



M A L A Y S I A N S U S T A I N A B L E P A L M O I L

INTEGRITY ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acronym	3
Definition	4
1. Introduction	6
2. Objectives	5
3. Scope	6
3.1 Purpose and Applicability	6
3.2 Nature of Integrity Assessment	6
3.3 Applicable Requirements	7
3.4 Subjects of Integrity Assessment	7
3.5 Assessment Coverage	7
3.6 Assessment Methodology	8
3.7 Stakeholder Engagement	8
3.8 Supporting Procedures	8
4. General Requirements	8
4.1 Confidentiality	8
4.2 Impartiality and Conflict of Interest	9
4.3 Transparency	9
4.4 Disclosure Information	9
4.5 Publicly Available Information	9
4.6 Resources Requirements	9
5. Risk-based Approach to Integrity Assessment	10
5.1 Risk-based Principle	10
5.2 Risk Considerations	10
5.3 Application of Risk Classification	10
5.4 Review of Risk Classification	10
5.5 Supporting Procedures	11
6. Conduct of Integrity Assessment	11
6.1 General Principle	11
6.2 Access to Information and Cooperation	11
6.3 Assessment Execution	11
6.4 Findings and Conclusions	12
6.5 Corrective Actions	12
6.6 Scheme-Level Actions	12
6.7 Complaints, Appeals, and Disputes	12
6.8 Supporting Procedures	12

ACRONYM

AB	Accreditation Body
ACB	Accredited Certification Body
BOT	Board of Trustees
CAR	Corrective Action Request
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DRC	Dispute Resolution Committee
DSM	Department of Standards Malaysia
HQ	Headquarters
LA	Lead Assessor
MSPO	Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil
NC	Non-Conformity
OFI	Opportunity For Improvement

DEFINITION

Accreditation Body (AB)	The organisation that undertakes the accreditation of Certification Bodies.
Accredited Certification Body (ACB)	Certification Body that has obtained accreditation by the Accreditation Body to undertake the MSPO certification assessment and issues a certificate.
Announced Assessment	Assessment or evaluation conducted within fourteen (14) working days to the organisation being assessed.
Assessment	The process of determining whether an organisation fulfils requirements related to its technical competence.
Certificate Holder	Organisation that is officially granted a certificate by an Accredited Certification Body, signifying they have met the requisite competence standards.
Conflict of Interest	A situation where impartiality could be compromised by a person or organisation's relationships, interests, or obligations.
Confidentiality	Property that information is not made available or disclosed to unauthorised individuals, entities, or processes.
Corrective Action	Action to eliminate the cause of a nonconformity and to prevent recurrence.
Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC)	An independent committee established by the Board of Trustees of the MSPO to consider and resolve any types of disputes specified under Dispute Resolution Procedure.
Impartiality	Presence of objectivity. Objectivity means decisions are based on evidence, not influenced by other interests or pressures.
Integrity Assessment	An assessment conducted by the scheme owner or its appointed technical expert to monitor the ACBs MSPO Certification audit activities based on risk-based assessment.
Non-Conformity	Non-fulfilment of a requirement.
Observer	Individuals who accompany the assessment team but do not influence or participate in the assessment activities.

DEFINITION

Opportunity For Improvement	A suggestion or recommendation identified during an assessment that could enhance the effectiveness or efficiency of a process, system, or practice, even though it currently meets requirements.
Recognition Agreement	A formal, documented agreement between MSPO (as the Scheme Owner) and the Accredited Certification Bodies (ACBs) involved in conformity assessment or certification, outlining rights, duties, and conditions that shall be fulfilled.
Risk Assessment	The overall process of risk identification, risk analysis, and risk evaluation, which includes recognising potential risks that could affect objectives, understand their nature, sources, and level, and compare risk levels against established criteria to determine acceptability.
Suspension	Putting temporary restriction in place for ACBs to conduct new certification audits (Stage 1 and Stage 2) and Recertification audits until the suspension is lifted. The ACBs shall take necessary corrective action not exceeding 180 days to lift the suspension. Failing which, the agreement will be terminated.
Unannounced Assessment	Assessment or evaluation conducted within three (3) working days to the organisation being assessed.
Withdrawal	ACB will not be allowed to conduct any further audits with immediate effect. The ACBs need to notify its clients and Accreditation Body (AB) within 2 working days from the date of termination. All certificates issued by the terminated ACB will remain valid until the next surveillance or recertification audit, whichever comes first.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil (MSPO), as the Scheme Owner of the MSPO Certification Scheme, is responsible for ensuring the integrity, credibility, and consistent implementation of certification activities conducted under the scheme. This responsibility includes the establishment of appropriate oversight mechanisms to safeguard confidence in MSPO certification outcomes.

Accredited Certification Bodies (ACBs) play a critical role in implementing the MSPO Certification Scheme. To support effective scheme governance and oversight, MSPO conducts Integrity Assessments as part of its monitoring framework.

The Integrity Assessment is distinct from accreditation assessments conducted by the Department of Standards Malaysia (DSM). While accreditation assessments evaluate conformity with ISO/IEC standards, Integrity Assessments focus on scheme-specific implementation and operational integrity under the MSPO Certification Scheme.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the integrity assessment are to:

- a) Provide assurance that certification activities conducted by Accredited Certification Bodies (ACBs) are consistent with and conform to MSPO Certification Scheme requirements;
- b) Uphold the impartiality, credibility, and integrity of the MSPO certification system; and
- c) Support continual improvement in certification practices to strengthen the effective implementation of the MSPO Certification Scheme.

3. SCOPE

3.1 Purpose and Applicability

This Guideline outlines the requisite criteria and procedures for executing Integrity Assessments of ACBs operating within the framework of the Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil (MSPO) Certification Scheme.

The Integrity Assessment is established by MSPO, as the Scheme Owner, to ensure confidence in the competence, consistency, and integrity of certification activities conducted under the MSPO certification scheme, in its capacity as the scheme owner, is responsible for defining and implementing the scope of Integrity Assessments.

3.2 Nature of Integrity Assessment

Integrity Assessments are limited to activities necessary to evaluate the conformity, consistency, and integrity of certification processes performed by ACBs under the MSPO Certification Scheme.

Integrity Assessments:

- a) focus on certification-related activities and decision-making; and
- b) do not constitute accreditation assessments and do not replace assessments conducted by the Accreditation Body.

ISO/IEC 17011 is applied as a reference framework for the development and implementation of Integrity Assessment activities.

3.3 Applicable Requirements

Integrity Assessments are conducted against relevant requirements of:

- a) Applicable ISO/IEC standards related to certification activities; and
- b) MSPO Standards, Scheme Documents, Recognition Agreements, and other applicable MSPO-issued requirements.

The detailed interpretation and application of these requirements are defined in relevant MSPO procedures.

3.4 Subjects of Integrity Assessment

The Integrity Assessment shall be conducted for all Accredited Certification Bodies (ACBs) operating under the MSPO Certification Scheme.

Findings identified during the Integrity Assessment shall be attributed to the ACB, as the ACB is responsible for planning, conducting, and making certification decisions for MSPO certification audits. Findings shall not be attributed to the certificate holder.

3.5 Assessment Coverage

Integrity Assessments may include the review of certification-related activities and records to evaluate:

- a) the effectiveness and impartiality of audit and certification decision-making processes;
- b) the consistency and traceability between audit evidence, conclusions, and certification decisions; and
- c) the overall conformity of certification activities with MSPO Scheme requirements.

The scope and depth of assessment coverage are determined by MSPO using a risk-based approach.

3.6 Assessment Methodology

Integrity Assessments may involve appropriate assessment methods, including document review, interviews, observation, and stakeholder engagement, where relevant.

Assessments may be conducted on an announced or unannounced basis, as determined by MSPO in accordance with risk considerations and applicable procedures.

3.7 Stakeholder Engagement

Where appropriate, MSPO may engage relevant stakeholders as part of the Integrity Assessment to support verification of certification activities and assessment conclusions.

Stakeholder information shall be evaluated objectively and handled in accordance with MSPO confidentiality and impartiality requirements.

3.8 Supporting Procedures

The detailed assessment methodologies, sampling approaches, notification arrangements, evidence collection methods, and stakeholder consultation processes are defined in the relevant MSPO procedures.

4. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Confidentiality

All personnel engaged in the Integrity Assessment activities are bound by strict confidentiality protocols, ensuring that all information acquired throughout the assessment process remains safeguarded against unauthorised disclosure.

Confidential information shall be used solely for the purpose of Integrity Assessment activities and handled in accordance with MSPO confidentiality requirements and applicable laws.

Any disclosure of information shall be limited, justified, and managed in accordance with MSPO governance provisions.

This mandate extends unequivocally to MSPO personnel, appointed assessors, representatives of ACBs, certificate holders, and all other entities participating in the assessment.

4.2 Impartiality and Conflict of Interest

Integrity Assessments shall be conducted impartially and free from actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest.

Personnel involved in Integrity Assessment activities shall act objectively, avoid situations that may compromise impartiality, and comply with MSPO requirements on conflict of interest management.

4.3 Transparency

Subject to confidentiality requirements, MSPO may disclose information related to Integrity Assessments where necessary to support scheme governance, oversight, and stakeholder confidence.

Such disclosures shall be factual, proportionate, and consistent with MSPO Scheme requirements.

4.4 Disclosure of Information

Integrity Assessment information and outcomes may be disclosed to relevant parties where appropriate and in accordance with MSPO Scheme requirements, applicable laws, and governance provisions.

4.5 Publicly Available Information

MSPO may make publicly available information related to scheme oversight, including the status of recognized ACBs and scheme-level actions arising from Integrity Assessments, where appropriate and solely at MSPO's discretion.

Any publicly disclosed information shall be accurate, objective, and limited to what is necessary to maintain confidence in the MSPO Certification Scheme.

4.6 Resources Requirements

Integrity Assessment activities shall be conducted by personnel who demonstrate appropriate competence, impartiality, and adherence to confidentiality requirements.

MSPO shall ensure that roles, responsibilities, competence criteria, and supporting arrangements for Integrity Assessments are defined and implemented through relevant MSPO procedures

5. RISK-BASE APPROACH TO INTEGRITY ASSESSMENT

5.1 Risk-based Principle

MSPO applies a risk-based approach to determine the need for, scope, and prioritisation of Integrity Assessments, in order to ensure effective scheme oversight and proportionate use of resources.

Risk classification is used to support MSPO's decisions on assessment coverage and oversight focus

5.2 Risk Considerations

In determining the risk profile of an Accredited Certification Body (ACB), MSPO may consider a combination of qualitative and quantitative factors, including but not limited to:

- a) The ACB's overall risk profile arising from MSPO monitoring and oversight activities;
- b) Audit and certification performance, including consistency of findings, conclusions, and certification decisions;
- c) Compliance history and any recurring or systemic issues;
- d) The scale and impact of certification activities conducted under the MSPO Certification Scheme;
- e) Operational complexity, including organisational structure and use of external resources;
- f) Changes affecting certification operations, personnel, or scope; and
- g) Information received from stakeholders, complaints, or other relevant sources.

5.3 Application of Risk Classification

The outcome of the risk assessment may be used by MSPO to determine:

- a) Whether an Integrity Assessment is required;
- b) The scope and focus of the assessment;
- c) The timing and frequency of assessment activities; and
- d) Whether the assessment is conducted on an announced or unannounced basis.

The application of risk classification shall be proportionate, objective, and aligned with the objectives of the MSPO Certification Scheme.

5.4 Review of Risk Classification

Risk classification outcomes are subject to periodic review by MSPO and may be updated based on changes in performance, operational conditions, or emerging integrity risks.

5.5 Supporting Procedures

The detailed risk classification methodology, sampling criteria, thresholds, assessment coverage, and determination of assessment resources, including man-day allocation, are defined in the relevant MSPO procedures

6. CONDUCT OF INTEGRITY ASSESSMENT

6.1 General Principle

Integrity Assessments shall be conducted in a structured, objective, and consistent manner to evaluate compliance with MSPO integrity requirements and to support effective scheme oversight.

Assessments may include off-site and/or on-site activities, as determined by MSPO, and shall be carried out in accordance with applicable MSPO procedures.

6.2 Access to Information and Cooperation

Accredited Certification Bodies (ACBs) and relevant parties shall provide MSPO and its appointed assessors with reasonable access to information, records, systems, sites, and personnel necessary for the conduct of Integrity Assessments.

Failure to provide required access or cooperation may be considered in determining assessment outcomes, in accordance with MSPO procedures.

6.3 Assessment Execution

Integrity Assessments shall be conducted using appropriate assessment methods, including document review, interviews, and observation, as applicable. Assessment activities shall be managed to ensure:

- a) clarity of scope and objectives,
- b) effective communication with relevant parties,
- c) protection of confidentiality, and
- d) maintenance of impartiality throughout the assessment process.

6.4 Findings Conclusions

Integrity Assessment outcomes may include findings related to conformity, non-conformity, or opportunities for improvement.

Findings and conclusions shall:

- a) be supported by objective and verifiable evidence; and
- b) reflect the severity and impact of identified issues on the integrity and credibility of the MSPO Certification Scheme.

The classification, grading, and management of findings shall be determined in accordance with applicable MSPO procedures.

6.5 Corrective Actions

Where non-conformities are identified, the ACB shall be required to implement corrective actions within timelines specified by MSPO procedures.

Failure to address identified non-conformities may result in escalation or enforcement actions in accordance with the MSPO Scheme requirements.

6.6 Scheme-level Actions

Based on the Integrity Assessment outcomes, MSPO may take appropriate scheme-level actions, which may include conditions, restrictions, suspension, or termination of recognition, in accordance with the MSPO Scheme Document, Recognition Agreement, and applicable procedures.

6.7 Complaints, Appeals, and Disputes

ACBs may submit complaints, appeals, or disputes related to Integrity Assessment outcomes in accordance with the applicable MSPO complaints, appeals, and dispute resolution procedures.

Decisions issued following the completion of the appeal or dispute resolution process shall be final and binding, subject to MSPO governance arrangements.

6.8 Supporting Procedures

The detailed processes for assessment initiation, planning, execution, reporting, classification of findings, corrective actions, appeals, dispute resolution, timelines, and resource allocation are defined in the relevant MSPO procedures.