

ICA-23: Area or Property Freedom

REVISION REGISTER

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01/07/2024	Version 5.5: update to Property Code Definitions under Dept Use Only Section in attachment 2 and minor grammatical and formatting updates to references, definitions, and 6.1.1.

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1 Purpose

This procedure describes the intrastate or interstate movement of produce certified under an Interstate Certification Assurance (ICA) arrangement for freedom in an area or property from a pest or disease, based on monitoring by Agriculture Victoria for the pest or disease.

2 Scope

This procedure covers all certification of produce as being free of specified pest or disease based on monitoring by Agriculture Victoria.

Certification of area or property freedom under this procedure may not fulfil all quarantine entry conditions for all produce to all intrastate and interstate markets.

Some intrastate or interstate markets may require additional quarantine certification as a condition of entry. It is the responsibility of the business consigning the produce to ensure compliance with all applicable quarantine requirements.

Information on intrastate quarantine requirements can be obtained from a local Agriculture Victoria Inspector.

Information on interstate quarantine requirements can be obtained from the plant quarantine service in the destination state.

Agriculture Victoria and interstate quarantine authorities maintain the right to inspect at any time produce and to refuse to accept a certificate where produce is found not to conform to specified requirements.

3 References

Plant Biosecurity Act 2010

Standard Operating Procedure - Completion of Plant Health Assurance Certificates

Standard Operating Procedure - Source Property Approvals for ICA Procedures

4 Definitions

Accredit	means to accredit persons to issue Assurance Certificates under the Plant Biosecurity Act 2010.
Accredited Source Property	means a property with current area/property freedom approval granted by an Authorised Inspector.
Act	means the Plant Biosecurity Act 2010 (the Act).

Area/Property Freedom Quarantine Requirement	means a quarantine requirement applying to intra or interstate movement that requires produce to be sourced from properties that are in an area free, or a specified distance from a known outbreak, of a specified pest or disease, or sourced from properties that are inspected and found free from a specified pest or disease.
Authorised Inspector	means a person authorised as an inspector under the Act.
Authorised Signatory	means a person whose name and signature is provided as an authorised signatory on the Application for Accreditation.
Business	means the legal entity responsible for the operation of the facility and ICA arrangement detailed in the business's Application for Accreditation.
Certification Assurance	means an arrangement between Agriculture Victoria and a business that demonstrates effective in-house quality management and provides assurance through documented procedures and records that produce meets specified requirements.
Certified/certification	means a Plant Health Certificate issued by a department of Agriculture of another state or territory or a Plant Health Assurance Certificate issued by an accredited business.
Consignment	means a discrete quantity of packages consigned to one business at one location at one time.
Interstate Certification Assurance (ICA)	means a system of Certification Assurance developed to meet the requirements of State and Territory governments for certification of produce for interstate and intrastate quarantine purposes.
Non-conformance	means a nonfulfillment of a specified requirement. Package means the final outer covering in which produce is consigned and may include a box, carton, bin, bundle or other packaging unit.
Plant Health Assurance Certificate (PHAC)	means certification issued by an Authorised Signatory of an accredited business.
Source Property	means a property on which produce is grown, packed or stored, for supply to an accredited business, to be certified under this arrangement.

5 Responsibility

The position titles used reflect the responsibilities of staff under the ICA arrangement. These positions may not be present in all businesses, or different titles may be used for staff who carry out these responsibilities. One person may carry out the responsibilities of more than one position.

The **Certification Controller** is responsible for:

- representing the business during audits and other matters relevant to ICA accreditation;
- ensuring the business has current accreditation (7);
- training staff in their duties and responsibilities under this procedure;
- ensuring the business and its staff comply with their responsibilities and duties;
- ensuring all source properties have current area/property freedom approval (6.3); and
- ensuring all certification of produce is carried out in accordance with this procedure.

The **Product Controller** is responsible for ensuring:

- produce received for packing and certification is from approved source properties (6.3);
- area/property freedom certification records are maintained (6.3.1); and
- produce intended for certification under the ICA arrangement is identified and segregated from produce from non-accredited properties and the identity of the produce and the approved source property is maintained from receipt to dispatch (6.3.3).

The **Authorised Dispatcher** is responsible for ensuring:

- all packages of certified produce are identified (6.4.1);
- certified produce is stored and transported in secure conditions (6.4.4); and
- copies of all PHACs issued by the business are maintained (6.4.2).

Authorised Signatories are responsible for:

- verifying all produce in a consignment has been sourced from properties with current approval for area/property freedom quarantine requirement being certified (refer 6.3); and
- ensuring, prior to signing and issuing a PHAC, that produce covered by the certificate has been prepared in accordance with this procedure, and the details on the certificate are true and correct (refer 6.4.2).

6 Procedure

6.1 Source Properties

The accredited business must ensure that all source properties are approved for the area/property freedom at least 10 working days prior to the date of sourcing produce.

This procedure sets out the steps required for compliance with the relevant law(s) or regulatory standards. It is the responsibility of the business consigning the produce to ensure compliance with all applicable quarantine requirements.

Agriculture Victoria will not be responsible for any damage to plant or plant product or any personal injury that may result from the application of this accreditation.

6.1.1 Approval

The business that owns or manages the source property must complete an Application for Area/Property Freedom form (Attachment 2) and submit to Agriculture Victoria for approval (refer Standard Operating Procedure - Source Property Approvals for ICA Procedures).

Approval may require a visit by an Authorised Inspector to verify the property's location and compliance with the area/property freedom requirements nominated in the application.

The Authorised Inspector shall endorse the Application for Area/Property Freedom following confirmation of conformance with applicable area/property freedom requirements.

Each source property shall be allocated a unique number IP number and granted approval for 12 months or until approval is suspended or cancelled.

A packer with suspended property or area freedom may not certify produce under ICA-23, even if the business has sourced produce from growers that have the appropriate area or property freedom codes.

6.2 Moving Produce Between Source Properties

Produce that is moved between source properties, through an area or another property that is not free of the specified pest for which area/property freedom has been granted, shall be transported under secure conditions which prevents infestation by that pest (refer 6.4.4).

6.3 Sourcing Produce

The Product Controller shall ensure that:

- all produce received for certification is from a source property with current area/property freedom approval for the quarantine requirement to be certified;
- copies of each source businesses property freedom certification certificate are obtained prior to sourcing produce for certification. The current status of the property must be checked by referring to the period of approval and the quarantine requirement/s covered.

6.3.1 Receival of Produce from Another Accredited Business

A business that certifies produce sourced from a business that holds separate accreditation shall ensure:

- each delivery of produce is supplied from a source property with current Area/Property Freedom approval (Attachment 2);
- a Record of Receipt is maintained for all receivals of produce (Attachment 3);
- where applicable, the produce has been transported under secure conditions.

6.3.2 Record of Receipt

The Product Controller shall ensure a record is kept of all receivals of produce to be certified for area/property freedom certification using a Record of Receipt (Attachment 3) or records which record the same information.

6.3.3 Handling, Identification and Storage

Produce intended for certification under this procedure must be handled and stored in conditions which maintain the identification of the produce and the source property and prevents mixing of conforming and other produce.

6.4 Dispatch

6.4.1 Labelling

The Authorised Dispatcher shall ensure that, prior to a PHAC being issued, each package of certified produce is marked with indelible and legible characters, of at least 5mm, stating:

- the Interstate Produce (IP) number of the accredited Business certifying the produce;
- the words “Meets ICA-23”; and
- date (or date code) on which the produce was packed.

6.4.2 Assurance Certificates

Prior to issuing a PHAC, the Authorised Signatory shall verify that all the produce in the consignment has been sourced from source properties with current approval for the area/property freedom quarantine requirement being certified.

The Authorised Dispatcher shall ensure the completed PHAC is signed by an Authorised Signatory prior to dispatch of the consignment of produce.

Verification shall involve sighting the current endorsed Application for Area/Property Freedom covering the source property. The name and signature of the Authorised Signatory issuing the PHAC is evidence that verification of area/property freedom has been conducted.

Assurance Certificates shall be in the form of a Plant Health Assurance Certificate and shall include the following additional certification (Attachment 1):

- the words “Meets ICA 23” (required for export to Tas); or
- the words “Grown in an area free of x”, where x is the nominated pest or disease; or
- the applicable area/property freedom code(s) or the specified area/property freedom quarantine requirement(s) for the market to which the produce is consigned.

Individual PHACs shall be issued to cover each consignment (i.e. a discrete quantity of produce to a single consignee at the one time) to avoid splitting of consignments (refer Standard Operating Procedure - Completion of Plant Health Assurance Certificates). A PHAC may be issued to cover a consignment comprising produce from a number of source properties provided the certification given is applicable to all produce in the consignment.

6.4.3 Assurance Certificate Distribution

The **original** (yellow copy) must accompany the consignment.

The **duplicate** (white copy) must be retained by the accredited business.

6.4.4 Post Certification Security

Fruit Fly

Certified produce must be transported under secure conditions:

- to prevent cross-infestation by uncertified produce;
- when being transported through outbreak areas or areas not declared free from fruit fly.

Secure conditions include:

- unvented packages;
- vented packages with the vents secured with mesh with a maximum aperture of 1.6 mm;
- fully enclosed under tarpaulins, hessian, shade cloth, mesh or other covering which provides a maximum aperture of 1.6 mm;
- shrink-wrapped and sealed as a palletised unit;
- fully enclosed or screened buildings, cold-rooms, vehicles or other facilities free from gaps or other entry points greater than 1.6 mm.

Where full containers of fruit are consigned to Tasmania, the container must be sealed prior to transport, and the seal number included in the Brand Name or Identifying Marks section of the PHAC (Attachment 1).

7 Accreditation

7.1 Application for Accreditation

A business seeking accreditation for this procedure shall apply for accreditation at least 10 working days prior to the intended date of commencement of certification of produce.

7.2 Audit Process

7.2.1 Initial Audit

Prior to accrediting a Business, an Inspector carries out an initial audit of the Business to verify the ICA system is implemented and capable of operating in accordance with the requirements of the procedure, and the system is effective in ensuring compliance with the specified requirements of the ICA arrangement.

On completion of a successful initial audit, applicants will be granted provisional accreditation and issued with a Certificate of Accreditation (refer 7.3).

7.2.2 Compliance Audits

Compliance audits are conducted to verify that the ICA system continues to operate in accordance with the requirements of the procedure. Compliance audits are, wherever practical, conducted when the ICA system is operating. A compliance audit is conducted:

- within four weeks of the initial audit and accreditation or issue of the first PHAC; and
- within twelve weeks of the business being reaccredited; and
- in the case of a business operating for more than six months of a year, between six and nine months after accreditation or reaccreditation.

Upon completion of a successful initial compliance audit, accreditation is granted to cover the current season, up to a maximum of twelve months. Unscheduled compliance audits may be conducted at any time to investigate reported or suspected nonconformances.

7.2.3 Re-Accreditation

Accredited businesses are required to re-apply for accreditation each year the business seeks to operate under the ICA arrangement. Businesses seeking re-accreditation must lodge a renewal application prior to accreditation lapsing, or if accreditation has lapsed, prior to commencing further certification of produce under the ICA arrangement.

A compliance audit is conducted within twelve weeks of the Business applying for re-accreditation each year.

A compliance audit is conducted between six and nine months after the date of re-accreditation for an ICA arrangement that operates for more than six months of the year.

7.3 Certificate of Accreditation

An accredited business will receive a Certificate of Accreditation. The current Certificate of Accreditation must be available on request by an Inspector.

7.4 Non-conformances and Sanctions

7.4.1 Non-conformances

Audits are regularly undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of implementation of ICA requirements. If, in the opinion of the auditor, there is evidence indicating that there has been a failure to meet one or more accreditation requirements, the auditor may raise a Non-conformance Report (NCR). Actions required to address the nonconformance shall be discussed and recorded on the NCR.

If the integrity of the accreditation has been significantly compromised, the non-conformance may provide grounds for the suspension or cancellation of the accreditation, and prosecution.

7.4.2 Incident Reports

Incident Reports may be raised by interstate quarantine authorities to report the detection of a non-conformance in produce certified under this ICA arrangement. An investigation into the incident shall be conducted and findings reported back to the originator.

If the integrity of the accreditation has been significantly compromised, the incident may provide grounds for the suspension or cancellation of the accreditation and prosecution.

7.4.3 Suspension and Cancellation

Agriculture Victoria may suspend or cancel an accreditation when an accredited business is found, for example,

- to have: obtained accreditation through the provision of false or misleading information;
- not paid fees owing to Agriculture Victoria;
- contravened an accreditation requirement that compromises the integrity of the arrangement;
- and/or not rectified a non-conformance.

Any action taken by Agriculture Victoria to suspend or cancel an accreditation shall be provided in writing to the Business. This shall also provide guidance on the lodgement of a written appeal requesting that the decision be reviewed.

7.4.4 Prosecution

Businesses found to be operating contrary to the Act may be liable for prosecution

7.5 Charging Policy

The business will be charged an annual accreditation fee.

A fee will be charged for all scheduled audits conducted. Unannounced audits will not be charged. Agriculture Victoria can be contacted for a schedule of fees.

8 Records and document control

8.1 ICA System Records

The business shall maintain the following records:

- a) copies of all Area or Property Freedom approval forms for source properties (refer 6.3);
- b) the Record of Receipt (refer 6.3.1); and
- c) the duplicate copy of each PHAC issued by the business (refer 6.3).

ICA system records shall be retained for a period of at least 12 months from completion, or until the next compliance audit of the ICA arrangement, whichever is the latter.

8.2 ICA System Documentation

The business shall maintain the following documentation:

- a copy of the business's current endorsed Application for Accreditation;
- a copy of the current endorsed Authorised Signatory forms;
- a current copy of this procedure; and
- a current Certificate of Accreditation.

9 Attachments

Attachment 1	Plant Health Assurance Certificate (PSE-015 - SA Example)
Attachment 2	Application for Area or Property Freedom (PSF-016)
Attachment 3	Record of Receipt (PSF-053)

Plant Health Assurance Certificate

Certificate number
XXXXXXXX

Consignment details (please print)

Consignor	
Name	ABC PTY LTD
Address	STREET ROAD, MILDURA VIC 3500

Consignee	
Name	PRODUCE PEOPLE
Address	SOMEWHERE ROAD, ADELAIDE SA

Reconsigned to (splitting consignments or reconsigning whole consignments)	
Name	
Address	

Certificate details (please print)

IP Number	Facility number	Procedure
V9999	01	ICA-23

Accredited business that prepared the produce	
Name	ABC PTY LTD
Address	STREET ROAD, MILDURA VIC 3500

Grower or Packer	
Name	ABC PTY LTD
Address	STREET ROAD, MILDURA VIC 3500

Other facilities supplying produce	

Brand name OR identifying marks (as marked on packages)	Date OR date code (as marked on packages)
ABC PRODUCE	25/08/2020

Number of packages	Type of packages (e.g. trays, cartons)	Type of produce	Authorisation for split consignment
20	Trays	Apples	

Treatment details

Treatment date	Treatment	Chemical (active ingredient)	Concentration / duration and temperature

Additional certification / Codes
QFF01, MFF01

Declaration: I, an Authorised Signatory of the accredited business that prepared the plants, plant products, used equipment, used packages or earth materials described above, hereby declare that the plants, plant products, used equipment, used packages or earth materials have been prepared in the business' approved facility in accordance with the business' Certification Assurance arrangement and that the details shown above are true and correct in every particular. I acknowledge that it is an offence under the *Plant Biosecurity Act 2010* to issue assurance certificates without being accredited and/or to make false statements in certificates and declarations.

Authorised Signatory (print name) A.Signature	Signature A.Sign	Date 25 / 08 / 2020
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Application For Area Or Property Freedom

Complete and submit this application form where your business intends to either supply or prepare produce for certification under an accreditation. Applicable accreditations include:

1. ICA-20;
2. ICA-23;
3. ICA-33;
4. ICA-57.

See Standard Operating Procedure - Source Property Approval for ICA Procedures for a guide to completing the application form.

PROPERTY DETAILS (A separate application must be completed for each source property)

Trading name of business:			
Name of property owner/manager:			
Telephone:		Facsimile:	
Email address:			
Postal address:			
Source property street address: <small>* Please attach map showing property location & area(s) where produce is grown on the property</small>			
Real property description: <small>* Available from Rates Notice or Local Government Authority</small>			
Produce type/s to be certified: NOT 'stonefruit' or 'citrus' – must be specific type <small>eg apple, orange, lemon, tomato, plum, peach, fruiting grapefruit tree, etc - If insufficient space attach a list</small> For ICA-57 accredited businesses only, the word 'various' is acceptable			

DECLARATION

I declare that the property details above are true and correct.		
..... Name of owner/manager Signature of owner/manager/...../..... Date

FOR DEPARTMENTAL USE ONLY

Period of approval/...../..... to/...../.....		
Interstate Produce (IP) number	V _____	Property Number:	
Area/Property freedom code/s			
Property GPS location (decimal degrees)	S (-) _____	E _____	



CONFIRMATION OF AREA OR PROPERTY PEST FREE STATUS

Property code	Definition	Authorisation (Y/N)
MFF01	Grown on a property free of Mediterranean Fruit Fly (MFF)	
PHY02	Grown on a property within a Phylloxera Exclusion Zone (PEZ).	

CONFIRMATION OF PROPERTY INSPECTION FOR PEST FREE STATUS (ICA-33 ONLY)

Property code	Definition	Authorisation (Y/N)
PHY06	Grown on a property within a Phylloxera Risk Zone (PRZ), which has been surveyed and found to be free of Phylloxera in accordance with the National Phylloxera Management Protocol	

APPROVAL

..... Officer Name Signature of Officer/...../..... Date
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