

FAQ: Assurance Model Changes

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Frequently Asked Questions

Purpose

This document lists questions and answers on the new [Assurance Manual 4.0](#). It is meant as a supplementary resource for IP and PU, as well as the BCI staff.

New PU Set-up and Readiness Checks

- ***In countries where BCI does not have an official country programme in place yet can we consider preparatory activities as a set-up phase? If yes, which are the necessary requirements in terms of PU organization and documentation etc.?***

You can consult [Assurance Manual 4.0](#) document, and specifically sections 3 and 4.

- ***If a PU receives a non-conformity during the readiness check, and PU has to submit the CAP, who will be checking the CAP?***

The IP will be solely responsible for following up on corrective actions identified during a Readiness Check. The CAP for a Readiness Check is incorporated into the Readiness Check Report Template and will need to be completed by the IP Representative and PU Manager together. IPs are expected to follow up either remotely or in-person to ensure these corrective actions have been implemented after the Readiness Check, and there is a section of the reporting template where they can 'sign off' the corrective actions. IPs will provide completed Readiness Check reports (including corrective actions) to BCI periodically or when requested.

- ***Will Large Farms need to have a set-up season?***

No, they will not.

- ***Are the readiness check reports reviewed by Assurance Managers or by country teams?***

BCI Assurance Managers and Country Teams are not required to review the Readiness Check reports. It is the responsibility of the IP to complete the Readiness Check Report fully and with a high level of quality. The completed reports will be shared with BCI (i.e. through a shared Dropbox folder) periodically or when requested by BCI. BCI may spot-check a sample of reports for quality control purposes and will provide feedback to IPs on this basis only.

- ***Will the IP share schedule of readiness checks with BCI prior to the visits?***

It is not required that the IP share a schedule of Readiness Check visits with BCI. BCI will set up a simple tracker in Excel, which IPs will be asked to maintain up to date with the PU codes, dates of visits, and report status. For most countries this tracker will be maintained in a designated Dropbox folder where the reports can also be stored when completed. BCI will monitor that all new PUs have received a Readiness Check ahead of being recommended for licensing.

➤ ***Does a Readiness Check take place every year? Does it apply to licensed PUs too?***

No – a Readiness Check applies only to new PUs which have not yet been licensed. Generally, a new PU would therefore receive only one Readiness Check. However, if a new PU is recommended for licensing (after a Readiness Check) and then a Systemic non-conformity is found during the Licensing Assessment, another Readiness Check would be required by the IP before the PU can be recommended for licensing again.

➤ ***When can a Readiness Checks be carried out?***

Readiness Checks can be carried out any time from sowing to harvest during the initial set-up season or any time during the sowing period of the PU's second season. IPs must submit a list of all PUs that are recommended for licensing to BCI Country Teams by the end of sowing deadline at latest. Refer to [7 Readiness Checks](#) of the Assurance Manual 4.0 for more detail on the Readiness Check process.

➤ ***During the PU set-up phase, will there also be a BCI visit?***

During the set-up phase, BCI will not carry out any kind of assurance visit. However, BCI teams may carry out a separate capacity building or support visit to provide guidance to the PU – these do not impact licensing.

➤ ***Are there any guidelines about the number of farmers registered in a PU in year “0”?***

At the moment, BCI only has guidance around optimum PU sizes and is not yet prescriptive about the number of farmers in a PU. Note that any PU where the farmer composition changes by more than 33% year to year will require a surveillance assessment to maintain the license.

➤ ***Is the new Assurance model applicable to Large Farms?***

Yes, though the changes for Large Farms are limited. Previously, non-conformities identified during Large Farm external assessments could only be graded as systemic, which would lead to an automatic licence denial. Going forward, non-conformities raised during Large Farm assessments can also be categorised as 'incidental' – these need to be addressed within 6 months for the licence to remain valid. Another change is that self-assessments no longer impact licensing; all licences will have a standard duration of 3 years.

Self-assessment

➤ ***What has changed in regard to self-assessments?***

The self-assessment process will no longer be linked to licensing – instead it will be used as a learning tool. An annual self-assessment will still be required for all PUs and LFs;

however, the outcome will no longer be 'compliant' or 'non-compliant'. Improvement indicators will not be a part of self-assessment. Instead, the self-assessment will focus on identifying gaps against Core Indicators, reporting progress against the Continuous Improvement Plan, and identifying areas where additional support or corrective actions are needed. The self-assessment is required annually for all PUs, including PUs in their first season.

Licensing

➤ ***For licensing purposes, will a PU be checked by both 3PVs and BCI in the same season?***

No, only one licensing assessment will take place during the licensing season and will be carried out either by BCI or by a third-party verifier

➤ ***Will BCI only issue 3-year licences?***

Yes, all PUs and Large Farms that are found compliant during a Licensing Assessment will receive a standard 3-year licence from the 2020-21 season onwards.

➤ ***If a PU received a 1-year licence in the 2019-20 season, will it be extended to 3 years?***

PUs that are due for licensing in 2020-21 will either receive a Licensing Assessment this season, or in some cases be granted a new 3-year license and will have their Licensing Assessment deferred to 2021-22 season. BCI Assurance Managers will work to provide each country with a customised assessment schedule for 2020-21.

➤ ***Has the concept of provisional/conditional licensing been changed?***

This is no longer a formal term in the BCI Assurance Manual; however the concept applies. A small percentage of PUs may have their licensing assessment scheduled after the licensing date – in these cases, the license would be renewed ahead of the assessment, and if any systemic non-conformities are found, the licence would be cancelled for the following season.

➤ ***If a PU received a 3 or 5 year license in 2019-20, will the license still be valid under the new model? Will these PUs receive another Licensing Assessment in 2020-21 season?***

All active licences will remain valid, and these PUs will only receive another Licensing Assessment when the current licence expires. However, in the case of active 5-year licenses, BCI Assurance Managers may schedule a Surveillance Assessment ahead of the expiration of the licence. In these cases, the IP will be informed.

➤ ***What will happen to a license when there is a 33% change in farmer composition in the PU?***

A PU where the farmer composition has changed by 33% will have to undergo a Surveillance Assessment in order to maintain a licence. They will be added to the Surveillance Assessment schedule for 2020-21 by Assurance Managers.

PU Support Visit

➤ ***Does the IP need to share the PU Support Visit schedule with BCI?***

The IP will not need to share a visit schedule with BCI. However the IP will be asked to maintain a tracker of PU support visits that BCI will have access to, including e.g. the PU codes and visit date and report status. In most cases this will be saved in a shared Dropbox folder – BCI is still working on setting up this system and designing a template for the visit tracker.

➤ ***Will a given percentage of PUs receive Support Visits each season or will they need to be conducted in every licensed PU?***

PU Support Visits will be conducted by IPs for every PU at least once during their active licence period. Please note here that in 2020 BCI will provide a sample size for each IP roughly equal to BCI 2PCCs they would have carried out under the previous model. IPs will be able to choose which PUs to visit.

➤ ***Who should the PU Support Visit report be shared with?***

Copies of the PU Support Visit reports are to be shared with the BCI Country Teams at least once per year, or when requested. BCI is setting up a system for IPs to be able to easily share reports, for example through a shared Dropbox structure.

Surveillance Assessment

➤ ***If additional risks are identified during a PU visit, will there be additional verification checks?***

A Surveillance Assessment can be commissioned if a risk is flagged during, for instance, a PU Support Visit. In this case, the IP notifies BCI and BCI assessors will conduct a Surveillance Assessment.

➤ ***Will existing PUs with 3-year licenses receive Surveillance Assessment in the 2020-21 season?***

Surveillance assessment is conducted in year 2 or 3 of an active licence.

Templates

➤ ***When will BCI share the new CIP template? What are the changes in the new CIP template?***

There are no updates to the CIP template for the season 2020-21. BCI will monitor this process for another year before we make informed, holistic changes to the CIP process with feedback from BCI Country Teams and IPs.

➤ ***Is there a change in farmer list template or farmer list submission process for season 2020-21?***

There are no global changes expected for 2020-21. Some countries may choose to test out new categories for farmer+ or co-farmer categories in the farmer lists – please reach out to your local BCI Country Team if you have questions.

Other



➤ **Has the process for comparison farmers in the new and existing PUs changed?**

The process has not changed for season 2020-21.

➤ **CIP: Is there a minimum number of focus areas to be identified in a CIP?**

There is no guideline around a minimum number of focus areas to be identified in a CIP.

➤ **What is BCI planning in terms of 3PV knowledge upgrading?**

All 3PVs undergo a refresher training prior to their assessment visits.

➤ **Have Results Indicator reporting criteria changed in the new Assurance Model?**

This process remains largely the same. However, for PUs in set-up phase, Results Indicator data is only required for a small set of 5 designated Learning Groups to focus on quality and learning.

➤ **What is the Government's role related to risk identification (from [Summary of the Assurance revision](#) in point six)?**

If any external source, including the government, raises credible concerns around social or environmental risks, BCI may conduct an additional field-based verification visit.

➤ **How does a worker interview differ from farmer interview?**

Worker Interviews and Farmer Interviews are both expected to be covered during a Licensing/Surveillance Assessment, Readiness Check, and PU Support Visit. Please refer to the *BCI Assessment Guidance* documents available on the [BCI website](#) for more information on these elements.