

INC SUSTAINABILITY CERTIFICATION



INC SUSTAINABILITY[®]
INSTITUTE FOR NUTS
& DRIED FRUIT





INTRODUCTION



The **INC Global Certification Program** establishes a unified and credible framework for sustainable production in the nut and dried fruit industry. It provides a standardized approach to sustainability, ensuring consistency and accountability across the sector.

Developed in line with international guidelines, industry best practices, and expert input, the program defines certification standards for three key operator categories:

01/ Standard for Growers

02/ Standard for Processors and Manufacturers

03/ Standard for Global Trade Specialists

Through certification, companies demonstrate their commitment to sustainability while reinforcing the integrity, credibility, and responsible growth of the global nut and dried fruit industry. To guarantee impartiality, compliance is verified by independent, authorized auditing bodies. Certified participants are granted the right to use the official INC trademark—a recognized symbol of sustainability and market leadership.

By implementing this business-to-business (B2B) framework, the INC supports sustainable production practices and provides a clear pathway toward resilient value chains. Certified companies benefit from stronger market visibility, enhanced brand reputation, and greater recognition—essential advantages in today’s sustainability-driven global marketplace.

ABOUT US



The International Nut and Dried Fruit Council is a private foundation who’s main goal is to promote global consumption of nuts and dried fruits, and communicate and disseminate industry information. With an extensive network of more than 900 members across 85 countries, the organization is a global umbrella for industry initiatives.

After recognizing sustainability as a key area for the industry, in 2025 the INC creates the INC Sustainability Institute, a platform to support the implementation of the Certification: providing access to certified members to a Datahub on sustainability research and industry programs, disseminating news, and setting a benchmark for sustainable initiatives in the industry.





OUR VISION



To be the globally recognized standard for sustainability in the nut and dried fruit industry, fostering a responsible, transparent, and resilient sector that contributes to a healthier planet and thriving society.

OUR MISSION



To provide a streamlined and credible framework for sustainable production in the nut and dried fruit industry.

OUR GOALS



Advance Sustainability

Promote adoption of world-class sustainability practices across the nut and dried fruit supply chain.



Ensure Credibility & Trust

Provide a transparent, independently verified certification system that strengthens industry integrity.



Enhance Market Value

Support certified companies with greater visibility, recognition, and competitiveness in the global market.



Unify & Strengthen the Industry

Establish standardized global benchmarks, foster collaboration, and align with international sustainability goals.





SCOPE & REACH



The certification is not product based, evaluates only the practices related to production, processing, manufacturing and trading of the following products:

- Almonds
- Brazil Nuts
- Cashews
- Dates
- Dried Apricots
- Dried Cranberries
- Dried Figs
- Dried Grapes
- Hazelnuts
- Macadamias
- Peanuts
- Pecans
- Pine Nuts
- Pistachios
- Prunes
- Walnuts

CERTIFICATION PROGRAM



The Certification evaluates common industry specific practices through three pillars: **Environmental, Social, and Governance**, divided into various categories that are evaluated according to different criteria. To increase reach on the supply chain, three type of Standards have been developed, for **Growers, Processors and Manufacturers, and Global Trade Specialists**.

- 01/ Standard for Growers
- 02/ Standard for Processors and Manufacturers
- 03/ Standard for Global Trade Specialists

01/ Standard for Growers



In addition to general practices, the standard may incorporate specific aspects of the cultivation system for each product. The evaluation of general criteria can also vary depending on the risk profile of each crop. The INC Standard for Growers places strong emphasis on the Environmental pillar. Categories:

1. Soil Management
2. Water Source
3. Water Use
4. Agricultural Inputs
5. Biodiversity
6. Carbon Footprint
7. Safety at work
8. Human & Labor Rights
9. Governance





02/ Standard for Processors and Manufacturers



Designed as a multi-product framework with a strong emphasis on Social and Governance dimensions. It promotes a holistic approach to responsible business conduct—encouraging companies to integrate sustainability into their operations, workforce practices, and with a strong focus on responsible sourcing. Categories:

PART I: Governance & Operational Responsibility

- 1. Water Management
- 2. Industrial Input
- 3. Carbon Footprint
- 4. Waste Management
- 5. Human & Labor Rights
- 6. Safety at work
- 7. Local Communities
- 8. Procurement

PART II: Responsible Sourcing

- 1. Compliance & Ethics
- 2. Human & Labor Rights
- 3. Environmental Impact

03/ Standard for Global Trade Specialists



Structured as a multi-product framework with a strong emphasis on responsible sourcing, it embeds sustainability into procurement strategies and supply chain oversight. By addressing environmental stewardship, ethical labor practices, and transparent governance, the standard supports a more accountable and resilient global trade system. Categories:

PART I: Governance & Operational Responsibility

- 1. Governance & Strategy
- 2. Business Integrity
- 3. Carbon Footprint
- 4. Procurement

PART II: Responsible Sourcing

- Compliance & Ethics
- Human & Labor Rights
- Environmental Impact





THE CERTIFICATION



The **Certification Program** is structured in three-year cycles, beginning with an on-site audit in the first year, followed by remote online audits in the second and third years.

To streamline processes and avoid duplication, the INC Certification partially recognizes other widely adopted third-party certifications that meet its credibility requirements. These recognized certifications are specified within each Standard.

Companies are assessed across **three performance tiers**, reflecting their level of commitment to sustainable practices. This tiered approach acknowledges organizations at the early stages of their sustainability journey while encouraging continuous improvement and deeper engagement to reach higher levels of performance and impact.

In addition, certified companies gain access to the **INC Sustainability Institute's DataHub**—a centralized resource featuring scientific studies, industry programs, and best-practice insights. This knowledge platform is designed to support ongoing progress and foster innovation in sustainable practices.

CREDIBILITY AND ASSURANCE



The Certification is granted after the audit of an independent third-party, that will evaluate the compliance to all criteria of the related Standard's.

This provides a neutral, objective assessment of the applicant's practices. Certification Bodies are independent companies specializing in auditing, with proven multinational presence, strong reputation, and expertise in evaluating agricultural and industrial standards.

The INC will evaluate the audit report and grant, if appropriate, a Certification. Evaluation will be performed under strict conditions of impartiality, independence, and Confidentiality, as detailed in the following **Declaration of Impartiality, Independence, and Confidentiality**. Any disagreements regarding the audit results or evaluation may be approached through the **Complaints and Appeals Procedure**.

A list of all Certified Companies will be regularly published on the website: www.sustainability.nutfruit.org





THE VALUE OF YOUR CERTIFICATION



Sustainability is not just a trend, but a necessity in today's day-to-day business. However, diversity of regulations between countries and national programs/recommendations are a challenge for an industry that operates globally, from source to markets. Furthermore, the existing certifications often provide very deep insights, although on a narrow window of key topics.

The INC Sustainability Certification aims to explore all key criteria that affect all areas of sustainability.

Through a streamlined, focused approach, the Certification provides a simpler but complete assessment of the critical areas of sustainability in the nut and dried fruit industry.

The Certification aims to facilitate business interactions by identifying providers that adhere to these principles, and at the same time provide resources and tools for further improvement.

Certified Companies will have granted the use of a protected trademark, with a digital package to be used in all kinds of B2B interactions:

- Packaging for B2B operations (excluding End-consumer products)
- Marketing materials, both digital and printed
- Websites and social media platforms
- Internal and external communications, in both physical and digital formats
- Events

APPLICATION AND EVALUATION PROCESS



Interested companies may apply for certification through any of the INC's official communication channels, including the INC Sustainability Institute website. The INC will review the applicant's suitability and if approved, further information will be provided (Certification Agreement, and Audit- Service Proposal). The referred documents outline the conditions for use of the trademark, confidentiality, and associated responsibilities. Upon agreement, the INC will notify an authorized Certifying Body to coordinate directly with the applicant the audit date and time.

For applicants with multiple farms or facilities, a representative subset will be inspected, as it is common practice in certification programs. The number of locations to be audited will be determined by calculating the square root of the total number of farms/facilities, rounded up to the nearest whole number. The applicant's "head office," as defined by the applicant, will always be audited.

The evaluation will be conducted by a Certifying Body combining on-site inspections (in the first year) and remote audits (in the second and third years).

Assessments may include field inspections, document reviews, and, where necessary, access to the applicant's confidential information.

Information obtained will be documented in the Audit Report and handled with strict confidentiality as defined in the **Document Control Procedure**.



CONTACT US

If you have any feedback or questions regarding the Program, please don't hesitate to contact the INC at: sustainability@nutfruit.org.

