

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on the implementation of ProTerra Standard on Social Responsibility and Environmental Sustainability

September 2024

The purpose of this FAQ is to clarify the interpretation of certain provisions related to the ProTerra certification scheme. It aims to help stakeholders comply with the requirements cost-effectively, to ensure the usability and comparability of the reported information on the sustainability issues covered by the ProTerra Standards and to provide a common interpretation among certification bodies. The publication is part of the ProTerra Foundation's ongoing efforts to make its Standards and procedures more transparent and usable.

The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) reflect the input received from various stakeholders and cover all issues related to the Proterra Network, standards, system documentation and procedures. The ProTerra Foundation will update these FAQs as necessary.

The answers to the FAQs contained in this document clarify the requirements already contained in the applicable ProTerra system documentation and associated procedures and therefore do not in any way extend or increase the obligations (or rights) derived from the ProTerra Standards and Protocols or introduce any additional requirements.

1) Are remote audits possible?

The Certification Protocol (v 4.0) indicates under item 6.3.1 that “the on-site certification audit is compulsory and necessary to obtain objective evidence to determine the extent to which the economic operator complies *with the requirements of the ProTerra Standards. Special circumstances (such as sanitary crises, war, or other situations out of one’s control), may allow virtual audits, but in this case, specific procedures must be agreed upon with the ProTerra Foundation in order to guarantee the robustness of the evaluation. This must be documented, including all details used in the alternative approach to avoid data gaps, and included in the audit report*”

Exceptional circumstances that waive the need for on-site audits are not limited to the example listed under requirement 6.3.1. Additional examples include (but are not limited to):

- Traders with no physical storage of commodities (paper flow only);
- Gap analysis against Proterra requirements, and
- An extremely remote location or a location with a known violent environment that poses a risk to the integrity of the auditors.

In all cases where a virtual audit is considered, the Certification Body shall, prior to the audit, justify the rationale for conducting a remote audit as opposed to an on-site audit and shall agree with the ProTerra Foundation on the specific procedures to be followed to ensure the robustness of the evaluation. This should be documented, including all details used in the alternative approach to avoid data gaps, and included in the audit report. Only prior documented approval from the ProTerra Foundation, on a case-by-case basis,

authorises the CB to conduct an off-site audit. Retroactive requests will not be accepted from the mandatory implementation date of V5 (January 2025).

2) Volume sheet dates are predefined by the Protocol

No, it is not. The deadline associated with the Volume Sheet must be completed on a case-by-case basis by the auditor, depending on the organisation's specific certification cycle. In the first year of certification, it is not applicable.

3) What happens if a supplier refuses to receive the certification audit?

In this case, the volumes produced by this particular supplier are not considered ProTerra compliant, as it cannot be confirmed that the ProTerra requirements (e.g. DCF, pesticides, etc.) are met. Furthermore, certification cannot take place as there are basic requirements that need to be confirmed to be fulfilled. The organisation seeking certification must exclude the volume produced by such suppliers from its ProTerra certified supply chain if certification is desired.

The processor and the auditor must verify that the production does not take this 'unaudited volume' into account when making any ProTerra related claims. If Mass Balance (MB) rules are used, they are respected when estimating certified production values (the economic operator must maintain a mass balance to demonstrate that the volumes of ProTerra certified material received are equivalent to the final ProTerra certified product shipped - requirement 10.2.1).