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Cert ID Releases the ProTerra Standard for Socially and Environmentally Responsible Food and Feed Production

The ProTerra Certification Program provides impartial, third-party, verification that food and feedstuffs have been produced sustainably, in a manner that is both socially and environmentally responsible. ProTerra achieves this in a way that works economically and operationally for industry.

ProTerra meets a timely need, because rapid expansion and globalization of the food system are placing intense demands on environmental and social systems, damaging fragile elements of the ecosystem, such as rain forests, savannas, and wetlands, and causing large scale soil erosion, agrochemical pollution, marginalization of smallholders, disruption of land ownership structures as well as infringement of labor rights.

ProTerra certification allows responsible companies to be confident that the materials they are purchasing are produced in a way that does not contribute to these problems.

ProTerra also enables manufacturers to assure their buyers, and ultimately consumers, that their products are sustainably produced. Environmental sustainability and social responsibility are of rapidly growing concern to consumers. According to *Pejling*, a magazine of the Swedish Dairy Association, seventy per cent of Swedish consumers boycott products from companies that they feel are not socially and environmentally responsible. Similar statistics are reported in other countries.

“Our consumers have clear expectations that animal feed used in producing Coop products must be sustainably produced and not genetically modified,” says Brigit Hofer of Coop Switzerland. “That is why we joined forces with the WWF to develop the Basel Criteria for Responsible Soy Production. We are happy to see that ProTerra provides a systematic and impartial mechanism for verifying compliance with all of the requirements of the Basel Criteria.”

Suppliers find that highlighting their social and environmental policies not only satisfies consumers’ concerns, but can also create good will and differentiation of their products in the marketplace. ProTerra provides the systematic third-party verification that creates the strong credibility required to accomplish this.

ProTerra Standards

The ProTerra standards comply fully with the Basel Criteria, as well as with the principles of other important international accords on social and environmental responsibility, and responsible agricultural management such as SA8000, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, International Labor Organization Conventions and Recommendations, the UN Norms with Regard to Human Rights, and the EurepGAP Standard.

ProTerra considers all critical dimensions of social and environmental responsibility, requiring:

- Compliance with all relevant national laws on environmental protection and human welfare,
- Management of agronomic factors such as soil and water quality, chemical use, crop protection methods, and avoidance of genetically modified seeds and inputs,
- Preservation of fragile features of the ecosystem, such as primary forest, rain forest, primary savanna and wetlands,
- Adherence to socially responsible practices, such as paying fair wages and fair prices, prohibiting child labor and forced labor, protecting workers' rights, welfare, security, and safety, and operating ethically regarding land tenure and ownership,
- Contributing to the economic, social, and environmental development of the community,
- Assuring traceability of each lot of product, thereby enabling the buyer to confirm responsible production.

ProTerra operates on the basis of the principle of continuous improvement, in which an organization can be certified initially based on compliance with core requirements, as long as they verifiably implement a systematic and timely plan for achieving compliance to all remaining program elements.

Creating ProTerra

ProTerra is the result of nearly two years of work in cooperation with both industry and the public. This work began in 2004, when Coop Switzerland and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) requested a sister company of Cert ID, Genetic ID (Europe), to undertake a study evaluating the feasibility of establishing objective criteria for assessing the sustainability and ethics of soy production in Brazil.

In preparing this feasibility study, Genetic ID (Europe) cooperated closely with Cert ID Brazil, whose years of experience gave them ready access to all of the dimensions of information essential for the study - agronomic, environmental, ecological, legal, social and cultural.

The process of helping create the feasibility study opened our corporate eyes,” says Richard Werran, Managing Director of Cert ID Europe, “to the need for a sustainability and ethics certification program. With that realization, ProTerra was born.”

Cert ID used a highly interactive consultative approach in developing the ProTerra standard, gathering input from many organizations, both leading members of the food and agricultural industry and public interest organizations.

“The goal of this process,” says Augusto Freire, CEO of Cert ID Brazil, “was to create a certification program that sets a universally respected standard for social and environmental responsibility in food and feed production, that is, at the same time, highly practical for industry, both economically and operationally. The new standard meets this goal.”

Early Adopters Ready to Go

Cert ID has already been working with early adopters of the ProTerra Certification Program, who will be quickly shipping ProTerra-certified soy and derivatives into Europe. In fact, it is anticipated that one of these pioneers, IMCOPA, one of the large Brazilian crushers, who import soy meal and lecithin into Europe, will ship their first panamax size vessel of ProTerra-certified soy meal within the week.

Soy is the first market sector to implement ProTerra, but, in short order, it will be extended to other crops and regions of the world, and applied to every stage of the food chain—production, storage, shipping, processing, and manufacturing of finished consumer products.

About Cert ID

Founded in 1998, Cert ID was the pioneer, and continues to be the leading certification body, specializing in certification of non-GMO commodities. These include large volumes of soy meal, lecithin, and other soy derivatives from Brazil. During 2005 Cert ID approved 8 million metric tons of Brazilian soy meal for certification. In addition, Cert ID offers third-party auditing and certification programs for organic foods, meat traceability, food safety, and, now with ProTerra, socially and environmentally responsible food and feed production. Cert ID's systems and procedures operate in compliance with EN 45011 and ISO 65, serving leaders in the food and feed industries on every continent.