## INTEGRITY PROGRAM

Guideline



#### Introduction

the 4C Integrity Program aims to ensure a consistent, objective and reliable audit and certification process by all Certification Bodies (CBs) cooperating with 4C on a global basis. The program contributes to continuous improvement of the 4C System and facilitates the high standards of 4C certification with respect to quality, credibility and reliability. It supports the quality and risk management at 4C and provides valuable feedback to 4C regarding the implementation of the standard and its verification.

Candidates for Integrity Audits (IA) are selected on an annual basis.

## Who conducts the Integrity Audit?

Integrity Assessments are conducted by the 4C Integrity Program Manager and 4C Integrity Auditors. Audits can take place in any country where 4C Units, Intermediary Buyers (IB)/ Final Buyers (FB) and CBs are located. The Integrity Auditors work on behalf of 4C and are not allowed to work for CBs cooperating with 4C at the same time.

4C Integrity Auditors are experts with professional experience in certification and deep knowledge about quality and supply chains for coffee and other agricultural products



Integrity Auditors are certification experts who work on behalf of 4C



The objective of 4C Integrity Assessments is to evaluate the quality of 4C audits and certification processes



Integrity Assessments intend to ensure credible and transparent certification processes

## What is the goal of Integrity Assessments?

The objective of 4C Integrity Assessments is to evaluate the quality of 4C audits and certification processes conducted by independent CBs. Integrity Audits are not intended to blame auditees but serve as a basis to identify gaps and/or potential risks of non-compliances with 4C System requirements, and for the auditees to receive guidance on alternative improvement actions to assure compliance with 4C's sustainability requirements.

## Integrity Assessments intend to ensure credible and robust certification processes

In order to achieve the best results, continuous communication between all parties involved is requested to facilitate the entire assessment process.



4C offers you a completely free-of-charge opportunity to identify areas for improvement and receive specialised advice from experts, to increase productivity and improve sustainability of your coffee business

How do Integrity Audits differ from 4C audits conducted by CBs?

The scope of 4C Integrity Audits will be defined depending on findings of previous reports from recertification, surveillance and addendum audits conducted by CBs, as well as recorded infringements, feedback or violations reported from third parties against 4C Regulations. Defining the final sample and scope of the assessment is up to the judgment of the Integrity Auditor. The Integrity Auditor must be granted access and insight to all sites and documents that he/she considers as relevant for the assessment. After the Integrity Audit, results are compared with audit report(s) from previous 4C audit(s) conducted by CBs.



The participation of 4C System users in a scheduled 4C Integrity Assessment is mandatory and may be requested on a random or risk-based selection approach. After the receipt of the notification letter, the selected auditee is obliged to respond to the notification letter within 5 working days to confirm participation at the audit dates proposed by 4C. Rescheduling may be possible in case of well-founded reasons upon written request by the selected auditee (within 5 working days from the date the notification is sent by 4C). Refusal to participate is a severe infringement with the 4C requirements and will be sanctioned with a Red Card (ref. 4C System Regulations, Chapter 3.8 and 4C Certification Body Regulations).

Can auditors from the responsible CB of the 4C Unit, IB/FB join the Integrity Audit?

The representative of the responsible CB is invited to join the Integrity Audit conducted at 4C Unit level or IB/FB as an observer. The responsible CB shall send its qualitied and responsible auditor or evaluator to join the audit. However, any interference that might result in influence of the Integrity Assessment and audit results by CBs is not allowed and will lead to corresponding sanctions.

Participation of the respective CB is mandatory in the opening and closing meetings of the IA

Is the auditee obliged to cover the costs for Integrity Audits?

4C does not charge any costs of Integrity Assessments to the auditee. Costs of Integrity

Audits are fully covered by 4C.

How much time does the auditee have to tackle non-conformities identified after the end of the audit? The auditee has 60 calendar days to implement actions to tackle major NCs identified, counted from the last day of the Integrity Audit. Minor NCs must be documented within the Improvement Plan of the respective 4C Unit/IB/FB. For CB office audits, the auditee has 14 days to tackle detected infringements, counted from the day 4C has send the first warning letter to the CB.



The Integrity Audit includes several steps with defined timelines and will be explained in a detailed 4C Step-by-Step Guide.





### What benefits can be expected from a 4C Integrity Assessment?

- Receive specialized feedback and assessment free of charge from experts.
- Receive an independent expert evaluation of the accuracy and completeness of compliance with 4C System Regulations.
- Help to identify opportunities for cost savings, increase farm productivity, revenue growth, and other improvements to nourish the management strategy of the 4C Unit, IB or FB.
- Provide assurance to stakeholders, such as investors, creditors, and regulatory bodies, that the company is operating in accordance with 4C Code of Conduct standard.
- Can help to build trust and confidence with stakeholders, which enhances your company's reputation and support future business opportunities.
- Gather key ideas from a specialized expert for the continuous improvement path, helping to establish a baseline for performance and identifying areas for ongoing monitoring and improvement
- Provide insights and recommendations for improving risk management and management practices within the 4C Unit.

• Can improve the management and handling of 4C audits.

For further questions regarding 4C Integrity Program please contact us:

integrity@4c-services.org

# Which type of sanctions can be applied in case of infringements\*?



Moderate infringements such as documentation failures will lead to warning letters and/or monetary sanctions.

#### **Severe infringements**



detected during the 4C Integrity Assessment will lead to issuing the Yellow Card and/or monetary sanctions depending on the type of infringement.

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Critical infringements
will lead to the Red Card,
monetary sanctions and /or
withdrawal of the 4C Certificate

\*(ref. 4C System Update 13)





4C IS A GLOBAL LEADING COFFEE CERTIFICATION SCHEME which applies strict requirements on economic, social and environmental conditions for coffee production and processing, aiming to establish sustainable, trustworthy and fair coffee supply chains