be expanded with an individual certification.	The business has hitherto been part of a VLOG group organisation. The scope of the VLOG area of application is to be expanded within a second VLOG group certification.	The company has hitherto had a VLOG individual certification. The expansion of the area of application is to be accomplished within this individual certification.
Example	A dairy cattle facility for cow's milk is already integrated into the group certification of a dairy which wants to also market its older cows as VLOG. The new scope of application for meat is to be certified via an individual certification.	A dairy cattle facility for cow's milk is already integrated into the group certification of a dairy which wants to also market its older cows as VLOG. The scope of application for meat is to be bundled via a second group organiser.	A dairy cattle facility has been certified according to the VLOG Standard for VLOG raw milk production since February 2021 and wants to include an additional area of application into the VLOG certification in September 2021.
Process	See chapter 4.1	See chapter 4.2	See chapter 4.3
Responsibility crisis management new scope of application	Agricultural business	Group organiser new scope of application	Agricultural business

Table 1: Possible systems for certification of multiple areas of application

4.1 Group certification + individual certification

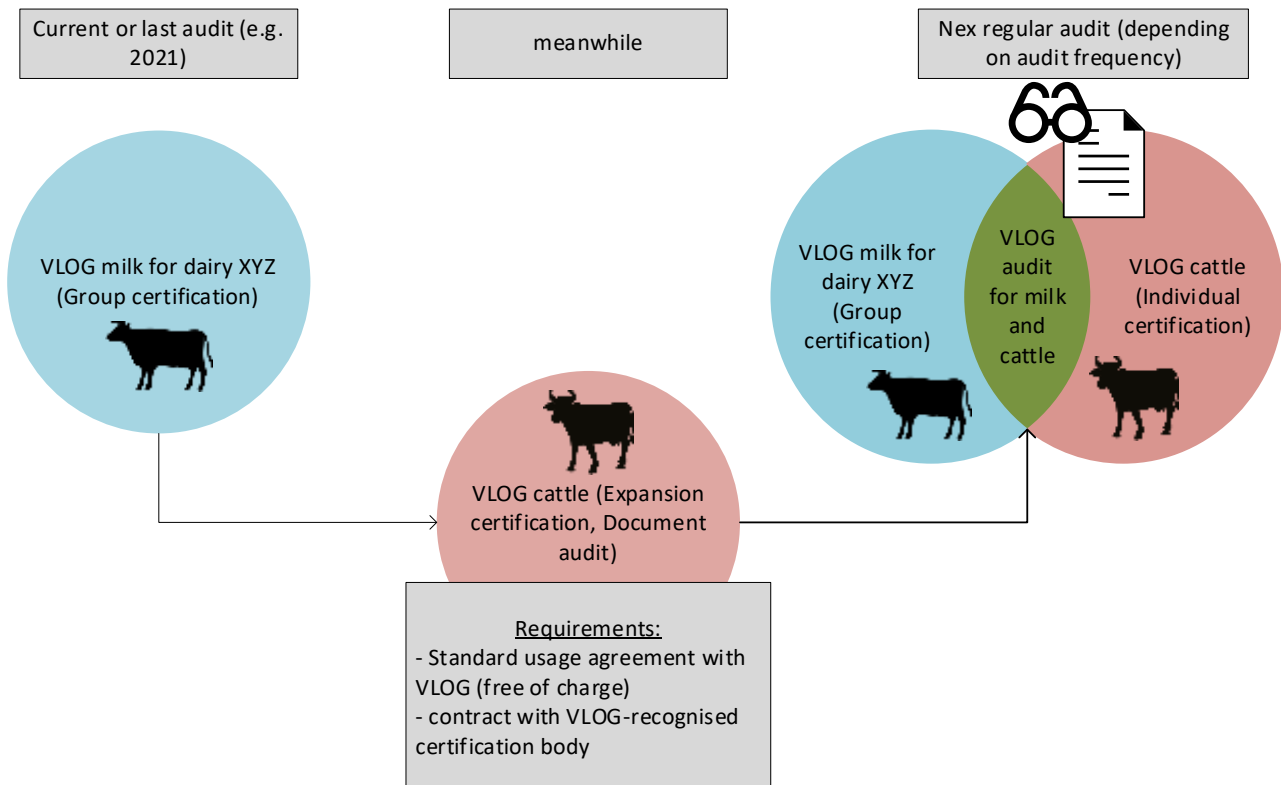


Figure 2: Procedure for group certification + individual certification

The following steps are taken sequentially and, in some cases, in parallel:

Steps	Responsibility
Application to a VLOG-recognised certification body (e.g. milk certification body or other) for the expansion certification	Agricultural business
Conclusion of an auditing contract/agreement between the agricultural business and certification body	Certification body/ Agricultural business
Written provision on information forwarding ¹ , data protection and splitting of costs between the parties (certification body, group organiser(s) and agricultural business) Information forwarding by existing group organiser to certification body, incl. consent for data usage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facility description • Checklist for agricultural business 	Certification body, Group organiser, Agricultural business
Conclusion of a standard usage agreement between the agricultural business and VLOG	Agricultural business
Verification as to whether criteria for expansion certification (document audit) are met (see Chapter 3)	Certification body

¹ A blanket, informal written consent statement for information forwarding for the additional individual certification by the group organiser is sufficient (e.g. via email or in the VLOG group description). It is not necessary to obtain the consent from each group member individually.

Steps	Responsibility
<p>Execution of expansion certification by the certification body:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verification of information/documents (e.g. current facility description that also comprises the new area of application, including feed ration, feed used, animal stock...) • Grading into a risk category/categories (one risk category for the overall facility or a separate risk category per respective area of application, see Chapter 5.1) • Documentation of the VLOG checklist for agriculture (see Chapter 5.2) 	Certification body
Issuance of the VLOG certificate (expansion certification according to VLOG template, term of validity per V 22.01, Chapter A 3.11.3)	Certification body
Submission of audit documents to VLOG	Certification body
<p>As the case may be, communication with other certification body for group certification (e.g. if the audit was not passed)</p> <p>Forwarding of current information (e.g. updated facility description, changes due to the expansion certification, necessary corrective actions...) to the relevant parties</p>	Certification body

4.2 Group certification + group certification

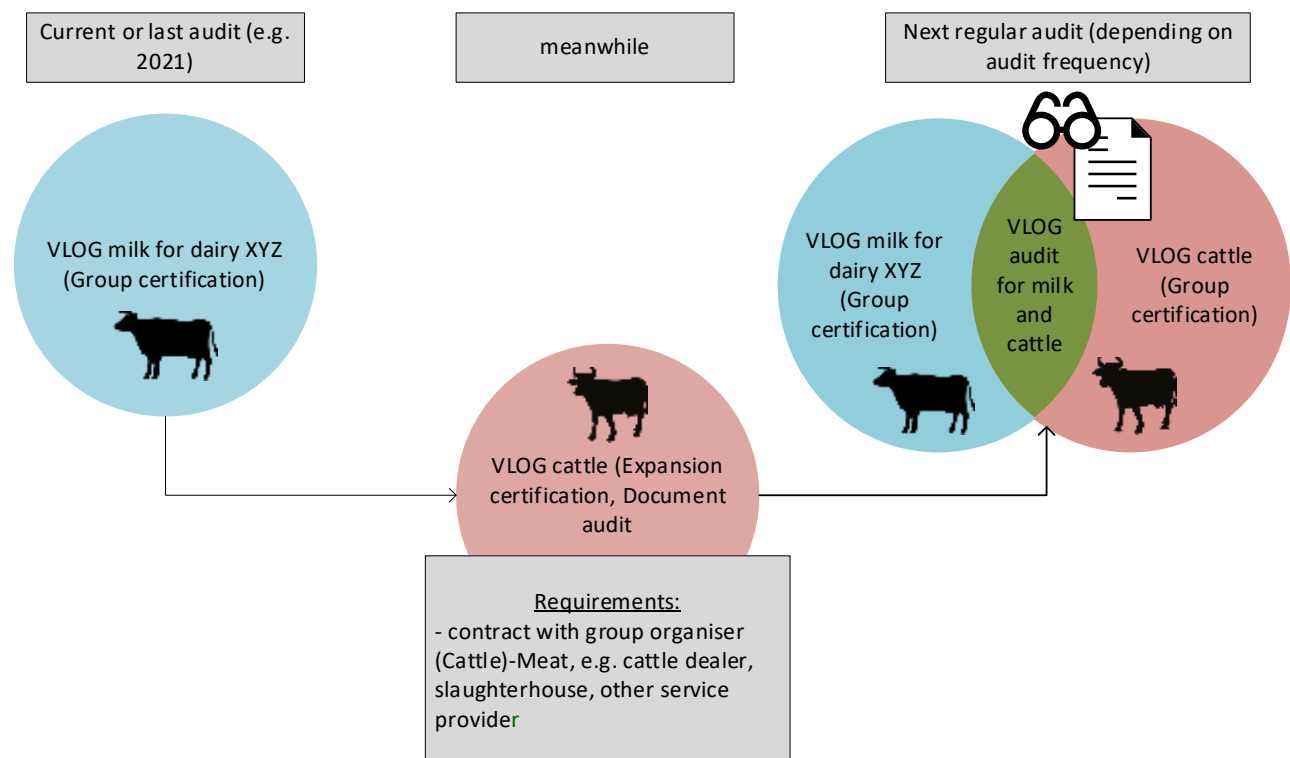


Figure 3: Procedure for group certification + group certification

The following steps are taken sequentially and, in some cases, in parallel.

Steps	Responsibility
Application to a VLOG-recognised certification body (e.g. milk certification body or other) for the expansion certification for a new group member	Agricultural business or Group organiser ²
Conclusion of a contract/statement of participation between the group organiser and group member	Group organiser ²
If not yet done: conclusion of an auditing contract/agreement between the group organiser and certification body	Group organiser ² / Certification body
Rules for information forwarding, data protection and splitting of costs among the parties (certification body, group organiser(s) and facility) Information forwarding by previously existing group organiser to certification body, incl. consent for data usage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facility description • Checklist for agricultural business 	Certification body
Verification as to whether criteria for the expansion certification (document audit) are met (see Chapter 3)	Certification body
Execution of expansion certification by the certification body: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verification of information/documents (e.g. current facility description that also comprises the new area of application, including feed ration, feed used, animal stock...) • Grading into a risk category/categories (one risk category for the overall facility or a separate risk category per respective area of application, see Chapter 5.1) • Documentation of the VLOG checklist for agriculture (see Chapter 5.2) • Inclusion of the facility in the list of members; if necessary, a certificate can be issued according to V22.01, Chapter F 2.2.6 	Certification body Certification body and Group organiser
Communication with other certification body or group organiser, if necessary Forwarding of the current information (e.g. facility description, changes due to the expansion certification, necessary corrective actions...) to the relevant parties	Certification body

4.3 Expanded individual certification

The expansion certification in agriculture (document audit) is also possible for expanding an existing agricultural individual certification if the criteria are met. If the criteria are not met, an on-site expansion audit can be performed according to the VLOG-Standard V22.01, Chapter A 3.1, or the new area of application is verified/certified in a (prior) routine audit.

² In the following: The group organiser of the new area of application (e.g. a farmer is already integrated into a VLOG group for raw milk and wants to market his older cows via a second group organiser (e.g. producer group or abattoir. In this case there is a new group organiser for such a producer group or abattoir.

5 Details on implementing the expansion certification in agriculture

5.1 How is the risk grading performed for the agricultural business while including the new area of application?

If several areas of application in the business are part of a VLOG certification, risk grading is performed as follows:

- either across all areas of application (one risk category per business – and only the highest/strictest risk category shall apply) or
- separately for individual areas of application under the following conditions (one risk category per area of application).

A business may only be graded into multiple risk categories if all of the following requirements are met:

- the business is a member of a VLOG group certification for one area of application,
- the areas of application are completely separate from each other (clearly and completely separate facilities/feeding equipment/machines in contact with feed), and
- all four grading criteria in the VLOG Standard V22.01, Chapter E2.1 are observed for each area of application.

Please note: The different risk categories for the individual areas of application result in different audit intervals per area of application (see Chapter E 2.2 in combination with F 2.4).

5.2 How is the documentation performed for the document audit for the expansion certification Agriculture?

The most recent VLOG checklist of the agricultural business (either from the last VLOG routine audit individual certification or group certification) is either supplemented or a new VLOG checklist is filled out.

The following requirements of the VLOG Standard, at minimum, must absolutely be verified and documented.

- Facility Description (E 3.1),
- Risk Management (E 3.3),
- Crisis Management (E 3.9, KO),
- Animal Inventory (E 4.1),
- Compliance with the Minimum Feeding Conversion Period (E 4.6, KO)

5.3 When is the document audit for the expansion certification in agriculture deemed passed?

The expansion certification is deemed to be passed when

- The up-to-date and complete facility description has been submitted, and
- All KO requirements have been passed (at minimum E 3.9 and E 4.6).

Nevertheless, deviations can be assigned and corrective actions demanded. The final certification decision is made by the certification body.