

0 SCOPE OF PROCEDURE

This procedure applies to all audit services accredited or not accredited i.e.:

- ISO 9001:2015 (accredited)
- ISO 14001:2015 (accredited)
- ISO 50001
- ISO 45001:2018 (accredited)
- FSSC
- EMPPA
- Legal Compliance
- Customer specific
- Responsible Care (including Process Safety)

Note: this procedure applies to all audit services as provided for accredited or non-accredited audit services irrespectively, in conformance with the impartiality policy.

1 REVIEW OF CLIENT INFORMATION AND AUDIT INITIATION

For new clients, the Customer Questionnaire (419CUSTOMERQUESTIONNAIRE) is submitted with the request of completion.

The office receives the client information as a pre-requisite to review the EQCSA capability of offering the client with the required certification service.

1.1 Customer Questionnaire:

The administration manager is responsible to ensure that all customer information has been received to enable EQCSA to review the information and to prepare the customer offer and consequent process steps to ensure that certification services are provided to client satisfaction and accreditation standards.

Step 1: (Administration Manager)

Review the customer information for completeness and availability of information on which a formal certification service offer can be made.

Step 2: (Manager Certifications)

The customer information is used to select the required audit competence and auditor availability (701LISTOFAUDITORS, 703AUDITORLOG)

Note: Please ensure that all external documents required (SANAS, IAF, Customer) are of the latest issue/revision/edition.

Step 3: (Manager Certifications)

The Audit Manager reviews the customer information to establish the appropriate scope with the EAC Scope List and the NACE List to establish the correct EAC-Scope with specific NACE scope detail. (I.e. EAC Scope 3 Foodstuff, NACE 15.11 Productions and Preserving of Meat). Where there is no clear scope alignment, the primary decision criteria is to establish the company's position in the supply chain and client base. Where there are still uncertainties, the customer together with the lead auditor can discuss scope statement for alignment of scope allocation with customer requirements. The allocated EAC Scope number forms part of the established Audit Number and is reflected on the certificate. Where EQCSA has decided or cannot offer the service to the client, the client is notified with reasons.

1.2 Offer Preparation:

Should EQCSA not be in the position to meet one of the above criteria, the Manager Certification is informed and negotiations with the potential client arranged. The objective of the negotiations is to achieve client satisfaction, either:

- by establishing new client requirements
- by agreement for service outsourcing
- by sub-contracting
- by joint venture
- by reference to another certification organization.

Step 4: (Manager Certification)

Once the client requirements are established, the Manager Certification prepares the Offer of Service to the client and appoints the respective lead auditor for the certification audit project. The Offer of Service and appointed lead auditor is confirmed by the Manager Certification, before the Offer of Service is submitted to the client (410OFFEROFSERVICE).

Step 5: (Administration Manager/Lead Auditor)

Once the Manager Certification has confirmed the offer of service and the appointed lead auditor, the offer is submitted to the customer. Customers are reminded in the e-mail with the offer attached to return the signed agreement form within one month of submission of the offer. Once the customer has returned the Application for Certification, the appointed lead auditor is informed to proceed with the certification audit preparations (201CERTIFICATIONPROCFESS).

1.3 Contract Confirmation

Once the client has returned the signed Application for Certification (Annexure to 410OFFEROFSERVICE) the Lead Auditor is informed to commence with the audit preparations. Should the agreement form not be available, however, the client has confirmed the audit dates (usually by e-mail), the lead auditor prepares the agreement form as part of the audit documentation and obtains the signature at the Opening Meeting.

Step 6: (Administration Manager)

Any changes in regard with the scope of service, which have been discussed with the client, are included into the data package returned to the customer. (See comments on Step 3 Review of Customer information).

For surveillance and recertification audits, verification of the audit dates and consequently the agreement to carry out the audits is communicated and recorded with the audit plan and arrangement through e-mails. The e-mails as evidence of the audit commencement and agreed dates are part of the electronic customer file.

Unless the client is requesting another quotation for recertification and the next audit cycle, the above process applies. In case were the client requests another quotation, the agreement form as attached will be saved on record as for original certification audits.

1.4 Amendments/Contract Modifications

Should at any time during the certification audit process and maintenance of the certification (three-year period) the conditions of the contract change, the Manager Certification is responsible to ensure that all changes and amendments are authorized and client agreement as well as conformance to the certification requirements are clear.

Step 7: (Lead Auditor/Manager Certification)

During the audit process, the lead auditor confirms with the client the audit arrangements. Should during the preparations, specifically during the Stage 1 audit within the certification scope, and during the certification maintenance period and before the recertification audit any of the certification conditions reveal any change of the conditions of the confirmed offer, the Lead Auditor addresses the matter to the Manager Certifications. The Manager Certifications negotiates with the client the changing conditions and impacts of the certification services. The negotiations are including the inputs of the Lead Auditor. If required a meeting with the client is arranged and the changes are agreed. The agreed results are submitted as amendment to the contract. The Lead Auditor should be present and involved in the negotiation process for amendment and change of contract conditions.

Amendments due to the scope change of a client's organization change or expansion (own market focus change, merger, joint venture) are processed in conjunction with either an extended surveillance or re-certification audit or a separate certification audit activity. The decision on the approach is made during the contract review of the client's amendment request. The communication of the amendment request follows the Customer Acquisition Procedure Sec. 2 Enquiry (301MARKETINGOFSERVICES)

The offer of services follows the process as established above and includes the evaluation of the impact of the amendment on the existing certificate validity. With extreme changes, a new certification option could be the only possible solution.

1.5 Submission for Preparation of Transfer of Certification Offers

Should a potential client indicate existing certification and transfer options in his request for quotation, the following documents are requested prior to the preparation of the offer:

- ✓ Copy of the last valid certificate
- ✓ Copy of the last audit report by the present service provider.
- ✓ 419CUSTOMERQUESTIONNAIRE

Step 8: (Certification Manager/Lead Auditor)

During contract review the submitted documents are reviewed to ensure that:

- 1 The certificate is still valid and there is enough time for auditing before certificate expiry
- 2 The certificate has been issued by an accredited certification service provider (Accreditor must be a member of IAF)
- 3 The submitted audit report does indicate a satisfactory audit result
- 4 The requested transfer fall within the scope of certification by EQCSA (Pty) Ltd
- 5 The Information from the Customer Questionnaire 419CUSTOMERQUESTIONNAIRE

Should there be any Non-conformances; evidence of closure by the present certification service provider must be obtained or the customer is requested to submit the Non-conformities and evidence for corrective action and close out. The appointed lead auditor can close the non-conformities; if necessary, a visit at the client's premises is arranged.

A site visit is arranged, and a site visit report is generated. The report ensures that information as provided on (419CUSTOMERQUESTIONNAIRE) is complete. The customer must provide the following information:

- 1 Reasons for seeking transfer
- 2 Complaints received, and action taken
- 3 Any current engagement by the organization in legal representation with statutory bodies.
- 4 Present certification cycles
- 5 Other site-specific conditions affecting audit time

During the review of the above documents EQCSA (Pty) Ltd decides whether the certification in place can be continued with the relevant audit (Surveillance/re-certification). A document review is required prior to the certification transfer service by EQCSA (Pty) Ltd and a document review report is generated.

Thereafter, the Offer of Service is prepared, and acceptance is awaited.

In all cases a scope change or amendment to the contract will be carried out with the required on-site audit activities as calculated in accordance with ISO 17021:2015 requirements.

1.6 Administration:

During the Offer of Services process the potential customer is registered in the LIST OF INVQUOTORDERS

2 CERTIFICATION

The complete certification cycle is limited to three years. The certificate is automatically expired three years after the issue date of the original certificate. The following recertification is following the same steps as the original

certification cycle (except Stage 1 audit). The original certification date remains on the certificate. The new certificate is amended by the re-certification date and the new expiry date based on the original certification date.

2.1 Stage 1 Audit:

Step 1: (Manager Certification)

The agreed audit dates with the customer are reflected in the annual audit program. The audit program is after any change submitted to the active lead auditors for information and preparation for audit activities. For new certification audits, provisional dates for the Stage 2 audit are included. Should, during Stage 1 the audit dates for Stage 2 change, the Lead Auditor informs the Manager Certification for approval and revision of the Annual Audit Plan.

Step 2: (Lead Auditor)

The lead auditor submits a Stage 1 Audit Plan (420AUDITPLAN) to the customer. The audit plan should be prepared and sent out four weeks ahead of the audit dates (except the customer makes arrangements for auditing within a shorter time period and audit resources are available).

Provided the audit plan is accepted, the lead auditor commences with the required travel arrangements, assuring the where long-distance travel is required, the travel arrangements do not cause a delay in arriving in time at the customers' site.

For Stage 1 audits, the lead auditor must have the following documents prepared:

- 420AUDITPLAN
- 421DOCUMENTLIST
- 431ATTENDANCESHEET
- 475/450STAGE1AUDITREPORT9/18
- 434NCRREPORT
- AGREEMENT FORM from 420OFFEROFSERVICES2019

The lead auditor receives prior to the preparation the required audit number from the Manager Certification. The number is registered in the second worksheet of the annual audit plan.

The audit number is to be referenced on all audit documents relating to the individual audit package.

During audit preparation, the Lead Auditor must ensure that open memorandums (1005MEMORANDUMS) of "Instructions to the Auditors", must be used and made available to the audit team for guidance and compliance.

The objectives of the Stage 1 Audit are as follows:

- system document review for conformance to the relevant Standard
- evaluate the site conditions and location specific issues affecting audit time
- review the customer's preparedness and understanding of the system and certification requirements and conditions
- assure clarity with the client of certification regulations and rules
- verify resources for Stage 2 Audit
- obtain information for planning the Stage 2 Audit and possible focus areas
- verifies legal and other requirements and compliance
- verify correct scope definition or possible changes
- reviews internal audit report and management review minutes to verify management control effectiveness for the system
- agree with the customer the Stage 2 Audit approach and where required, changes to the audit plan for Stage 2.

2.2 Stage 1 Audit Conduct:

Step 3: (Lead Auditor)

The lead auditor assures adequate time for traveling and in time arrival at the customers' site.

The Opening Meeting is chaired by the lead auditor and includes the following agenda items:

- Welcome address
- Introduction of the audit team
- Verification of the Audit Plan Stage 1 Audit
- Verification of the contract conditions
- Process for changes to the audit plan
- Invite for questions and input
- Verify number of staff (permanent and conditions of contract staff)
- Ensure that the agreement form is signed by the client
- Close the Opening Meeting

During the audit, the audit team is following the audit trail in accordance to the agreed audit plan. For trace ability and evidence of audit conduct the individual audit team member completes the Documentlist and the confirmation of names on the audit plan. (Where required note changes).

In addition, the auditor should make notes for input in daily audit planning, possible deviations and positive areas and audit reporting.

For the feedback and preparation of the Stage 1 Audit Report, the lead audit must include sufficient time in the audit plan. The lead audit must consider the following:

- Input from audit team
- Input discussion with audit team
- Review of findings for potential Stage 2 improvements/non-conformities
- Compiling of the Stage 1 Audit Report
- Possible re-verification of unclear issues or insufficiently collected audit evidence

Should the audit results indicate problems for achieving certification during Stage 2 due to major shortcomings in system compliance or/and implementation, the lead audit should discuss the concern with key management representatives prior to the Closing Meeting. In critical conditions, the Closing Meeting is confined to the required management personnel for effective corrective actions.

The Closing Meeting should begin at the time as indicated and agreed during the audit and the audit plan. The customer decides who on their side should attend the Closing Meeting.

The Closing Meeting is chaired by the lead auditor and includes the following agenda items:

- Thanking the customer for hospitality and cooperation
- Verify the reporting and action process for preparation of the Stage 2 Audit
- Agrees the reporting lines between customer and EQCSA
- Presents the Stage 1 Audit results
- Invites for questions and comments
- Verifies the scope of certification
- Confirms audit dates for Stage 2 Audit
- Acknowledges system capability and preparedness for certification Stage 2 Audit.
- Confirms response of improvements needed for Stage 2 Audit readiness

2.3 Stage 1 Audit Completion:

Step 4: (Lead Auditor)

The Stage 1 Audit is complete when the lead auditor has received the required responses from the customer in time. With the response, the Stage 2 Audit plan should be prepared and submitted to the customer.

Step 5: (Manager Certification)

For new certification audits the dates for the Stage 2 audit are confirmed in the annual audit plan. Should, during Stage 1 the audit dates for Stage 2 change, the Lead Auditor informs the Manager Certification for approval and revision of the Annual Audit Plan.

With the submission of the audit plan for the Stage 2 Audit, the Stage 1 Audit is complete.

2.4 Stage 2 Audit:

Step 6: (Manager Certification)

The Manager Certification communicates with the lead audit to ensure that the audit team is prepared for the Stage 2 Audit. Should any need arise where the Manager Certification need to communicate with the customer to remove any uncertainties, he must include the lead auditor in the communication loop. This should be kept to a minimum. The main communication between customer and EQCSA during the audit process should be maintained by the lead auditor.

Step 7: (Lead Auditor)

The lead auditor prepares the audit plan for the Stage 2 Audit within a sufficient time period for all involved to prepare for the audit.

For Stage 2 audits, the lead auditor must have the following documents prepared:

- 420AUDITPLAN
- 421DOCUMENTLIST
- 431ATTENDANCESHEET
- 439/451STAGE2AUDITREPORT9/18
- 443NCRREPORT

The lead auditor receives prior to the preparation the required audit number from the Manager Certification. The number is registered in the second worksheet of the annual audit plan.

The audit number is to be referenced on all audit documents relating to the individual audit package.

The objectives of the Stage 2 Audit are as follows:

- collect information and evidence to verify implementation of the customer's management system
- compare monitoring and measurement results against objectives and targets and the achievement thereof
- seeks evidence of the customer's performance against legal and other requirements
- observes processes and practices for compliance with agreed customer management system requirements
- verifies the effectiveness of the internal audit and management review process
- conducts interviews with top management to establish management commitment and policy adequacy
- conducts interviews with staff to establish management system knowledge and application capability

2.5 Stage 2 Audit Conduct:

Step 8: (Lead Auditor)

The lead auditor assures adequate time for traveling and in time arrival at the customers' site.

The Opening Meeting is chaired by the lead auditor and includes the following agenda items:

- Welcome address
- Introduction of the audit team
- Verification of the Audit Plan Stage 2 Audit
- Verification of the contract conditions
- Process for changes to the audit plan
- Explain certification conditions and processing of non-conformities
- Explain conditions for issue of non-conformities
- Invite for questions and input
- Verify number of staff (permanent and conditions of contract staff)
- Close the Opening Meeting

During the audit, the audit team is following the audit trail in accordance to the agreed audit plan. For trace ability and evidence of audit conduct the individual audit team member completes the Documentlist and the confirmation of names on the audit plan. (Where required note changes). Indicated improvement needs from the Stage 1 Audit report must be verified for improvement actions completed and implemented. Improvement opportunities as indicated for potential

concern of nonconformance during Stage 2 Auditing need to be verified for effective corrective actions or reasons for raising a non-conformance report.

To ensure that audit consistency is maintained, auditors should make use the audit checklist. The checklist should be considered as the aid memoire and trigger for specific important issues during the audit process. Experienced auditors should be reminded that checklist review for preparation of the next day's events is important.

In addition, the auditor should make notes for input in daily audit planning, possible deviations and positive areas and audit reporting.

For the feedback and preparation of the Stage 2 Audit Report, the lead audit must include sufficient time in the audit plan. The lead audit must consider the following:

- Input from audit team
- Input discussion with audit team
- Review of findings for Stage 2 non-conformities
- Compiling of the Stage 2 Audit Report
- Compiling of the nonconformance report

- Possible re-verification of unclear issues or insufficiently collected audit evidence

Should the audit results indicate problems for achieving certification during Stage 2 due to major shortcomings in system compliance or/and implementation, the lead audit should discuss the concern with key management representatives prior to the Closing Meeting. In critical conditions, the Closing Meeting is confined to the required management personnel for effective corrective actions. The lead auditor, in severe condition or system breakdowns also informs the Manager Certification of the situation and possible audit repeat options or even early audit abortion, where it is obvious during the audit that certification cannot be achieved under normal conditions and that extensive corrective actions are required to ensure system compliance. Situations as such described should occur with minimum potential, since the Stage 1 Audit should indicate management system conditions leading to abortion or repeat auditing before the Stage 2 Audit.

The Closing Meeting should begin at the time as indicated and agreed during the audit and the audit plan. The customer decides who on their side should attend the Closing Meeting.

The Closing Meeting is chaired by the lead auditor and includes the following agenda items:

- Thanking the client for hospitality and cooperation
- Verify the reporting and action process for preparation of the certification issue
- Agrees the reporting lines between customer and EQCSA
- Indicates the number of nonconformities
- Presents the Stage 2 Audit results
- Presents the audit team's recommendations for certification proceeding
- Invites for questions and comments
- Verifies the scope of certification
- Confirms response for corrective actions
- Confirms the certification process

The signed audit report remains with the client unless agreed with the client at a later stage (not more than 5 working days).

2.3 Stage 2 Audit Completion:

Step 9: (Lead Auditor)

The Stage 2 Audit is complete when the lead auditor has received the required responses for closure of the non-conformities from the customer in time. With the response, the lead auditor indicates the closure of the non-conformities to the Certification Committee and commencement with the certification issue process.

Step 10: (Manager Certification)

The Manager Certification reviews the audit package as submitted from the lead auditor for completion and readiness for Certification Committee review and certification issue decision.

Step 11: (Certification Committee)

The Certification Committee convenes initiated by the Manager Certification. The Manager Certification presents the completed audit packages to the Certification Committee. The committee reviews the package for adequacy of the audit report content and confidence indicators for certification issue approval (406CERTIFICATIONRELEASE).

With the completed and signed Certification Release Document, the certification printing can be prepared.

Step 12: (Administration Manager/Certification Committee/Manager Certification)

Once the Administration Manager has received the approved customer package, the certificate text is prepared and verified with the client. This should be only to ensure correct name and address transfer from the original customer information during audit preparation. The scope statement should be correct, since the appropriate scope statement has been verified by the lead auditor during the Stage 2 Audit.

With the customer's confirmation, the certificate is prepared for printing. The Manager Certification issues the Certificate Number as defined in the (CERTIFICATELIST). The Manager Certification ensures that the correct certificate issue and expiry dates are reflected on the certificate, before the certificates are signed by the designated Certification Committee member.

With the certificate, the Letter of Confirmation is compiled and signed by the designated Certification Committee member.

The Administration Manager decides on the method of expediting the certificates and confirmation letter to the client and verifies that the customer has received his certificates.

The Administration Manager prepares the data package for filing the customer filing system and reviews the electronic data packages for completion. With the signing off the document review form (407SENTPACK) and the filing, the certification audit is complete. Variations of the dates of expiry, not in line with the original certification date could occur in special cases and will be documented in the certification decision protocol.

3 CERTIFICATION MAINTENANCE

The certificate is issued and allowed to be displayed at the customers' sites under the conditions that the customer undergoes an annual Surveillance Audit process. The annual surveillance audit dates are calculated as twelve months from the date of the original certification decision date. (i.e. Certification decision date is 12/06/2008..., the first surveillance audit date is 12/06/2009, the second audit is 12 months from there i.e. 12/06/2010). Two surveillance audits successfully passed allow for proclamation of maintaining an ISO compliance management system relevant to the applicable standard.

After the full cycle of three years, the customer can extend the relationship with EQCSA or decide to change to another certification service provider. EQCSA's objective is to ensure that our service secures the customer's continuation of the certification service with EQCSA.

3.1 Surveillance Audit Planning:

Step 1: (Manager Certification)

At the end of the year (December) the Annual Audit Plan is compiled, the new plan is based on the previous plans audit dates for certification and surveillance audits. The surveillance audits are planned as close as possible to the previous

year's audit dates. For re-certification audits the plan must ensure that sufficient time is considered for adequate audit time planning to ensure that the audit is completed before the expiry date of the certificate. (see section 4).

Lead auditors will receive the audit plan for review and input into their time availability. Parallel thereto the audit plan is submitted to the customers for review and confirmation of the audit dates. With the received customer approvals or change request, the color coding in the plan will indicate confirmed and proposed audit dates.

The Manager Certification reviews the Annual Audit Plan to ensure that:

- Audits are carried out as planned
- Times and resources are available for existing audits and room for expansion

- Audit times are conforming to the time calculation requirements
- Customer change requests are including and conforming to the time limits and tolerance (- three months)
- Recertification audits are planned well ahead
- New certification audits are included and agreed with the customer
- Time constraints are not affecting the required frequency and tolerance of audit dates
- Auditor capacity is available

The revised annual audit plan is resubmitted to customers and auditors affected for confirmation.

3.2 Surveillance Audit:

Step 2: (Manager Certification)

The Manager certification ensures that the designated lead auditor has received the notification and background information from the previous audit. For the first surveillance audit the following information is submitted:

- Certification audit plan (Stage 2)
- Certification audit report (Stage 2)
- Non-conformance reports and lead auditor closure comments
- Scope of certification (referenced in report and audit plan)
- Agreed audit dates
- Changes to customer's key personnel and contact person (where required)
- Changes to customers' locations and scope (where required)
- Change verification audit report (where applicable)
- Signed agreement form where required (change of audit conditions)

Where customer changes during the certification maintenance year have initiated a change verification audit, the lead auditor should have been involved and should be familiar with the changes. For continuity, it is desirable that the lead auditor conducts the audit. Should the lead auditor not be available, the required change documentation should be available for preparation of the surveillance audit.

Step 3: (Lead Auditor)

The lead auditor prepares the audit plan for the Surveillance Audit within a sufficient time period for all involved to prepare for the audit.

For surveillance audits, the lead auditor must have the following documents prepared:

- 420AUDITPLAN
- 421DOCUMENTLIST
- 431ATTENDANCESHEET
- 440/452SURVEILLANCEAUDITREPORT9/18
- 443NCRREPORT
- Ensure that the agreement form is signed by the client

The lead auditor receives prior to the preparation the required audit number from the Manager Certification. The number is registered in the second worksheet of the annual audit plan.

The audit number is to be referenced on all audit documents relating to the individual audit package.

The objectives of Surveillance Audit are as follows:

- collect information and evidence to verify continuous conformance of the customer's management system
- verifies the implementation and effectiveness of the customer's continual improvement program

- compare monitoring and measurement results against objectives and targets and the achievement thereof
- seeks evidence of the customer's performance against legal and other requirements
- observes processes and practices for continual compliance with agreed customer management system requirements
- verifies the effectiveness of the internal audit and management review process
- conducts interviews with top management to establish management commitment and policy adequacy
- conducts interviews with staff to establish management system knowledge and application capability
- verifies customer compliance to EQCSA's application of logo procedure (308USEOFCERTIFICATIONMARK)
- Trends in management system weaknesses and strength and complaints

Surveillance audit times are usually about 1/3 of the certification audit time. To ensure that the available time is effectively used the following areas are always audited, whereas the remaining issues can be selected to verify sufficiently appropriate system maintenance and continual improvement.

3.3 Surveillance Audit Conduct:

Step 4: (Lead Auditor)

The lead auditor assures adequate time for traveling and in time arrival at the customers' site.

The Opening Meeting is chaired by the lead auditor and includes the following agenda items:

- Welcome address
- Introduction of the audit team
- Verification of the Audit Plan Surveillance Audit
- Verification of the contract conditions
- Verify changes to staff numbers
- Process for changes to the audit plan
- Explain certification conditions and processing of non-conformities
- Explain conditions for issue of non-conformities
- Invite for questions and input
- Verify number of staff (permanent and conditions of contract staff)
- Ensure that the agreement form is signed by the client (where required)
- Close the Opening Meeting

During the audit, the audit team is following the audit trail in accordance to the agreed audit plan. For trace ability and evidence of audit conduct the individual audit team member completes the Documentlist and the confirmation of names on the audit plan. (Where required note changes). Indicated corrective actions to non-conformities raised during the Certification Audit and improvement needs indicated during the Certification Audit report must be verified for improvement actions completed and implemented.

In addition, the auditor should make notes for input in daily audit planning, possible deviations and positive areas and audit reporting.

For the feedback and preparation of the Surveillance Audit Report, the lead audit must include sufficient time in the audit plan. The lead audit must consider the following:

- Input from audit team
- Input discussion with audit team
- Review of findings for Surveillance Audit non-conformities
- Compiling of the Surveillance Audit Report
- Compiling of the nonconformance report

- Possible re-verification of unclear issues or insufficiently collected audit evidence

Should the audit results indicate problems for maintaining certification during the Surveillance Audit due to major shortcomings in system compliance or/and implementation, the lead auditor should discuss the concern with key management representatives prior to the Closing Meeting. In critical conditions, the Closing Meeting is confined to the required management personnel for effective corrective actions. The lead auditor, in severe condition or system breakdowns also informs the Manager Certification of the situation and possible audit repeat options or even early audit abortion and certification suspension, where it is obvious during the audit that certification cannot be maintained under normal conditions and that extensive corrective actions are required to re-establish system compliance.

The lead auditor has the authority to decide on the most adequate option and where necessary abort the audit, indicate his/her decision to the customer's management and establish corrective action time and dates for return and continuation of the Surveillance Audit. A new audit plan is to be issued. The Manager Certification updates the Annual Audit Plan and the List of Certified Companies with the required comments of Certificate Suspension where required.

The Closing Meeting should begin at the time as indicated and agreed during the audit and the audit plan. The customer decides who on their side should attend the Closing Meeting.

The Closing Meeting is chaired by the lead auditor and includes the following agenda items:

- Thanking the customer for hospitality and cooperation
- Verify the reporting and action process for preparation of the certification confirmation
- Agrees the reporting lines between customer and EQCSA
- Indicates the number of nonconformities
- Presents the Surveillance Audit results
- Presents the audit team's recommendations for certification proceeding
- Invites for questions and comments
- Verifies the scope of certification
- Confirms response for corrective actions
- Confirms the certification process

The signed audit report remains with the customer unless agreed for submission at a later time (not more than 5 working days).

Other surveillance activities are listed on the audit report and include one or more of the following:

- Enquiries of certification aspects
- Public statements by the client regarding certification and scope
- Publications as evidence during any audit
- Other opportunities for checking (i.e. visit, client's client opinion, monitoring during activities in public)

3.4 Surveillance Audit Completion:

Step 5: (Lead Auditor)

The Surveillance Audit is complete when the lead auditor has received the required responses for closure of the non-conformities from the customer in time. With the response, the lead auditor indicates the closure of the non-conformities to the Certification Committee and commencement with the certification confirmation process.

Step 6: (Manager Certification)

The Manager Certification reviews the audit package as submitted from the lead auditor for completion and readiness for Certification Committee review and certification continuation decision.

Step 7: (Certification Committee)

The Certification Committee convenes initiated by the Manager Certification. The Manager Certification presents the completed audit packages to the Certification Committee. The committee reviews the package for adequacy of the audit report content and confidence indicators for certification continuation approval (406CERTIFICATIONRELEASE). With the completed and signed Certification Release Document, the Letter of Certification Confirmation is prepared, signed and sent to the customer.

3.5 Repeat Audit and Possible Certificate Withdrawal

Step 8: (Lead Auditor/Manager Certification)

Where the Surveillance Audit has revealed severe short comings leading to certificate suspension, a repeat audit is required. The planning conduct and completion of the repeat audit follows the process of the Surveillance Audit. The focus during the repeat audit is the areas of concern and reasons for repeat.

The audit report generated follows the sequence of the Surveillance Audit. Satisfactory audit results indicate the re-instatement of the certification. Should the lead auditor find no improvements, he reports the concern to the Manager Certification. EQCSA will in those cases initiate the process of certification withdrawal.

3.6 Certificate Re-issue during the Three-Year Certification Cycle.

The following conditions can occur, where certificates need to be re-issued within the three-year certification cycle.

- Name Change of the Company
- Relocation to another site
- Change of Scope
- Extension of Scope (Customer)
- Extension of Scope (EQCSA)
- Reduction of Scope
- Customer complaint

The following activities will be initiated:

Reason for Change	Document review	Visit to Customer	Out of Period Audit	Re-certification audit
Name change	yes	yes	Only if system effectiveness is affected	no
Relocation	yes	yes	yes	Only if system effectiveness is considerably affected
Site Closure (Multi)	yes	yes	Only if system effectiveness is affected	no
Change of Scope	yes	no	no	yes
Extension of Scope (Customer)	yes	yes	yes	Only if system effectiveness is considerably affected
Extension of EAC Scope (EQCSA)	no	Only after 3 months after last audit	no	no
Reduction of Scope	yes	yes	yes	no
Complaint against certified customer	yes	yes	When needed as per nature of complaint	no

All certificate re-issue is dated from the issue date of the certificate until the existing expiry date of the certificate.

Should the change be initiated during a surveillance audit activity, the submission and approval for re-issue of certificate is carried out within the process of certification verification.

Is a recertification audit used for EQCSA EAC-scope extension (isolated case) or where seasonal conditions require a different to 12 months audit period (i.e. agricultural seasonal or specific environmental conditions required), there could be a gap between the required issue of the new certificate in line with the required issue at the date of the expiry of the previous certificate, EQCSA will issue a letter of extension to the customer, until the certificate can be printed with the SANAS Logo, (i.e. after SANAS has approved the EAC-scope extension). Where seasonal conditions require deviation from the 12 months' audit period this should be similarly treated with a letter of extension of the original certificate expiry date and the approved extension. The practice of extension is treated with caution.

4 CERTIFICATION RENEWALS

After three years, the certificate expires. Should the customer indicate the continuation of the certification service as provided by EQCSA, a re-certification audit is planned and carried out. The re-certification audit basically follows the process of the original certification audit.

However, the following is considered within the audit process as different to the original certification audit process.

- The customer has been audited for the original certification, including two surveillance audits over a period of three years.
- The customer management system has been continually improved.
- Changes in requirements due to Standard changes could be required.
- The customer's scope of activities and products/services have been increased or changed.
- The customer's management system structure has changed.
- The customer's management structure and ownership has changed.
- EQCSA requirements have changed
- EQCSA audit personnel have changed
- Ensure that the agreement form is signed by the client

Since, during the surveillance audit cycle, the main attention to the customer's certification maintenance is the implementation, system management and control, and continual improvement process the re-certification process requires renewed verification of the documentation system and changes.

Therefore, the following steps must be planned:

4.1 Re-certification Audit Planning

Step 1: (Manager Certification)

Request for customer information as during the original certification is made (419CUSTOMERQUESTIONNAIRE) and the complete process of time calculation and offer of service for a three-year certification cycle is repeated. The customer is included in the new three-year cycle plan.

With the agreed re-certification, the audit dates are planned and verified in the Annual Audit Plan. The audit dates must be planned to ensure that with the re-certification audit and possible corrective actions from non-conformities can be implemented before the expiry date of the certificate. The audit plan must therefore ensure that the re-certification audit is at least conducted if possible three months before the certification expiry date.

Step 2: (Lead Auditor)

In addition to the planning for the re-certification audit as per certification audit planning, the lead auditor must consider the following:

- Is a Stage 1 Audit required due to customer system or structure changes?
- Requesting the documentation for documentation review.
- Analyzing the previous three audit reports for trends and latent weaknesses (included in the audit report format 2009)
- Compiling the document review report.
- Including the results from the Three-Year Analysis.

Depending on results and change information the calculated audit time from the previous offer and the offer of services for the re-certification is verified or where needed amended. The lead audit must communicate his/her concerns to the Manager Certification, who in return discusses this with the customer. Where change is agreed offer and contract documents are amended and submitted to the customer.

Where the need for an on-site Stage 1 Audit is required, the planning now follows exactly the routes of the original certification audit. However, time reductions can be made for the Stage 2 Audit.

4.2 Re-certification Audit:

Step 3: (Manager Certification)

The Manager Certification communicates with the lead audit to ensure that the audit team is prepared for the Re-certification Audit. Should any need arise where the Manager Certification need to communicate with the customer to remove any uncertainties; he must include the lead auditor in the communication loop. This should be kept to a minimum. The main communication between customer and EQCSA during the audit process should be maintained by the lead auditor.

Step 4: (Lead Auditor)

The lead auditor prepares the audit plan for the Re-certification Audit within a sufficient time period for all involved to prepare for the audit.

For Re-certification audits, the lead auditor must have the following documents prepared:

- 420AUDITPLAN
- 421DOCUMENTLIST
- 431ATTENDANCESHEET
- 438/448RECERTIFICATIONAR9/18
- 443NCRREPORT
- AGREEMENT FORM from 420OFFEROFSERVICES2019

The lead auditor receives prior to the preparation the required audit number from the Manager Certification. The number is registered in the second worksheet of the annual audit plan. The audit number is to be referenced on all audit documents relating to the individual audit package.

The objectives of Re-certification Audit are as follows:

- collect information and evidence to verify implementation and continual improvement of the customer's management system
- compare monitoring and measurement results against objectives and targets and the achievement thereof
- seeks evidence of the customer's performance against legal and other requirements
- observes processes and practices for compliance with agreed customer management system requirements

- verifies the effectiveness of the internal audit and management review process
- seeks evidence for maturity of the management system due to personnel commitment and application of the increasingly more effective management system
- conducts interviews with top management to establish management commitment and policy adequacy
- conducts interviews with staff to establish management system knowledge and application capability

4.3 Re-certification Audit Conduct and Completion:

For conduct and completion of Re-certification Audits, Step 8 – 12 of the Certification Audit process apply. The certificate renewal date should be seamless with the original certificate issue date.

5 VARIATIONS OF CERTIFICATION AUDIT PROCESSES

To provide for optimal customer certification services, EQCSA uses the options available for offering tailor made customer certifications. The following additional processes are established to ensure that certification services are available:

5.1 Multi-site Audits

Multi-site audits can be offered to customers who have more than one facility operating and want to have all sites certified. Multi-site audits can be offered under the following conditions:

- The customer has developed and implemented a centrally controlled and managed management system for all sites.
- All site-specific documentation is following the management system's format and requirements, considering the site-specific content.
- The customer has an internal audit program and competent auditors to ensure effective implementation of the audit program and control of the management system.
- The customer has an effective management review system at the top management level, indicating adequate management commitment.
- Similar process and product variations

Multi-site audits are calculated as per (302AUDITMANDAYCALCULATION) requirements. The audit process is based on a representative sampling selection achieving the audit is being carried out at all sites during the Three-Year Certification Cycle. Exceptions could be required by considerably different geographical location about significant environmental impacts of the customer's facilities.

International (Cross-Border) Multi-site certifications must ensure that within all countries the required sample size is calculated to ensure that all sites of the customer are covered during the Three-Year Certification Cycle and that within each country at least the minimum sites are audited once per year.

Extensions to multi-site certifications (client adds another new site) are treated as separate audits in calculation and conduct, if the customer wants the inclusion between certification/surveillance audits. Audit times are calculated against the usual criteria of amount of personnel, complexity and environmental impact. Consideration is given to subtract or add audit time depending on maturity and specific requirements of the customer's management system.

Recalculation of audit time and sample size for the next audit is done when the added site is aligned in the usual audit cycle of the customer. Certificates are issued in line with the multi-site certificate expiry date of the customers existing certificates.

Multi-site extensions within the normal certification/surveillance audit cycle initiate recalculation of the audit time and sample size for multi-site audits. Any change is communicated to the customer and considered in the audit plan. Certificate changes are including the new site on the main certificate and separate certificate for the new site. Reference to the main certificate must be on the individual site certificate.

Should the customer close an existing site, as for extensions, the audit time and sample size will be recalculated. Certification change will remove the site from the main certificate. The customer has to return the site specific certificate with the issue of new certificates excluding the closed site.

5.2 Advanced Surveillance and Reassessment Procedures (ASRP):

Customers with a long-term relationship with EQCSA will be reviewed for qualification to the ASRP audit process. This is more likely applicable for larger customers with a number of surveillance audit days due to size of the customer.

Customers with well performing management system consistently over many years with steady continual improvement and strong management commitment should have the benefit of a cost-effective certification service.

The following criteria are applied for consideration of a customer's qualification to ASRP:

5.2.1 Criteria for the Customer to benefit from the ASRP:

- At least one full certification cycle has been completed
- All non-conformities of the completed certification cycle are resolved
- The customer has demonstrated legal compliance during the completed certification cycle
- The customer has established and conforms to key performance indicators acceptable to EQCSA
- EQCSA has access and can approach all external interested parties and authorities relevant to the customer to ensure that views and performance expectations of the customer are acceptable to the interested parties and authorities
- The customer maintains an effective and competent internal audit program with effective non-conformance and corrective action control
- The customer maintains an audit management system conforming to ISO 19011
- The customer maintains competent audit personnel with adequate authority to manage audit results and corrective action implementation by the responsible managers.
- The customer has consistently demonstrated strong and effective top management commitment.
- The customer could maintain accredited certification in other areas (HACCP, IATF/TS 16949)

Based on the performance during the first certification cycle, EQCSA reviews the customer's management system performance under certification conditions for positive indicators to discuss the applicability of ASRP with the customer.

The calculations of varying audit times are documented in the (429AUDITTIMECALTABASRP) and are reflected in the Offer of Service amendment and on the Annual Audit Plan.

5.2.2 Criteria for EQCSA to apply the ASRP:

- EQCSA has completed one cycle of accreditation
- The Manager Certification is competent to design an ASRP for the individual needs of the customer
- Design Input Criteria for ASRP design are established
- Design Output Criteria for ASRP are established
- The documentation infrastructure allows consideration for ASRP data

EQCSA has completed one cycle of accreditation by SANAS and has the required competence within the Manager Certification to demonstrate capability to design each individual ASRP based on customer specific criteria.

5.2.2.1 Design Input Criteria

The following design input criteria are established to ensure data availability for ASRP design:

- Surveillance audit report section on ASRP eligibility
- Customer performance criteria in (429AUDITTIMECALTABASRP)

- Customer system for legal compliance capability
- Customer demonstrated legal compliance throughout the certification cycle (included in surveillance audit report)
- The customer maintains other accredited certification with EQCSA or an accepted certification organization with no non-conformities open or authority 100% inspection.
- The customer has an audit process capable to demonstrate full control by the customer of the management system
- The customer implements a technology review and assessment process for adequate management system and plant technology (BPEO NEMA minimum)
- Successful re-certification audit results.

The Manager Certification reviews all data for the design of the ASRP Program and calculates based on the information available the required audit time for the audit. The lead auditor is participating in the design process, to ensure that the agreed audit time and audit sampling process is acceptable to demonstrate the customer's management system compliance and effectiveness to maintain certification.

5.2.2.2 Design Output Criteria

The audit under ASRP conditions must achieve the following results and provide the required indicators thereto:

- The customer's audit process and management system.
- The review of customer's audit results and post audit control
- The competence of the customer's auditors and auditor competence requirements.
- The resolution of audit results within the customer's management system.
- The application of technology evaluation and continual improvement management.
- The application of advanced technologies for processes and products.
- The selection of EQCSA audit objectives related to the customer's management system progress and control effectiveness.
- The involvement of senior management in the management system improvement process.

The output criteria are used by the Manager Certification to establish the process for the ASRP-Audit. The lead auditor must be competent to establish the required critical controls and audit areas for the ASRP areas.

The audit report format for ASRP Surveillance and Recertification is the same as for the other surveillance and re-certification audits.

The audit objective, however, will refer to the ASRP Process. The Three-Year Analysis will deal with the relevant input and output criteria for the planning of an ASRP-Audit specific to the customer.

5.2.3 Criteria for Lead Auditor ASRP

In addition to the established competence criteria, the Lead Auditor competent for ASRP audits must meet the following criteria:

- 10 years audit experience in management system auditing (lead auditor)
- 5 years' management system development
- Certified competent in at least three different management system standards auditing
- 5 years audit management responsibility

EQCSA ensures that only competent auditors with the required experience and capability to adapt to audit situations are used for ASRP-Audits.

Customers must meet the above specified requirements.

5.3 Combined Audits

Combined audits are certification audits where the customer has applied for certification to more than one Standard (ISO 9000/14000/ISO 45001:2018/Responsible Care).

Certification does not necessarily involve accredited standard compliance. However, disregarding whether EQCSA is accredited or not, the same processes are applying to all certification criteria.

Synergy of combined standard audits cannot go to more than 50%-time benefits compared to single standard audit time calculations. The Manager Certification uses the applicable calculation tables in conjunction with (423AUDITTIMECALTAB). Lead auditors must qualify to audit the management system against the multiple standard selections.

5.4 Short Notice Audits

Short notice audits should be avoided as much as possible. However, if EQCSA does have to conduct Short Notice Audits, the following is applied:

- Audit team selected as per practice with consideration of the client's respect and conflict free environment.
- Audit Plan is simplified and details if necessary, amended during the audit
- Audit Report is generated as per procedure and commented with the reason for and result of the short notice motivation.

Short notice audits are signed off by the Managing Director or if conflict of interest is possible, by the certification committee.

5.5 Abnormal Condition Audits

Audits could become necessary when major changes are occurring, either politically, economically, technologically, environmental or society related.

Abnormal conditions can be prevalent during a normal audit cycle or changes either causing out of frequency audits or delays as caused by the event with no control by our audit services.

5.5.1 Politically Related Abnormal Conditions:

Due to events beyond our control the state or the nations affecting the audit service interval can declare:

- State of Emergency
- State of Disaster
- Declaration of War (International Conventions)

Depending on the conditions the situation needs to be evaluated and decisions initiated. Should the conditions affect the normal audit process it is necessary to establish the following conditions:

- Audit Service cannot be continued
- Audit Service requires a change of process
- Audit Service needs to be rescheduled

The owner of EQCSA must communicate with interested parties, what conditions and effects the events indicating and find a solution acceptable to all involved parties to either continue or discontinue the service. Thereby the principle of reasoning needs to be considered and the confidence of the management system maturity that the quality of the certification conditions are not compromised.

EQCSA and clients must agree to the earliest time to continue the certification process and re-establish normal conditions.

5.5.2 Economically Relate Abnormal Conditions:

Abnormal economic conditions are macro or global economic conditions leading to economic hardships to individual business entities. Those conditions could be:

- Stock Market Crash
- Conditions affecting the basic principles of business existence (Epidemics, major catastrophes, financial collapse, large areas affected by conflict)
- Political conditions
- Society conditions

Depending on the conditions the situation needs to be evaluated and decisions initiated. Should the conditions affect the normal audit process it is necessary to establish the following conditions:

- Audit Service cannot be continued
- Audit Service requires a change of process
- Audit Service needs to be rescheduled

The owner of EQCSA must communicate with interested parties, what conditions and effects the events indicating and find a solution acceptable to all involved parties to either continue or discontinue the service. Thereby the principle of reasoning needs to be considered and the confidence of the management system maturity that the quality of the certification conditions are not compromised.

EQCSA and clients must agree to the earliest time to continue the certification process and re-establish normal conditions.

5.5.3 Technologically, Environmental or Society Related Abnormal Conditions:

Experienced combination of major events as a combination of the above where society is not in agreement, concerned or rejecting technical and scientific conditions. (i.e. Global Warming, Climate Change, Poverty, etc.). The issue for EQCSA is their relationship with their clients and their position towards the issues of concern on a global society majority.

The indicators are or could be:

- Global demonstrations of society groups against business groups and interests
- Global events by industry sectors of unethical business practice
- Breakthrough of technological developments and society reaction

The events and trends could lead to ethical conduct of customers or members of their Supply Chain, origin of goods, risks or benefits of developed technology and society perception.

Depending on the conditions the situation needs to be evaluated and decisions initiated. Should the conditions affect the normal audit process it is necessary to establish the following conditions:

- Audit Service cannot be continued
- Audit Service requires a change of process
- Audit Service needs to be rescheduled

The owner of EQCSA must communicate with interested parties, what conditions and effects the events indicating and find a solution acceptable to all involved parties to either continue or discontinue the service. Thereby the principle of reasoning needs to be considered and the confidence of the management system maturity that the quality of the certification conditions are not compromised.

EQCSA and clients must agree to the earliest time to continue the certification process and re-establish normal conditions.

5.5.4 Abnormal Audit Conditions:

All abnormal conditions affecting audit services are established by evaluation of the conditions by EQCSA Management. Included in the decision-making process is communication and information collections from identified interested parties.

The evaluation initiates a risk assessment and depending on the risk result, the audit services and changing conditions are communicated to the clients. Clients must be informed of the limitations of decision making to achieve the acceptable balance of the EQCSA Accreditation Conditions, Contractual Conditions with the client and sustainability of the certification conditions of the clients.

The conditions leading to abnormal conditions are evaluated to establish that either the audit process needs to change or can be continued normally, after agreed audit activities are established.

Abnormal conditions can lead to changes in the audit process:

- Remote or on-line audit activities
- Direct personal interactions under conditions of distancing, minimization of time additional induction specific to the abnormal conditions and the client's management
- Physical evidence verification of recorded and documented processes and their results
- Audit reporting and closing meeting process

Depending on the abnormal condition, EQCSA will decide and agree with the clients to the process changes and affected audit time.

Remote audits can either be between EQCSA and the client or at the client premises with distant functions. Remote audits not from the client's premises should not exceed 30% of the audit time. Remote or on-line audits on-site should only be acceptable to distant functions as part of the scope of supply only limited to those ones where documentation, records can be submitted and person to person interaction on-line are feasible. On-site on-line audits should only be processed in presence of client staff at site. It is not acceptable to carry out physical site inspections via cameras of the remote site. Remote activities must be identified as such on the audit plan, records of evidence, audit protocol and audit report if affecting the audit outcome.

The other abnormal conditions need to be communicated with the client and the client procedures complied with (additional security and access checks, additional PPE, medical checks, induction training relevant to the abnormalities).

These conditions could lead to changes in the audit time and needs to be agreed between EQCSA and the client. Changes to the original audit plan need to be made before the audit commences.

Once the audit process changes have been established, documented and agreed, the audit commences according to the normal audit process.

6 NON-CONFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Non-conformities identified and raised during all audits within the certification cycle must be closed before the relevant certification process continues to either certificate issue or confirmation of successful maintenance.

The lead auditor is responsible to manage the non-conformities of his/her audit. Audit non-conformity close-out must be completed within a maximum period of three months or before certificate expiry to continue with the certification/confirmation of certification maintenance process.

Non-conformities which are not closed within the specified time are leading to either a new certification audit or suspension of certification and repeat audit for lifting suspension of certification. I.e. if the client is not in the position to have the NCR's closed within the period of six months, EQCSA will conduct a new Stage 2 audit (certification/recertification).

The audit processes applied for applicable audit activities are following the procedures of the certification/surveillance audit process respectively.

Depending on the nature of the non-conformity identified and corrective action required, close-out can be done either by submission of documents or on-site audit verification. The EQCSA Non-conformance report makes provision for the lead auditor to identify the relevant corrective action verification activity.

Irrespective of the method of immediate close-out of the non-conformance, the lead audit for the next regular audit re-verifies the effectiveness of the implemented corrective action.

Non-conformities raised during Integrated Management System Audits including Non-ISO relevant issues (legal compliance, industry specific management systems, etc.) usually are linked to an ISO standard related requirement and should therefore initiate a Non-conformance Report within the structure of the IMS Audit Report. Auditors and Lead Auditors must establish the relevant link and raise a Non-conformance Report.

The lead auditor classifies non-conformances to major or minor NCR's. Thereby he/she evaluates the audit evidence against the definition of major/minor as established in ISO 17021:2015 (Major NCR: nonconformity that affects the capability of the management system to achieve the intended result. Minor NCR: nonconformity that does not affect the capability of the management system to achieve the intended result). The NCR form will indicate the nature of the NCR.

7 AUDIT PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

7.1 Annual Audit program

An audit program is established for the next year at the end of the previous year and submitted to all clients. Thereby the twelve months' period between client audits is monitored. Deviations are only either earlier audit dates or extensions during program management on request by the customer with acceptable motivation. An extension beyond six weeks should be avoided. Beyond the six weeks motivated extension, the customer must be advised that an extended audit time is calculated, based on the conditions found during extension granted.

The audit program is reviewed during the program year and changed usually due to the following reasons:

- Customer request (especially during the first submission)
- Changes by EQCSA (auditor availability at the time of the planned audit)
- Changes in other activities influencing the audit plan (i.e. training and EQCSA participation in committees)

Changes not initiated by the customer are to be minimized and customer changes must be monitored for motivation.

Auditors and lead auditors for existing clients (surveillance audits) are used from previous audit at the audit of the existing clients. At least one auditor should have been conducting the previous audit for understanding and consistency of auditing and audit results finding.

To ensure that audit resources are available, EQCSA maintains an audit register with reference to the relevant EAC Scopes. Trends in enquiries are noted and reviewed against EAC-Scope auditor resource available. Should the trend indicate a shift in EAC-Scope changes, the auditor register will be reviewed for amendment and auditors are either reviewed for scope extensions or new auditors with the relevant EAC-Scopes are sourced.

7.2 Audit program maintenance

The changes are included in the annual audit program and indicated in different color coding. The changed audit program is from time to time submitted to remaining customers during the year, who are affected or could be affected by the change.

Auditor resources are monitored that auditors are not exposed to excessive auditing and have time for adequate preparation of new audits and follow-up of previous audits. Auditor resources also need to include time for further auditor development and system administration.

It is expected that auditors are involved in other activities such as committees and training, related to the advancement of auditor knowledge and skills.

The changes of the audit program are documented through monthly change dates and kept as copies within the management system documentation.

7.3 Audit program analysis

The audit program is analyzed during the change management and program maintenance. Should there be too many changes the MD of EQCSA review and determines the root cause of change. Corrective action is taken, such as customer information and auditor workshops.

During the annual customer workshops, the audit program is discussed and causes for changes indicated. Customer input during the workshop is noted and considered for future audit program planning.

Exemptions to the strict 12 months' audit period can also occur due to the customer's type of business environment. Especially during environmental audits or customer specific seasonal dependencies (i.e. agricultural environment) it is necessary to ensure that seasonal impacts are established and built into the audit program.

Included in the analysis is the review of audit reports and specific indicators deriving from previous audit or customer visits. (I.e. customer's discussion of intentions to expand or change product range, or business focus, etc.).

Auditor workshops include relevant issues to ensure that customer and auditor feedback is considered for the annual audit program improvement.

Should the audit program indicate auditor resource difficulties, existing auditors are reviewed for EAC-Scope extension or sourcing of new auditors. (See comments above).

To optimize audit preparation and follow-up times, the audit documentation is reviewed to optimize the administrative component of the complete audit process (preparation – audit at the customer – follow-up).

7.4 Audit Program Effectiveness

The audit program effectiveness is influenced by various factors, which are assessed continuously with the annual audit plan implementation and operation. The following key indicators are established to assess and establish annual audit plan effectiveness.

- Submission of next years' annual audit plan to customers (November previous year)
- Customer response to annual audit plan
- Changes to annual audit plan (reviewed after completion)
- Auditor resources
- Documentation of audit result trends
- Communication of a three-year audit plan to customers

7.4.1 Submission of next year's audit plan

EQCSA reviews and compiles the next year's audit plan for submission to the clients during the previous year to ensure that the audit plan is published in November of the previous year. Client confirmation is expected to be received sufficiently in advance (two months should be minimum) to enable audit teams to be determined, have time for preparation, submit company audit plan to the customer in reasonable due time (between two to four weeks).

The audit plan is submitted via e-mail. Usually the system generates confirmation response to control receipt by the customer. Client response is reviewed, and change requests are included in the annual audit plan. With confirmation of the audit dates by the client, the color coding of the audit in the audit plan changes as indicated on the bottom of the audit plan.

Later changes to audit plan inputs (after confirmation) are color coded as such and documented for the annual audit plan review. The annual audit plan from the previous year is presented during the customer workshops to develop a long-term consistency and minimization of change annual audit plan.

Information used during next year's audit plan draft compiling:

- Previous annual audit plan
- Customer audit reports (Tree year audit cycle)
- Three-year analysis
- Customer questionnaires (where requested for resubmission)
- Audit time calculation sheet (where changes are expected, new certifications, re-certifications)
- Changes to standards referenced for certification
- AGREEMENT FORM from 420OFFEROFSERVICES2019
- Multi-site sampling plan

7.4.2 Customer response to next year's audit plan

Customer response is individual to customers. The most likely response is via the e-mail system as well. Some customers also prefer personal meetings to discuss the detailed arrangements (mainly group certifications). The audit plan will only be resubmitted to customer in group mails during mid-year for the customers for the remaining year and the first months of the next year (see format of annual audit plan). Should customers not respond in time a reminder is sent out?

7.4.3 Changes to annual audit plan.

Changes to the original draft submitted are expected due to customer's annual activity planning. Changes should not be too considerable, since the audit reports document the three-year audit cycle with consideration to maintain a reasonably accurate 12 months' frequency. Out of planning changes, which can occur due to changes within the customers' or EQCSA needs, are documented and color coded on the annual audit plan. The last years audit plan is evidence of audit planning and conduct of the previous year. The less changes occur, the better EQCSA is achieving the objective of minimizing changes and achieve consistency and reliability towards customer services.

Although little control on changes requested by the customer can be expected, focus on optimization is EQCSA initiated changes (the long-term target is two changes/year requested by EQCSA).

The annual audit plan from the previous year is tabled for discussion and improvement during the annual customer workshop.

7.4.4. Auditor resources

The most likely reasons for change of audit plan by EQCSA are related to resource availability and their performance (indicator for audit effectiveness). This is monitored by EQCSA and should there be indicators verifying resource shortages, actions will be taken to eliminate the cause (use root cause sheet 438ROOTCAUSEANALYSIS).

A list of potential resources is maintained. Should the need arise the list is used to approach relevant individuals for submission of documented proof of competency and completed form (504PERSONNELDATA). New audit resources deriving from there developed and used for future audits. Individual auditor performance is monitored via assessment every two years (713AUDITORASSESSMENT). Depending on performance results, auditor development is identified.

Where changes to standards used for certification services are changing, auditor competence is maintained by workshops and training interventions.

7.4.5 Documentation of audit result trends

The performance of customer management system can influence the annual audit plan by either extension of audit time due to latent problems or repeat audits or application of advanced surveillance and recertification procedures (IAF-MD5-2009 ASRP) where audit times can be adjusted due to consistent good performance and maturity of the management system.

Audit result trends are documented accumulative during each audit within the three-year audit cycle. This can be monitored at any time and used for recalculating audit times and adjustment due to the accumulative statistical indicators. Should there be any reason indicated, EQCSA will adjust the audit time according to the indicated results within the audit reports (438STAGE2REPORT2008 last page).

Customers, where concerns are evident within the accumulative three-year analysis, are notified during the completion of the audit report during the closing meeting of the respective audit. This is followed through by rising of non-conformities and indications of future audit time changes.

7.4.6 Communication of three-year audit planning to customers

To achieve consistency and reliability in the annual audit plan implementation, early customer information is established to prepare customers for their expected availability for surveillance audits after certification is achieved and re-certification can be completed before certificate expiry.

Therefore, the audit report format includes a three-year planning section, indicating the next audit dates for a full certification cycle (438STAGE2REPORT2008).

This is completed and accumulatively updated during the audit cycle by the audit team compiling the next audit report and discussed with the customer during the closing meeting