ACTIVITY REQUIREMENT

ACTIVITY REQUIREMENTS - AGRICULTURE

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SUMMARY
The Activity Requirements - Agriculture (AR - AGR) describe the eligibility requirements for Agriculture activities, and enables such eligible projects to undergo Design and Performance Certification, including issuance of Certified SDG Impact Statements and Products. The overarching conditions are explained in this document. Any specific methodological requirement supersedes the conditions given in this document.
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1 | SCOPE, APPLICABILITY AND ENTRY INTO FORCE

1.1 | Scope

1.1.1 | This document outlines the requirements for listing, Design and Performance Certification, including issuance of Certified SDG Impact Statements and Products under Gold Standard for Global Goals for eligible Agriculture project activities.

1.1.2 | The eligible project shall apply the requirements of this document in conjunction with the Principles & Requirements, applicable impact quantification Methodology and Product Requirements such as GHG Emissions Reduction & Sequestration Product Requirements.

1.1.3 | A Project may be issued with Gold Standard Verified Emissions Reductions (GS VERs) and other products as applicable.

1.2 | Applicability

1.2.1 | The AGR requirement, this document outlines eligible project activities in Section 3.1 below.

1.2.2 | Other eligible Agriculture project activities may be added in the future. Stakeholders may also submit a request for approval of new activity types, following requirements and procedure described in Principles & Requirements.

1.3 | Entry into force

1.3.1 | The document will entry into force on dd/mm/yyyy.

2 | TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

2.1.1 | In addition to the definitions contained in the GS4GG Glossary, the following terms apply in this document:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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</table>
| Agriculture| According to FAO, agriculture refers to the cultivation of crops, animal husbandry, forestry, fisheries, and the development of land and water resources. For more information, visit FAO’s Term Portal: http://www.fao.org/faoterm/en/. Under GS4GG following adaptation to FAO definition applies to agriculture scope  
- “forestry” is understood as agroforestry systems (see agroforestry system).  
- “blue carbon” is understood as activities that are based on the cultivation, growth and development of offshore, aquatic biomass.  
- Projects involving mangrove shall follow Activity requirements - Forestry |
| Agroforestry system | Agroforestry is a collective term for land-use systems and technologies where trees (see “trees” definition) are deliberately used on the same land-management units as agricultural crops and/or animals, in some form of spatial arrangement or temporal sequence. In agroforestry systems there are both ecological and economical interactions between the different components. Agroforestry can also be defined as a dynamic, ecologically based, natural resource management system that, through the integration of trees on farms and in the agricultural landscape, diversifies and sustains production for increased social, economic and environmental benefits for land users at all levels. (Adapted from FAO: [http://www.fao.org/forestry/agroforestry/80338/en/]). Projects implementing agroforestry activities shall also follow the Activity requirements - Forestry for eligibility criteria and the Afforestation/Reforestation Methodology for accounting of GHG sequestration in tree biomass. |
| Animal husbandry | A kind of farming in which people raise livestock (see “livestock” definition) for meat, milk, eggs, etc. A branch of agriculture concerned with the production and care of domestic animals. (Adapted from FAO’s Term Portal: [http://www.fao.org/faoterm/en/]) |
| Crop | A crop is a plant or fungus species that is purposefully cultivated and/or harvested to satisfy human and livestock needs. |
| Direct & Indirect measurement approach: | An indirect measurement approach refers to the estimation (quantity and/or quality) of a variable of interest (e.g., tree biomass, soil organic carbon, methane emissions) via a statistically significant correlation within an accepted error range or threshold. Types of direct measurements are considered to be:  
- Direct measurement of a variable of interest (e.g., measurement of water table height in an irrigation project)  
- Collection of samples to quantify the variable of interest in a following stage (e.g., collecting soil cores to quantify SOC in a laboratory).  
- Measurement of proxy data whose correlation with the variable of interest has been proven via direct quantification and its global applicability is widely adopted (e.g., measuring diameter of a tree species and input this information in a peer-reviewed allometric equation developed based on the results of destructive sampling). Types of indirect measurements are considered to be:  
- Quantification of the strength and quality of a signal response which is correlated with the quantity of the variable of interest (e.g., measure the spectral response of a given band of a remote sensing apparatus and correlate the}
reflectance to a quantity of the desired variable without a form of direct measurement to verify the on-site specific accuracy).

- Direct application of peer-reviewed publications (calculation approaches, datasets, parameters and/or models) to estimate the variable of interest on the basis that research results are conservative and applicable to the project site and management practice (e.g., estimation of the quantity of the desired variable based on a model prediction without a form of direct measurement to verify the on-site specific accuracy).

- Direct application of default factors relating to the general Tier 1 or 2 model described in the IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories to estimate the variable of interest.

Eligible area
The eligible area is the part of the project area which meets the applicability conditions of the applied impact quantification Methodology.

Forest
A forest is defined by the project’s host country (refer to http://cdm.unfccc.int/DNA/index.html).

- In case no forest definition is provided by the DNA, the Project Developer can refer to the national forest definition of the project’s host country.

- In case no forest definition is established the host country, the Project Developer can refer to the forest definition provided by FAO’s Forest Resource Assessment 2020 - Terms and Definitions i.e., “Land spanning more than 0.5 hectares with trees higher than 5 meters and a canopy cover of more than 10 percent, or trees able to reach these thresholds in situ. It does not include land that is predominantly under agricultural or urban land use.” Available here https://www.fao.org/3/I8661EN/i8661en.pdf

Implementation proportion
The implementation proportion is used in Principle 5 – Financial Additionality & Ongoing Financial Need (option “c” Activity Penetration.

- Implementation proportion refers to the ratio (expressed as percentage) of farmers that consistently implement a target practice(s) in a particular agricultural system compared to the total number of farmers in the Reference Area who are engaged in the same agricultural system.

- A target practice(s) is a new or upgraded practice that results in the generation of Ecosystem Services and SDG Impacts.
- Agricultural systems are defined by the type of crop/s and farming practice at the farm level (crop, crop rotation, and/or agroforestry system).

Invasive Species

An organism introduced by humans into places out of its natural range of distribution, where it becomes established and disperses, generating a negative impact on the local ecosystems and species. Note that species which are already locally established and of economic importance are excluded under this definition.

Source: Adapted from IUCN, available at https://www.iucn.org/theme/species/our-work/invasive-species

Livestock

Livestock comprises all domestic animals (see “animal husbandry” definition). Non-domestic animals are not included unless they are kept or raised in captivity on agricultural holdings, including holdings without land. Source: FAO, available at http://www.fao.org/waicent/faoinfo/economic/faodef/fdef16e.htm

Modelling Units (MU)

Modelling Units are distinct parts of the eligible area (see eligible area) where carbon stocks can be quantified following an impact quantification Methodology. To meet the precision level for the carbon stocks estimation (see Annex A - Uncertainty of LUF Parameters of Activity Requirements – Forestry), MU areas normally have homogeneous characteristics to quantify a certain SDG Impact (growth patterns, management treatment and start date, among other relevant factors).

New Area

New areas are project areas (see project area) that are added to a project after it achieves Design Certification.

Non-eligible area

Non-eligible areas refer to the areas including set-aside conservation areas, water bodies, infrastructure, settlements, forests, protected grasslands, lands dedicated as places of worship and all those areas which doesn’t meet eligibility requirements set out in applicable methodology.

Project Area

The project area is a spatial area or areas submitted for certification with clearly defined boundaries managed to a set of explicit long-term management objectives. Source: Adapted from FSC, where the relevant term is ‘Management Unit’

- The project area is the sum of all eligible (see eligible area) and non-eligible areas (see non-eligible areas) as per Figure 1, below.

- Boundaries of the project area shall be clearly distinguishable in the field.

- The project area is divided in Modelling Units (MU) for the calculation of the Certified SDG Impact Statement or Product (for example GSVERs).
Therefore the ‘project area’ as the area of certification shall be limited to eligible areas, any riparian or other buffer zones located within eligible areas, and areas set aside for conservation.

**Figure 1: Project area and MUs**

**Project Types**

A project may encompass several single areas. The project developer can add new areas to a project or expand an existing project area at any time after a project reaches Registered status following design change procedure and applicable requirements.

For AGR Programme of Activities please refer to PoA Requirements and Procedures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project developer</th>
<th>A project developer is an individual (smallholders or not), group of individuals (e.g., agriculture cooperatives, other form of associations recognized by local customs and/or host country laws), or entity (e.g., privately-owned dairy facility) that implement the activities.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project start date</td>
<td>The project start date shall be the earliest date when physical implementation of the project activities on ground. For example, for a project that involves shift in agricultural practice the start date is the date when the first project developer shifted to the improved agricultural practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference Area</td>
<td>The reference area is an extension of land encompassing the project area and leakage belt that serves to collect reference data and trends as required by applicable activity requirements and/or methodology. A reference area can be expanded over time through new area certifications or addition of Voluntary Project Activities (VPAs) within a Program of Activities (PoA).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The reference area shall be defined following the requirements in section 5 and shall be identified in the Project Design Document (PDD).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Smallholder Project developer</th>
<th>A Smallholder project developer is who;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. own or lease no more than 3 ha of land in the host country. AND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. meets low-income group/community definition as defined by the host country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In case of leased land, the project developer shall provide evidence that the leaser has been leasing the land for the past 5 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In case project involves community owned land, the project developer shall provide evidence that the average land assigned to each community member is 3ha or less.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Smallholder Project</th>
<th>A smallholder project shall;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. be either a small-scale or a micro-scale project, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. generate no more than 16,000 tCO2e/yr, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. be designed in a participatory manner complying with GS4GG Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement Requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If a smallholder project is defined as a microscale project, the microscale caps for emissions (i.e., 10,000 tCO2e/yr) and maximum project area (i.e., 500ha), shall be applied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- small-scale project and generates more than 16,000 tCO2e in any monitoring year, the project issuance shall be capped to 16,000 tCO2e. A monitoring year may be covered under two or more consecutive monitoring reports.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If a smallholder project also involves measures/technology eligible under GS4GG activity requirements other than Activity requirements - AGR, the emission cap defined above, is only applicable to the component corresponding to the Activity requirements - AGR. In such cases, the project developer shall define each component separately in a manner that clearly differentiates emissions reduction/removal units for each component correspondingly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Silvopasture | A type of agroforestry system that combines forestry and grazing of domesticated animals on pastures, rangelands or on-farm. (Adapted from FAO: [http://www.fao.org/forestry/agroforestry/80338/en/](http://www.fao.org/forestry/agroforestry/80338/en/)) |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wetlands</th>
<th>Wetlands are lands that are transitional between terrestrial and aquatic systems where the water table is usually at or near the surface or the land is covered by shallow water, and that have one or more of the following attributes:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- At least periodically, the land supports predominantly plants typically occurring in wetlands, AND</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- The substrate is predominantly undrained and water saturated soil, AND
- The substrate is non-soil and is saturated with water or covered by shallow water at some time during the growing season of each year.

Source: Cowardin et al. 1979 - Classification of Wetlands and Deepwater Habitats of the United States

Workers

Workers are all persons that are employed by a written or verbal agreement. This includes permanent, migrant, part-time and seasonal employees of all ranks and categories, including field workers, artisans, labourers, administrators, supervisors, executives, contractor employees as well as self-employed contractors and sub-contractors.

Exceptions from the definition above are:
- Workers employed by a verbal agreement on smallholder farms for less than 3 months per year, AND
- Smallholder farmers themselves, AND
- Family members of the smallholder farmer

3 | ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

3.1 | Eligible Project Activities:

3.1.1 | The following activity types are eligible

a. Activities that increase Soil Organic Carbon (SOC) stocks (“SOC projects”). Refer to Annex - 1 for non-exhaustive list of eligible SOC activities. Activities that simply avoid the loss of SOC stocks against a baseline are not eligible.
b. Activities that combine agriculture activities with forestry (agroforestry) and/or livestock management (silvopasture) or a combination of these (agro silvopasture).
c. Activities that involve agricultural fields and/or livestock management activities that avoid methane (CH₄) and/or nitrous oxide (N₂O) emissions.
d. Activities that are undertaken on agricultural fields and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Such activities may include emissions reduction from crop residue burning, nitrogen management through fertilizer production (reductions in upstream emissions) and application (reduction in downstream emissions).
e. Other activities may be proposed by developers as necessary and would be considered on case-to-case basis by the Gold Standard Secretariat.
3.2 | **General eligibility requirement:**

3.2.1 | The eligible area shall not meet the definition of forest at project start date or at any time in the 10 years prior to project start date. Following exception may apply;

   a. In the case when the eligible area has been deforested during the last 10 years prior to project start date, the Project Developer shall
      i. shall provide evidence that the deforestation activity has not taken place with an intention to implement proposed project activity, and
      ii. shall submit a request with evidence to confirm the eligibility of the project area, as part of the Preliminary Review.

   b. In case of agroforestry projects, the project developer
      i. shall conduct a quantitative remote sensing based analysis with expert opinion to confirm that the areas appearing as forest are indeed agroforestry plantations.
      ii. shall submit a request with assessment outcome to confirm the eligibility of the proposed project activity, as part of the Preliminary Review.

3.2.2 | SOC pool of Agroforestry activities for both forest and agriculture interventions shall be governed by Activity Requirements – AGR (this document), while all other pools for the forestry component of Agroforestry will be governed by the Activity Requirements – Forestry.

3.2.3 | The eligible area shall not fall (totally or partially) on wetland areas at project start date or at any time in the 10 years prior to project start date (see Annex C of Forestry Activity Requirements for guidance).

3.2.4 | Certification of Soil Organic Carbon (SOC) projects:

   a. Certification of Soil Organic Carbon (SOC) projects is governed by the extant provisions in the SOC Framework Methodology and associated Activity Modules (AM). Carbon stock change adjusted for project emissions and leakages, if any (ex-ante vs ex-post) of SOC projects shall be assessed according to the SOC Framework Methodology.

   b. **Performance Shortfall Guidelines** and associated requirements apply to SOC projects that underperform (meaning ex-post CO2-performance is lower than expected ex-ante CO2-performance) and to address a reversal event (including areas leaving a project).

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1 Refer to Annex C of Activity Requirement - Forestry for further guidance.

2 For example, cocoa farms might appear as forest areas because of their spectral signature. Even so, the forest definition applied to the project might not include agriculture areas within the definition of forest.
3.3 | Secured Titles

3.3.1 | For all project participants e.g. farmers, land owner(s), the following information and evidence shall be provided:

a. Name and contact details, AND
b. Each entity’s i.e., project developer or other managing entity legal registration number and documentation by the governing jurisdiction, that proves that the entity is in good standing. AND

c. For the duration of the crediting period the Project Developer shall:
   i. own the CO2 user rights\(^3\) or carbon sequestration rights for the project area where a Gold Standard Certified Statement or Product (e.g. GSVERs) is sought, Project Developers, AND
   ii. hold an uncontested legal land title for the Project Area, AND
   iii. own the rights for timber and non-timber forest products for the project area, AND
   iv. hold all necessary permits to implement the project (planting permits, infrastructure permits, harvesting permits, etc.).

3.3.2 | If the Project Developer does not meet all of the requirements stipulated in 3.3.1 (c), the persons or legal entities that do meet those respective requirements shall endorse the proposed project through an agreement that aligns with the duration of the crediting period.

3.3.3 | The Project Developer shall inform all project participants with respect of

a. instructing the Gold Standard, AND
b. requesting or communicating the addition or edits of project participants, AND

c. receiving all information from the Gold Standard Secretariat on matters related to the project.

3.3.4 | Depending on the structure of the project, the Project Developer shall follow either requirement 1 or 2.

a. **Requirement 1**: The Project Developer acts on behalf of project participants. For such cases, each project participant shall sign an agreement with the Project Developer, which confirms that:

\[^3\] CO\(_2\) user rights are rights that grant the titleholder any benefit that could be generated from the certification of the carbon sequestration or greenhouse gas reduction by the project.

For land use projects, the holder of the CO\(_2\) user rights is usually the owner of the land, where the project activity takes place – except when such rights have been expressly transmitted to another person or entity by the land owner, or when an authority act / decision / order / regulation assigns such rights to a different person than the land owner.
i. The project participant holds the CO₂ user rights\(^4\) that are associated with the project activities and has passed these on to the Project Developer, AND

ii. The project participant holds all necessary rights to implement the project activities (e.g., rights to harvest), AND

iii. The legal land title or similar entitlement\(^5\) for the land on which the project activities are implemented is uncontested

These agreements shall include the:

i. Contact details of the project participants, AND

ii. The legal registration number and documentation by the governing jurisdiction that proves that the entity is in good standing (in case of an organisation), AND

iii. Contact details of the landowner (if differing), AND

iv. Length of lease contract (if applicable), AND

v. The liabilities and benefits for the person or entity to implement the project activities (e.g., switch to another crop and get access to the seeds).

b. **Requirement 2**: The Project Developer acts on its own. In such cases, the Project Developer shall provide evidence that:

i. It holds the CO₂ user rights\(^6\) and the rights for any other Certified SDG Impact Statement or Product that are associated with the project activities, AND

\(^4\) CO₂ user rights are rights that grant the titleholder any benefit that could be generated from the certification of the carbon sequestration or greenhouse gas reduction by the project.

For agriculture projects, the holder of the CO₂ user rights is usually the owner of the land, where the project activity takes place – except when such rights have been expressly transmitted to another person or entity by the land owner, or when an authority act / decision / order / regulation assigns such rights to a different person than the land owner.

\(^5\) Similar Entitlement: It is considered that similar entitlement exists, when 1) A person or entity has been using the land of the project as its owner, for the period of time that the applicable law requires for persons or entity to acquire property by its use, AND 2) Neighbours or neighbouring community agrees that the land has been used for such time by the person or entity claiming it.

\(^6\) CO₂ user rights are rights that grant the titleholder any benefit that could be generated from the certification of the carbon sequestration or greenhouse gas reduction by the project.

For agriculture projects, the holder of the CO₂ user rights is usually the owner of the land, where the project activity takes place – except when such rights have been expressly transmitted to another person or entity...
ii. It holds all necessary rights to implement the project activities (e.g., rights to harvest), AND

iii. The legal land title or similar entitlement for the land on which the project activities are implemented is uncontested.

3.4 | New Area Certification

3.4.1 | To add new areas to a design certified project the following requirements apply:

a. The inclusion of new areas and its certification shall follow design change requirements.

b. For new areas proposed for inclusion, the crediting period end date shall be the same as of Design Certified project activity.

c. New areas added to retroactive projects must follow the requirements for retroactive issuance as per the Principles and Requirements, GHG Emissions Reductions & Sequestration Product Requirements, and the Requirements stated in this document.

3.4.2 | Project developer shall inform and consult with Gold Standard before removing a certified area and/or reducing the size of a certified area, in order to assess the materiality of the changes.

3.4.3 | New areas added to retroactive projects must follow the requirements for retroactive issuance as per the Principles and Requirements, GHG Emissions Reductions & Sequestration Product Requirements, and the Requirements stated in this document.

4 | ELIGIBILITY PRINCIPLES & REQUIREMENTS

This section describes the additional requirements and/or deviations from the Principles and Requirements that apply to eligible Agriculture project. The Certification cycle for Agriculture Projects is as detailed in Principles and Requirements. For AGR Programme of Activities refer to Programme of Activity Requirements.

4.1 | PRINCIPLE 1 – CONTRIBUTION TO CLIMATE SECURITY & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

4.1.1 | Increasing resilience to deal with impacts of climate change is crucial for achieving income stability, food security and long-term development.

by the land owner, or when an authority act / decision / order / regulation assigns such rights to a different person than the land owner.
Therefore, preserving and increasing adaptive capacity for project participants should be a key element of every project. As part of project design and development, the Project Developer should

a. review and identify the likely changes in climate and weather caused by the impact of climate change in the project region and area. The relevant information on potential impacts may be sourced from peer-reviewed publications, official publications, and studies conducted by reputable local or international organizations (e.g., IPCC, FAO, WWF).

b. discuss the likely affect with magnitude of identified impacts and adaptation measures with the project participants as part of the stakeholder consultation process.

c. identify adaptation activities aligned with the scope and context of proposed project, in consultation with the project participants, may include an implementation and monitoring plan as part of project design document. For example;

   potential impacts may include but not limited
   • impact on livelihood of participants
   • impact on farm productivity

   adaptation activities may include but not limited to
   • Practices that may increase the resilience of farming systems.
   • Measures to improve the efficiency of water use and soil fertility.
   • Crops (crop breeds) with improved characteristics.
   • Crop rotation schemes.
   • Knowledge sharing on traditional and new agricultural practices.
   • Diversification of livelihoods, such as increased agricultural productivity, a greater variety of cultivated crops, and identification of other income streams.

4.2 | PRINCIPLE 2 – SAFEGUARDING PRINCIPLES & REQUIREMENTS

4.2.1 | The Project Developer shall conduct the assessment following Safeguarding Principles & Requirements and Risks & Capacities Guideline for the proposed project.

4.2.2 | For AGR project activity, the project developer shall identified and manage the following:

   a. Existing patches of native tree species, AND
   b. Single solitary stems of native tree species, AND
   c. Habitats of rare, threatened and endangered species, AND
   d. Areas relevant for habitat connectivity

4.2.3 | The Project Developer shall maintain a buffer zone for water bodies on both sides of any permanent or temporary water bodies such as lakes, streams, rivers, wetlands, etc. Irrigation channels are excluded from this...
requirement. Following riparian buffer width parameters shall be considered as part of designating the buffer zones:

a. 5m horizontal width along both sides of water courses between 1 - 5m wide.

b. For farms < 2 ha, the width of the buffer may be reduced to 2m at both sides 8m horizontal width along both sides of water courses between 5-10m wide, and around springs, wetlands, and other water bodies

c. 15m horizontal width along both sides of rivers wider than 10 meters wide

d. No additional non-application zones are required alongside fully established riparian buffers.

4.2.4 | In these buffer zones:

a. All existing native trees shall be kept, AND

b. No fertilizer and pesticides shall be used, AND

c. No logging activities shall take place, AND

d. No heavy machinery shall be used, AND

e. No cropping is allowed, AND

f. In case trees are being planted, these need to be native tree species.

4.3 | PRINCIPLE 3 – Stakeholder Inclusivity

4.3.1 | Refer to Stakeholder Consultation Engagement Requirements for requirements.

4.4 | PRINCIPLE 4 – DEMONSTRATION OF REAL OUTCOMES

4.4.1 | The crediting period shall be a maximum 10-years unless otherwise stated in applicable Impact Quantification Methodology.

4.4.2 | The crediting period starts either with the Project Start Date or three years prior to the date of Project Design Certification, whichever occurs later.

4.4.3 | A project may request retroactive issuance of Certified Impact Statements and / or Products. The maximum period for retroactive issuance is three years - which starts either with the Project Start Date or three years prior to the date of Project Design Certification, whichever occurs later.

7 Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard: Farm Requirements version 1.3; SA-S-SD-1-V1.3 (rainforest-alliance.org)
4.5 | **PRINCIPLE 5 – FINANCIAL ADDITIONALITY & ONGOING FINANCIAL NEED**

4.5.1 | The project developer shall demonstrate that proposed activity is neither directly mandated by law nor otherwise triggered by legal requirements (e.g., legally binding agreements, covenants, consent decrees, or contracts (with government agencies or private parties). If such legal requirements are identified, then crediting for the activity shall only be allowed until the date the legal requirements take effect.

4.5.2 | The project shall apply one of the following options to demonstrate project additionality, unless otherwise stated in the methodology or applicable methodology provides further requirements:

**Option 1 – Approved additionality tools:**

4.5.3 | This option is available for the cases where project activity is adopted by less than 20% of farmers in the Reference Area.

4.5.4 | The approved additionality tools that may be applied to demonstrate compliance includes the following. The developer shall use the latest version of the applied tool available. Other options may be proposed by stakeholder following Procedure for Development, Revision, and Clarification of Methodologies and Methodological Tools.

- a. Tool 01 Tool for the demonstration and assessment of additionality
- b. Tool 02 Combined tool to identify the baseline scenario and demonstrate additionality
- c. Tool 21 Demonstration of additionality of small-scale project activities

4.5.5 | The project developer shall follow referred guidelines when applying additionality tools mentioned in paragraph 4.5.4, above.

**Option 2 – Positive List:**

4.5.6 | The project developer shall meet requirements (a) and (b) in the list below and at least one of the requirements from (c) to (f) to demonstrate compliance for positive list approach.

- a. The project area is located in a country or in a region with the latest UNDP Human Development Indicator\(^8\) below or equal to 0.699.
- b. The project activities shall not be mandatory by any law or regulation, OR if they are mandatory, the Project Developer shall demonstrate that

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these laws or regulations are systematically not enforced. For high-income countries, all legal requirements shall be deemed to be enforced. For countries other than high-income countries, legal requirements shall only be deemed to be unenforced based on authoritative and up-to-date information of nonenforcement that is relevant and applicable to the mitigation activity; AND

c. The mean annual precipitation in the project area is less than 600 mm. OR

d. In the project area a minimum of 5 native crop species are being cultivated in a locally adapted agroforestry system. OR

e. The project is a smallholder project and results in Gold Standard VERs of less than 16,000 tCO₂eq per annum. OR

f. The project area is located in a country or region with a recent UNDP Human Development Indicator below 0.55, OR In a Small Island Developing State (SIDS).

**Option 3 – Activity Penetration rate:**

4.5.7 | An Agriculture project can only use this option if the project is applying [GHG Emissions Reductions & Sequestration Product Requirements](#) and annual GHGs reductions are less than 60,000 tCO₂eq.

4.5.8 | The project is deemed additional when the project activity is adopted by less than 5% of farmers in the Reference Area (see definition for Implementation Proportion), where

a. The ‘Number of farmers adopting the project activity’ represents the farmers participating in the project.

b. Adoption of practice in the Reference Area shall consider in the context of farmers consistently implementing an activity over time. To assess the implementation proportion of a practice, it is necessary to conduct a temporal analysis that encompasses the latest 5 years before the proposed project start date. A minimum of three years’ data within this 5-year period is required to carry out the analysis.

i. If the implementation proportion over a 5-year period doesn’t show a clear trend and the average implementation rate is equal or higher than the activity penetration threshold, then the activity is considered to be common practice.

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9 A locally adapted agroforestry system refers to land-use systems and practices where trees are deliberately integrated with crops and/or livestock on the same land management unit adapted to the local geophysical and social conditions.

10 Reference Area: an area with similar climatic and social conditions as defined by the Köppen-classification 2017 update: [http://koeppen-geiger.vu-wien.ac.at/present.htm](http://koeppen-geiger.vu-wien.ac.at/present.htm)
ii. If the implementation proportion over a 5-year period shows a decreasing and the average implementation rate is lower than the activity penetration threshold, the project developer shall demonstrate that the decreasing adoption rate is not driven by an expectation of becoming eligible for carbon credits. If this can be demonstrated, then the activity is not considered to be common practice.

iii. If the implementation proportion over a 5-year period shows an increasing rate and the average implementation rate is lower than the activity penetration threshold, then the activity is not considered common practice. However, the project developer shall assess the implementation rate at project certification renewal among the non-project participants. If the project activity becomes common practice, then the project cannot renew its crediting period.

5| REFERENCE AREA REQUIREMENTS

5.1.1 | Projects shall define a Reference Area with the following properties:
   a. Size: the project shall meet the following requirements
      i. the minimum size of the reference area shall be determined as per the table below.
      ii. The Köppen-Geiger climatic class (10 meter resolution) of the project area must be the same as that in the reference area. If the project area falls on more than one Köppen-Geiger climatic class, then the reference area should be split to include all the climatic classes the project area falls on. In this case, the size of the reference area in each climatic class will depend on the size of the project area in that climatic class (see requirement for size of reference area).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of project area</th>
<th>Minimum size of reference area (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project area &lt;= 1,000 ha</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000 ha &lt; Project area &lt;= 5,000 ha</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000 ha &lt; Project area &lt;= 10,000 ha</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000 ha &lt; Project area &lt;= 50,000 ha</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50,000 ha &lt; Project area &lt;= 150,000 ha</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100,000 ha &lt; Project area &lt;= 150,000 ha</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project area &gt; 200,000 ha</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
b. Cropping systems: at least 90% of the reference area must have the same cropping systems as 90% of the project area.

c. Agricultural practices: at least 90% of the reference area must be under the same agricultural practices as 90% of the project area.

d. Elevation, slope, and precipitation: at least 90% of the reference area should have a mean value for these parameters that is $\pm 5\%$ the mean value of the parameters in the project area.

e. Soil type: at least 90% of the reference area must have the same soil types prevalent in 90% of the project area. When more than one soil type is found in the project area, then the proportion of each soil type in the reference region must not differ beyond $\pm 5\%$ of the proportion of the soil type in the project area. For example:

   i. Project area soil types: Soil A: 30%; Soil B: 20%; Soil C: 50%
   
   ii. Acceptable reference area soil types: Soil A: 25%; Soil B: 15%; Soil C: 55%; Soil D: 5%.

f. Land-tenure systems: at least 90% of the reference area should be governed by the land-tenure system prevalent in 90% of the project area. In case of multiple land-tenure systems, the proportion of land-tenure systems in the reference region must not differ more than $\pm 5\%$ of the proportion of the same land-tenure system in the project area. For example:

   i. Project area land-tenure systems: System A: 30%; System B: 20%; System C: 50%
   
   ii. Acceptable reference area land-tenure systems: System A: 35%; System B: 20%; System C: 45%

5.1.2 | In addition, Annexure to Activity Requirements - Forestry would be applicable to AGR projects that aim at enhancing soil carbon stock.
ANNEX – 1 NON-EXHAUSTIVE LIST OF ELIGIBLE SOC ACTIVITIES

A non-exhaustive list of eligible SOC activities is provided in the table below. Stakeholders are encouraged to contact the Gold Standard Secretariat to propose new activity types that are not listed below, unless they are explicitly stated as non-eligible in the SOC Framework Methodology. If an SOC Activity Module is not yet available, stakeholders may propose an activity module for potential soil organic carbon (SOC) activities as listed below, following the SOC Activity Modules Approval Procedure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity type</th>
<th>Scope of activity module</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zero tillage</td>
<td>Change farming practices to prevent soil carbon emissions which apply direct measurement for the estimation of SOC accrual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable grassland</td>
<td>Promote grassland management practices (such as increased use of non-N-fertilizer on degraded areas, improved pasture rotation, introduction of beneficial species (e.g. legumes) and plant inoculation, high biomass crop). This Activity Module may include fire management to prevent degradation and biomass/soil carbon loss by adopting appropriate management strategies such as regular sheep grazing, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endophytic</td>
<td>Add suitable microorganisms such as septate endophytic fungi to degraded, dry soils to increase soil carbon stock, improve soil quality, reduce need of N-fertilizer, and improve the water retention capacity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residue</td>
<td>Maintain and conserve ground coverage and increase input of organic crop residue, mulch, sod or other organic C sources to the project area fields, thus increasing the soil carbon stock while at the same time preventing erosion. This module would lead to benefits overlap if applied together with the reduced tillage module on the same project area. Respective safeguards/ calculation approaches would need to be implemented accordingly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable livestock management</td>
<td>Prevent degradation through overgrazing by adopting appropriate management strategies (e.g. adjusting 10 grazing pressure by balancing spatial and temporal presence of livestock, improved mobility of animals in pastoral and agropastoral systems, integration of trees and pastures (silvopastoral management). In addition to SOC enhancement, the grasslands become more resilient to drought and to wet conditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercropping and crop rotation</td>
<td>Improve the soil quality, nutrients and soil carbon sequestration through simultaneous cultivation of multiple crop species in a single field which might directly or not increases yield due to species complementarity (forage crops — such as grasses, clovers and alfalfa — penetrate the soil with extensive root systems that lead to the formation of soil organic matter). Food security must be maintained (yields must not be lower than baseline scenario).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agroforestry activities</td>
<td>Agroforestry activities could be considered if these are specifically implemented to increase SOC (otherwise agroforestry activities fall within the A/R methodology). Please contact the Gold Standard Secretariat to determine eligibility of the proposed activity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## DOCUMENT HISTORY

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<tr>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Release date</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>XX</td>
<td>01/11/2023</td>
<td>Public consultation draft</td>
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