

VLOG Expansion

Certification in Agriculture - Information for Group Organisers in the Dairy Sector

1 Background

As a VLOG group organiser, you already offer dairy farms the opportunity to participate in the efficient VLOG group certification for raw milk production. Many of these dairy farms are also interested in marketing their older cows and other cattle (e.g., their calves, heifers/female calves, young cattle, fattening livestock) for VLOG-quality meat production. To offer these dairy farms a simplified option for including additional production areas¹ in their VLOG certifications, the VLOG system will provide the option of expansion certification in agriculture in the future. In this way, dairy farms will, for example, be able to market their cattle for meat production within the VLOG system.

The following is an explanation of who can claim this certification and what requirement must be met. It also indicates how group organisers can assist dairy farms in developing additional marketing options for their older cows and fattening livestock.

2 What is an expansion certification in agriculture and who can claim it?

In an expansion certification, the existing certification of a VLOG-audited dairy farm (group certification) is expanded to include a new production area at the VLOG Agriculture Stage (e.g., milk cows & heifers/female calves (meat/animals) or cattle – fattening livestock). This is accomplished based on a document audit by the certification body.

If the dairy farm meets the criteria for an expansion certification in agriculture (see Chapter 3), this certification is possible on a one-off basis between two regular VLOG audits and will enable initial certification of the new production area. In the process, the dairy farm can choose whether the new production area will be certified as an additional VLOG individual certification or as an additional membership in another VLOG group (group certification for meat/animals).

For example, an expansion certification can be claimed in the following scenarios:

- A dairy farm wishes to sell its VLOG milk cows to a slaughterhouse as VLOG animals
- A dairy farm wishes to sell heifers or bull calves that are the offspring of its VLOG dairy cows to a slaughterhouse/fattener as “VLOG” animals
- A dairy farm wishes to have its bull fattening at the same site VLOG-certified
- A dairy farm wishes to have its fattening pigs at the same site VLOG-certified

¹ To facilitate understanding, this information letter uses “production areas” synonymously with “areas of application” for purposes of VLOG certification.

In subsequent years, all VLOG production areas are generally audited together during the VLOG routine audit (see Chapter 4.1).

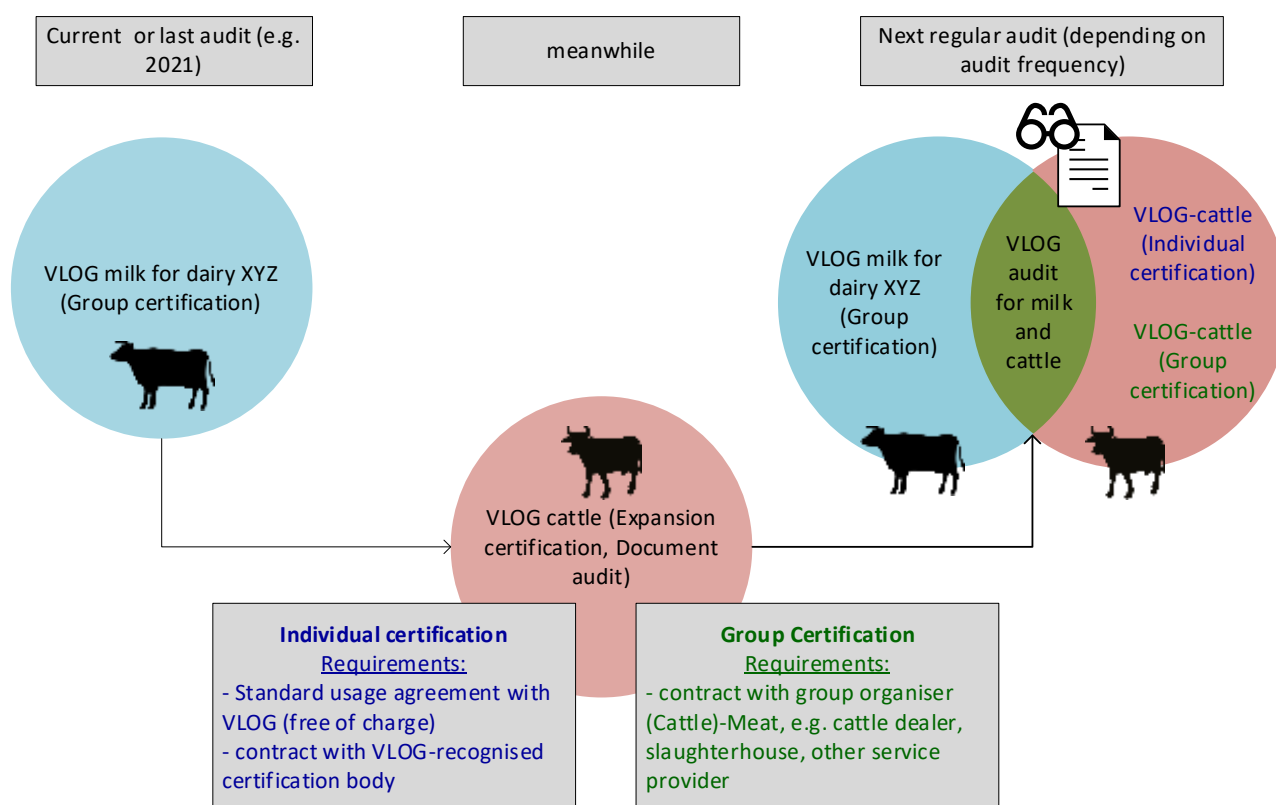


Figure 1: Procedure for individual certification

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

All the following criteria must be met for an expansion certification in agriculture based on a document audit. The criteria will be evaluated by the competent certification body.

Criterion	Expansion certification is possible if all of the following requirements are met:
Change of risk category	The risk category of all VLOG production areas remains the same or is diminished. Alternatively, the risk category can be graded separately for the individual production areas under certain conditions (see Chapter 4.1).
Site/operating unit	Sites/operating units of the new production area were 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 was already 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).

If the dairy farm does not meet the aforementioned criteria, an expansion certification (document audit) cannot be carried out. In such cases, the new production area can be certified by means of an on-site expansion audit according to VLOG Standard V22.01, Chap. A 3.1, or a (possibly early) VLOG routine audit.

Alternatively, the dairy farm or the group organiser for the meat/animal sector can request an individual certification or a group audit of the new production area from a VLOG-recognised certification body prior to a planned VLOG routine audit. To avoid duplicate data collection, the group organiser for the dairy sector should agree in writing to the use of the available audit documents (see Chapter 5).

4 What effect does the expansion certification have on the VLOG group certification for the dairy sector?

4.1 Does the expansion certification in agriculture increase the risk category and thus the audit interval for dairy farms?

As a rule, the expansion certification has no effect on the risk category of the group member because the entire farm or dairy production site was also audited in the past. The inclusion of new VLOG production areas can even reduce the risk category because the dairy farm fully converts the feeding in all its production areas to “VLOG verified” feed.

Under the new VLOG Standard V22.01, if the individual production areas of the dairy farm are completely separate from each other (completely separate systems/feeding equipment/machines in contact with feed), the risk categories for the individual production areas/areas of application for the VLOG certification can be determined separately. Thus, an increase in the risk category/audit interval for VLOG dairy production can be avoided in this rare case.

4.2 Who bears the costs of the expansion certification in agriculture?

Additional costs can be incurred through expansion certification or through VLOG certification of additional production areas due to the following factors:

- Necessity of additional GMO tests,
- Prolongation of auditing time,
- Processing time for the certification body to do preparation/follow-up work, additional certification,

Since the VLOG audit already examined the entire dairy farm or VLOG dairy production site as part of risk management/risk analysis in the past, the following assumptions can be made:

- ... that no additional feed needs to be approved by GMO testing. However, if this is the case, the costs of GMO testing must be borne by the dairy farm or the group organiser for the meat/animal sector.
- ... that the auditing time for subsequent VLOG audits will only minimally increase. For example, only an additional audit of young cattle rations and any related feed deliveries and an audit of compliance with the minimum feeding conversion period during the VLOG audit are required for a dairy farm currently in risk category 0 for it to market VLOG-quality older cows and/or heifers/female calves. A written agreement between the dairy farm, the VLOG certification body, the group organiser for the dairy sector and the group organiser for the meat/animal sector, if any, can ensure that the costs of any additional auditing time are billed to the group organiser for the dairy sector only with its consent. If this is not the case, the costs will be charged to the dairy farm or the group organiser for the meat/animal sector.

- ... that the additional VLOG certification of the dairy farm will occur parallel to that of the VLOG group audit. In this case, the synergy effects are great and the effort expended by the certification body is significantly lower. The costs for this will be charged to the dairy farm or the group organiser for the meat/animal sector.

5 How can a group organiser in the dairy sector assist its group members with an expansion certification in agriculture?

The release of the farm-specific data in the VLOG audit documentation from the group certification for the dairy sector is of fundamental importance to the expansion certification (document audit) of the dairy farm. This comprises the following data for the dairy farm:

- Facility description agriculture
- Starting date for VLOG milk production or verifiable date of conversion to “Ohne Gentechnik”-compliant feeding
- Checklist for the last VLOG group audit of the dairy farm.

Therefore, the general agreement of the group organiser for the dairy sector to provide information to the VLOG certification body is very helpful. The certification body can be given informal written notification of this or it can be documented in the group description.