

INC SUSTAINABILITY CERTIFICATION

STANDARD FOR GLOBAL TRADE SPECIALISTS



ABOUT THIS STANDARD

The **INC Sustainability Certification** promotes a standardized, streamlined, sector-specific framework for assessing sustainable practices within the nut and dried fruit industry.

This Standard evaluates the trading of nuts and dried fruits through the lens of **Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG)** considerations. The Standard focuses on governance and responsible sourcing, using weighted criteria that combine binary (yes/no) responses with quantitative indicators.

Companies holding certain industry certifications may be exempt from auditing some categories or performance measures. Certifications should have be valid, or if do not expire, been issued within the last three years. Accepted certifications include:

- ISO 16064-1
- GHG Protocol Corporate Standard
- GB/T 32150
- SA8000 (SAI)
- SMETA 4Pillar (SEDEX)
- INC Sustainability Certification

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CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

This Standard consists of two parts. **Part I. Governance & Operational Responsibility**, addresses the company’s internal practices, **Part II. Responsible Sourcing**, refers to the practices of the company’s suppliers.

To qualify for certification, a company must achieve a minimum score of **50 points**. Following the audit, the company will be awarded 1-3 stars based on its total score:

- **1 star:** 50-65 points
- **2 stars:** 66-80 points
- **3 stars:** 81+ points

Mandatory Criteria: Certain criteria are classified as mandatory. These must be met in order to be eligible for certification, regardless of total points. Compliance with **Part II. Responsible Sourcing** is considered Mandatory.

Minimum Scoring: A minimum score is required for each category. Failure to achieve the minimum score will result in disqualification, regardless of total points.

Recognized Certifications: Companies holding certain third-party certifications may be exempt from auditing some performance measures. If the company holds a recognized third-party certification (highlighted in green), it is considered to fulfill all criteria in the corresponding category.

Categories	Criteria	Max. Points
PART I. Governance & Operational Responsibility		
1. Governance & Strategy	7	20
2. Business Integrity	5	14
3. Carbon Footprint	4	10
4. Procurement	3	6
PART II. Responsible Sourcing	1	50
TOTAL	20	100

TRAINING DOCUMENTS

To facilitate the understanding and implementation of this Standard, several supporting documents have been developed:

- **Regulations and Requirements:** Defines the general functioning of the certification ([RR_v1.0_January 2026](#)).
- **Interpretation Guide:** Clarifies the intent of each criterion and provides guidance on acceptable evidence, as well as any exceptions for compliance ([IG-GTS_v1.0_March 2026](#)).
- **History Log:** Tracks all changes from previous versions ([Log_SD-PM_v1.1_March 2026](#)).

As scientific knowledge and technological developments evolve, these documents may be updated periodically to reflect changes in definitions, interpretations, and best practices. Users are therefore advised to refer to the latest version, as indicated by the version number and publication date.

All supporting documents take effect on their date of publication and supersede any previous versions. Updates apply prospectively and do not affect audits conducted before to their release.

PART I.

GOVERNANCE & OPERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

This part of the Standard addresses the company's internal practices across the following categories:

Category 1. Governance & Strategy

Category 2. Business Integrity

Category 3. Carbon Footprint

Category 4. Procurement

Category 1. Governance & Strategy

Min. Score: 10 Max. Points: 20

Subcategory	Criterion
1.1 Integration of Sustainability in Management Strategy	Sustainability is embedded in overall business strategy, with targets and actions reviewed at the management level. Sustainability KPIs are reviewed by leadership at least once every three years.
1.2 Defined Accountability	Roles and responsibilities for implementing the company's procurement and/or sustainability policy are clearly defined.
1.3 Leadership Commitment	Senior leadership actively oversees the company's sustainability policy.
1.4 Stakeholder Engagement	The company incorporates stakeholder perspectives (e.g. workers, communities, investors) into governance processes through advisory panels, surveys, or board-level discussions.
1.5 Grievance Mechanisms and Remediation	Senior management is responsible for overseeing grievance mechanisms and ensuring that legitimate complaints are addressed and remedied.
1.6 Gender Equality – Inclusive Leadership	The company takes active measures to ensure women's full participation and equal opportunities in leadership roles, including senior management, boards, and committees, with at least 30% of leadership positions held by women.
1.7 Staff Capacity Building	The procurement team receives training on Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) risks and regulations at least once every three years.

Category 2. Business Integrity

Min. Score: 4 Max. Points: 14

Subcategory	Criterion
2.1 Certification	Companies holding a SMETA 4 Pillar or SA8000 certification are considered to fulfill all criteria in this category.
2.2 Anti-Corruption and Bribery	The company has measures in place to prevent, detect, and respond to corruption and bribery in its trading operations, including a clear anti-corruption policy, employee awareness, and procedures for reporting and investigating suspected violations.
2.3 Contract Transparency	The company ensures full disclosure of all relevant terms and conditions in its trading contracts and agreements. All parties are clearly informed of product specifications, pricing, delivery terms, payment conditions, quality standards, and applicable regulations, and arbitration before the transaction is concluded.
2.4 Human and Labor Rights	The company has a process in place to identify, prevent, and mitigate adverse human and labor rights impacts, and this process is reviewed by senior leadership.
2.5 Local Community Rights	The company must consider its impact on communities in its sourcing areas, and respect the rights of local communities and Indigenous Peoples regarding land tenure and natural resources.

Category 3. Carbon Footprint

Min. Score: 4 Max. Points: 10

Subcategory	Criterion
3.1 Certification	Companies holding a certification of their carbon footprint according to ISO 14064-1, GHG Protocol Corporate Standard, covering Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions, or GB/T 32150, are considered to fulfill all criteria in this category.
3.2 Energy Consumption	The company records energy consumption for its offices, warehouses (if applicable), and related machinery or vehicles, and calculates its carbon footprint.
3.3 Carbon Emissions from Business Travel	The company quantifies carbon emissions from business-travel related transport.
3.4 Carbon Offsetting	The company annually offsets its organizational carbon emissions through contributions to certified carbon sequestration projects.

Category 4. Procurement

Min. Score: 2 Max. Points: 6

Subcategory	Criterion
4.1 Supplier Risk Assessment	Suppliers are assessed using a documented, risk-based approach that considers country risk and sector-specific ESG risks.
4.2 Continuous Improvement	The company documents and tracks corrective action plans when ESG issues are identified.
4.3 Supply Chain Traceability	A system is in place to ensure product traceability to the farm or grower group level.

PART II.

RESPONSIBLE SOURCING (1/5)

To qualify for certification, the company must demonstrate the implementation of a robust Responsible Sourcing policy, with both **direct** and **tier 2 suppliers**. The scope is limited in both cases only to providers of nuts and dried fruits. The following criteria shall be met:

- **Suppliers in High-Risk Countries:**
 - At least 80% of the total raw material volume must be sourced from suppliers that have formally signed a Code of Conduct. The requirements to be covered in the Code of Conduct are detailed in the following section.
 - Verification: the company shall verify the compliance with the code with online surveys, to at least 30% of suppliers located in high-risk countries. Verification shall be conducted through Online Surveys and on a rotating basis, ensuring that different suppliers are assessed each year. This percentage shall be calculated excluding **certified suppliers** (i.e. companies holding a valid SMETA 4-Pillar or INC Sustainability Certification).

See Annex 1 for the list of High-Risk Countries.

PART II.

RESPONSIBLE SOURCING (2/5)

To qualify for certification, the company must demonstrate the implementation of a robust Responsible Sourcing policy, with both **direct** and **tier 2 suppliers**. The scope is limited in both cases only to providers of nuts and dried fruits. The following criteria shall be met:

- **Suppliers in Other Countries:**
 - At least 80% of the total raw material volume must be sourced from suppliers that have formally signed a Code of Conduct. The requirements to be covered in the Code of Conduct are detailed in the following section.
 - Verification: the company shall verify the compliance with the code with online surveys, to at least 15% of suppliers located in high-risk countries. Verification shall be conducted through Online Surveys and on a rotating basis, ensuring that different suppliers are assessed each year. This percentage shall be calculated excluding **certified suppliers** (i.e. companies holding a valid SMETA 4-Pillar or INC Sustainability Certification).

See Annex 1 for the list of High-Risk Countries.

PART II.

RESPONSIBLE SOURCING (3/5)

To qualify for certification, the company must demonstrate the implementation of a robust Responsible Sourcing policy, with both **direct** and **tier 2 suppliers**. The scope is limited in both cases only to providers of nuts and dried fruits. The following criteria shall be met:

- **Tier 2 Suppliers in High-Risk countries:**
 - The company shall ensure that Tier 2 suppliers sign a Code of Conduct. Coverage shall include at least 80% of Tier 2 suppliers by volume.
 - In addition, at least 40% of Tier 2 suppliers by number shall sign the Code of Conduct. The requirements to be covered in the Code of Conduct are detailed in the following section.
 - Verification: the company shall verify the compliance with the code with online surveys, to at least 30% of tier 2 suppliers located in high-risk countries. Verification shall be conducted through Online Surveys and on a rotating basis, ensuring that different suppliers are assessed each year. This percentage shall be calculated excluding **Certified Second-tier suppliers** (i.e. companies holding a valid SMETA 4-Pillar or INC Sustainability Certification).

See Annex 1 for the list of High-Risk Countries

PART II.

RESPONSIBLE SOURCING (4/5)

To qualify for certification, the company must demonstrate the implementation of a robust Responsible Sourcing policy, with both **direct** and **tier 2 suppliers**. The scope is limited in both cases only to providers of nuts and dried fruits. The following criteria shall be met:

- **Tier 2 Suppliers in Other Countries:**
 - The company shall ensure that Tier 2 suppliers sign a Code of Conduct. Coverage shall include at least 80% of Tier 2 suppliers by volume.
 - In addition, at least 40% of Tier 2 suppliers by number shall sign the Code of Conduct. The requirements to be covered in the Code of Conduct are detailed in the following section.
 - Verification: the company shall verify the compliance with the code with online surveys, to at least 15% of tier 2 suppliers located in high-risk countries. Verification shall be conducted through Online Surveys and on a rotating basis, ensuring that different suppliers are assessed each year. This percentage shall be calculated excluding **Certified Second-tier suppliers** (i.e. companies holding a valid SMETA 4-Pillar or INC Sustainability Certification).

See Annex 1 for the list of High-Risk Countries

PART II.

RESPONSIBLE SOURCING (5/5)



* Verification: Online Surveys shall be conducted yearly on a rotating basis, ensuring that different suppliers are assessed each year. Verification of Suppliers shall be carried out by the Company, and to Tier-2 Suppliers, by the Supplier.

Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct shall address all criteria listed below.

Definitions from the ILO or applicable local legislation—whichever is more stringent—shall serve as the reference framework.

Compliance,
Human & Labor
Rights

- Prohibition of child labor and forced labor
- Non-discrimination, respect and fair treatment of workers
- Legal employment terms
- Payment of legal wages
- Social security, health and safety
- Freedom of association
- Ethical business practices

Environmental
Impact

- Forest & ecosystem conservation
 - Prohibition of the use of fire for land clearance
 - Efficient use of resources, including water, agrochemicals, and waste management
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ANNEX. HIGH-RISK COUNTRIES

Afghanistan	Egypt	Malawi	Senegal
Argentina	El Salvador	Mali	Serbia
Bangladesh	Ethiopia	Mauritania	South Sudan
Benin	Gabon	Mexico	Sudan
Bhutan	Gambia	Micronesia	Tanzania
Bolivia	Ghana	Mongolia	Timor-Leste
Brazil	Guatemala	Myanmar	Togo
Burkina Faso	Guinea	Nauru	Türkiye
Burundi	Guinea-Bissau	Niger	Tuvalu
Cambodia	Haiti	Nigeria	Uganda
Chad	Honduras	North Korea	Ukraine
Colombia	India	Pakistan	Venezuela
Comoros	Iran	Palau	Viet Nam
Congo, DRC	Jamaica	Panama	Zambia
Costa Rica	Kenya	Paraguay	
Côte d'Ivoire	Laos	Peru	
Dominican Rep.	Lebanon	Philippines	
Ecuador	Madagascar	Samoa	

This list has been compiled based on classifications from the International Labour Organization (ILO), the U.S. Department of Labor – Bureau of International Labor Affairs, and The Rainforest Alliance.

CONTACT US

If you have any feedback or questions regarding this Standard or the auditing process, please don't hesitate to contact the INC at:
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