

ACCREDIA L'Ente Italiano di Accreditamento

Voluntary product certification.

What is working well, what is failing and why?

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*Ing. Alberto Musa
Dr. Francesco Santini
Dipartimento Organismi di certificazione e ispezione*

What is necessary to conduct Product Certification?



What is necessary to conduct Product Certification?

1. The definition of the characteristic(s) (**TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS**) of the product, to be certified;

(eg. Product description & characteristics to be certified and acceptance values, related uncertainty, ...)

2. The definition of the **RULES** used to conduct the initial certification of the product and the following surveillances

(eg. Type, number and frequency of controls, what happens when a Non conformity rises?)

ISO/IEC FDIS 17067:2013 standard (previous ISOGuide 67)

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS:

*4.1.1 Product certification is the provision of impartial third-party assessment and attestation that fulfillment of **specified requirements** has been demonstrated. Product certification is carried out by product certification bodies which should conform to ISO/IEC.*

Specified requirements for products are generally contained in Standards or other normative documents.

ISO/IEC FDIS 17067:2013 standard (previous ISOGuide 67)

EXAMPLES OF THE MOST COMMON TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS:

- Product description
- Product Characteristics
- Methods for testing
- Acceptance limit
- Tolerance
- Quality System (if required)

ISO/IEC FDIS 17067:2013 standard (previous ISOGuide 67)

Product Certification System:

Rules, procedures, management related to particular set of **specified requirements**

ISO/IEC FDIS 17067:2013 standard (previous ISO Guide 67)

example of the most common Rules:

- Controls done by:
 - Client
 - CAB
- Frequency of controls
- Sampling plan and methods
- Use of certification marks
- Treatment of Non Conformity
- Corrective actions

Voluntary product certification, criticism

The definition of the Technical Requirements for product certification is a first element of difference among:

- **Voluntary** product certification;

and

- Regulated product certification (eg. Organic production);
- Mandatory product certification (eg. EU Directives)

as, for regulated and mandatory areas, the Technical Requirements are defined by the Authorities and/or inside official Standard documents.

Voluntary product certification, criticism

In the field of **Voluntary** product certification the Technical Requirements can be fixed:

- In Standard documents, as well as for reg. and mandatory field);
- In documents issued by the Owner of the product certification schemes;
- In documents issued by the certification body (CAB) itself.

Voluntary product certification, criticism

This last situation, when the documents(s) containing the **Technical Requirements** are issued by the certification body (CAB) itself, some problems could rise:

- Are these Requirements correct and give «added value» to the product?
- Different CABs can fix different Requirements on the same type of product(s).

ISO/IEC 17067 (FDIS) § § 6.4 and 6.5 **should be followed!**

Voluntary product certification, criticism

but....

The most important criticism of the Voluntary product certification is that this certification has **costs** related.

For this reason it's not easy to start with voluntary product certification schemes, if there are not some external influences.

The most important external influences / requirements, come from the "**Big Buyers/Retailers**" and / or from the **market**

Voluntary product certification, criticism

Interesting examples of this situation can be found in the field food products voluntary certification.

Many Scheme Owners have issued product certification schemes, that are under accreditation:

- **BRC**
- **IFS**
- **GLOBAL GAP**
- **PFC**
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Voluntary product certification, criticism

BRC, IFS and Global GAP are B2B certification schemes and are considered as a process certification.

Certification schemes (requirements and rules) are established by Association of European Retailers.

Certification against these standards is a tool for supplier qualification.

Voluntary product certification, criticism

BRC, IFS are standards food related covering post farm production:

- Food processing
- Packaging
- Logistic
- Broker

Global GAP is a standard of Good Agricultural Practices related to:

- Crops
- Livestock
- Aquaculture

Voluntary product certification, criticism

Example of requirements of Food processing certification scheme:

- Management Commitment
- HACCP
- Quality Management System
- Site Standard
- Product control
- Process control
- Personnel

Regulatory product certification in food field

Organic Production certification schemes equivalent to EU Regulation 834/07 according art. 33 (3) applicable when the certification scheme applied in the third country is not direct recognized by the EU Commission (e.g. Argentina, Canada, New Zealand, etc.).

The Commission recognizes CAB applying a private certification schemes developed by CAB itself according the Codex Alimentarius Guidelines [CAC/GL 32](#).

Regulatory product certification in food field

The recognition is based on an assessment report and a declaration of equivalence issued by an accreditation body or, as appropriate, by a local Competent Authority.

The recognized CABs are listed in a specific regulation.

Regulatory product certification in food field

EA has published recently a mandatory document (EA-3/12) on this kind of activities establishing minimum criteria for assessing CBs operating in third countries.

Regulatory product certification in food field

The requirements established are about:

- Competences of Assessors
- Duration of assessment (initial and surveillance)
- Witnessing
- Information exchange
- Accreditation scope
- Extension of accreditation

The document is available on the EA web site.