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Objective

The objective of this specifications manual is to outline the Production Standards for Grass-Fed Cattle, based on grazing systems on natural grasslands and pastures, non-GMO, without any type of confinement or feedlot finishing, and considering animal welfare conditions, as determined by CMS AGROCONSULTORA in order to comply with the Certification of the Grass Fed Registration Certificate.¹

Scope and field of application

It applies to any Applicant requesting Certification under the Certification Scheme for the Production Standards for Grass-Fed Cattle – Grass Fed Seal.

The SCOPE covers all live cattle, their products and by-products, in relation to their production and feeding system, including breeding, rearing, fattening and finishing, within cattle production systems.

The FIELD OF APPLICATION covers any cattle-producing farm wishing to enter the Grass Fed Seal certification program.

Mark of conformity

Any establishment that complies with the provisions of this protocol may use the mark seal. The same is shown below.

Definitions

Animal Welfare: physical and mental state of an animal in relation to the conditions in which it lives and dies, in harmony with the environment, including the 5 “needs”: freedom from hunger, thirst and malnutrition; freedom from fear and distress; freedom from physical and thermal discomfort; freedom from pain, injury and disease; and freedom to express natural behavior.

Inspection: Verification of compliance with the certification standards of the protocol at the place of production.

Operator: Any establishment that has signed a contract with the Certification Body for the certification process.

Natural Grassland: herbaceous community dominated by different native, naturalized and non-invasive species of the Grass (Poaceae) and Legume (Fabaceae) families, with the presence of woody species always below 20% of the cover, and commonly used as the basis for grazing activities.

Established Pasture: crop intended for forage use, composed of one or more species.

Fresh Forage: a resource consumed through direct grazing of natural grasslands, established pastures and annual forage crops.

¹ This document may receive updates, improvements and necessary adjustments based on advances in research in Bovine Animal Production, changes in markets, requirements of the certification body or changes in legislation. Any modification will be communicated to the parties involved.

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Grazing System: consists of the rational management of meadows and paddocks, planning land division to promote animal occupation and rest periods, generating a change in animal grazing behavior (from selective to voracious) as a practice that allows the farmer to achieve greater forage production per unit of area, providing adequate recovery time for pastures and/or grasslands, calculating an appropriate stocking rate according to pasture availability, contributing to the elimination of overgrazing and promoting sustainable soil use.

Supplementation: the action of administering a feed or mixture of feeds that are added to another feed referred to as the base diet.

Description of the attribute

1. PRIMARY PRODUCTION

1.1. Origin of the animals

a. Animals should preferably complete their entire life cycle within the establishment under the Program, complying with the stages of breeding, rearing, fattening and finishing.

The entry of animals from other cattle establishments under the same Program is permitted.

All animals sent to slaughter, originating from establishments carrying out a complete cycle or only fattening and finishing, must be under certification and comply with the Program requirements.

b. All animals must be individually and correctly identified.

c. Records must be kept of births, animal stock, deaths, time of animal identification (ear tagging), movements of animals entering and leaving the certified property, and any health-related event occurring at the establishment.

1.2. Production systems

a. The production systems covered by this program must respect occupation and rest periods, managing the pasture resource, promoting pasture recovery and soil regeneration. Animals must graze outdoors, respecting natural feeding behavior.

b. Animals shall be fed predominantly on a pasture-based diet throughout their lives.

c. The production system must ensure that animals spend their entire lives in open environments on natural grasslands or established pastures, non-GMO.

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d. Confinement, housing or feedlot finishing is prohibited. Temporary confinement is permitted only in the event of adverse environmental conditions that put the animals' lives at risk.

e. Each establishment must have a map or sketch of the establishment detailing and identifying the production lots / paddocks used to implement the grazing system.

1.3. Grazing system

a. The producer must base production on a grazing regime, grazing system or grazing management system for feeding the animals.

b. The system must ensure that all animals live under a grazing regime, spending their lives outdoors with access to pasture, under conditions that allow them to express their natural behavior and with their water and feed needs met, ensuring that the animals' nutritional requirements are satisfied.

c. The grazing system involves some form of management, so that:

1. Animals always have access to pasture that is as fresh as possible and maintained under the highest hygienic conditions.
2. The stocking rate is adjusted to the productivity of the available area.
3. Excreta are distributed throughout the available area, acting as a natural fertilizer and preventing potential sources of unhealthy conditions, water contamination and/or pathogen proliferation.
4. Adequate rest is allowed for areas that have already been grazed to restore vegetation and soil, avoiding overgrazing.

1.4. Feed and water

The following is a summary of the composition of feed permitted under the Grass Fed certification program.

Animals included in the Grass Fed Program must consume exclusively forage as feed throughout their lives. Forage constitutes the only feed permitted within the production system.

	Normal conditions	Exceptional conditions ² (Limited period: up to 3 months)
Feed composition (% of dry matter)	Minimum 90% fresh forage. Up to 10% ensiled or hay forage.	Minimum 50% fresh forage. Up to 40% ensiled or hay forage

a. Animals must receive a diet that ensures a minimum of 90% pasture-based forage, originating from direct harvesting of pastures, with up to 10% reserves made from the same forage (bales, hay, crop residue without grain) throughout their lives.

² Exceptional conditions are periods of forage shortages: frost, drought and/or flooding. The composition of the diet is modified for a limited period of up to 3 months, solely to cover specific deficits in forage production and preserve the animal's basic feeding. Weaning is also considered an exceptional condition, as it is a period that causes stress to the animal. In this case, the maximum period during which the diet composition may be modified is 20 days.

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The Grass Fed animals covered by the protocol spend their entire lives on a forage chain based on fresh forage, natural grasslands or established pastures.

The species used as established pastures may include grasses and legumes, annual and perennial species, single-species or multi-species stands, and cereal crops in the vegetative stage, always from non-GMO seed.

Commercial crops that are in the fruiting stage may not be grazed. Grazing of commercial crops is authorized only when they are in the vegetative stage.

In justified climatic emergencies and for a controlled period, strategic supplementation will be permitted—preferably within the paddock—or nearby, using bales, silage

b. If supplementation is provided, the type of supplement, quantity, frequency and animals receiving it must be detailed and recorded, as well as whether it comes from own production (preferably) or purchased feed, with records and documents such as delivery notes and invoices. The percentages of supplementation offered to the animals must be fully auditable based on lot records, animal stock records, crop production records, invoices and purchase delivery notes.

The fact that bales, silage are provided in the paddocks, where water is also available to the animals (there or nearby), ensures that dung and urine are distributed homogeneously throughout the paddocks.

c. Supplementation in a feedlot or any other form of animal confinement is not permitted.

d. The use of commercial or industrial balanced feeds and/or concentrates is prohibited. In areas where mineral deficiencies limit production, the use of corrective organic mineral salts is permitted.

e. The use of feeds containing animal-origin proteins is prohibited, with the exception of milk proteins and fat.

f. The use of products intended to act as growth promoters is prohibited.

g. The use of anabolic agents and growth hormones is prohibited.

h. It is essential that animals have sufficient, fresh and suitable water nearby, since, in addition to contributing to their welfare, it contributes to natural fertilization (through dung and urine deposition in the paddock), promotes animal comfort, reduces energy expenditure from long-distance movements and improves the efficiency of converting pasture into meat or milk.

Although water sources may be of different origins depending on the characteristics of the production system (troughs, streams, reservoirs), it is essential that animals always have sufficient availability and quantity to meet their needs.

i. The use of nutritional supplements such as mineral salts and vitamins is authorized when required by the geographical area, provided they do not contain prohibited ingredients, such as antibiotics and ionophores.

j. The producer must keep records clearly showing:

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1. Livestock feeding practices, controlled strategic supplementation exclusively for a minimum period due to climatic emergencies—strategic supplementation (preferably in the paddock or nearby)—, water supply sources, the health system implemented, land division planning (field sketch showing paddocking or parceling), and animal identification.

2. Records of the use of sown pastures (multi-species and/or perennial), annual forage crops, cover crops, or crop residues with interseeding, specifically grazed by the animals.

1.5. Integration of Livestock and Agriculture

a. Animals may be included in annual forage crops, service crops or interseeded crop residues in an integrated crop-livestock system, provided that they are non-GMO.

b. Water supply should be provided in agricultural areas occasionally used for grazing annual forage crops, interseeded residues or service crops, with the aim of distributing dung and urine homogeneously throughout the entire lot rather than concentrating them in certain areas.

c. Records of production, use and/or purchase of inputs must be kept.

1.6. Animal welfare and livestock handling

a. Compliance with the “five domains” of welfare must be ensured:

- Environment.
- Mental state.
- Behavior.
- Health.
- Nutrition.

b. Through the pasture-based production system and the implemented and controlled grazing system, conditions must be promoted to ensure livestock welfare, providing:

1. **GOOD NUTRITION:** provision of water and feed in sufficient quantity and appropriate nutritional quality, capable of meeting the biological and physiological requirements corresponding to the animal’s age.

2. **ADEQUATE ENVIRONMENT:** physical and social comfort conditions without exposure to various stimuli or stress factors, such as thermal and/or physical discomfort, while respecting the minimum space per animal according to the species and type of production.

3. **GOOD HEALTH:** preventive health care and veterinary treatments appropriate to any pathology that may occur, in order to eliminate pain, injuries and/or diseases.

4. **SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT: NATURAL BEHAVIOR** without the development of behavioral alterations due to lack of welfare.

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- c. Animal welfare is prioritized, as is uninterrupted access to pasture at will (with bales also being understood as pasture), and water in the paddock or nearby, whenever possible.
- d. Fatigue and traumatic handling of animals must be avoided during livestock handling operations. Animals must not be mistreated, must be handled calmly, and must move of their own accord.
- e. Do not use whips, electric prods or dogs for handling livestock or loads. Blows against gates, fences or when working with horses must be avoided.
- f. Animals must move freely, allowing all livestock to express their natural and instinctive behaviors. They must also be kept in environments that do not cause injuries.
- g. Dogs, electric prods, goads, irons or sharp objects shall not be used.
- h. Facilities where animals are handled (chutes, handling alleys, headgates, cattle loading ramps, fences) must be properly maintained and in conditions that prevent animal injuries.
- i. The use of flags is recommended when some assistance is necessary to move the animals.
- j. Confinement, i.e. keeping animals enclosed, is prohibited. Certified Grass Fed Beef animals must graze in paddocks with natural grasslands or established pastures, where they will receive all their nutrition.
- k. Producers are responsible for instructing, training and educating their employees regarding proper treatment, handling, use of equipment and care of livestock. Training must be recorded.
- l. All animals must be maintained in good health and veterinary care must be provided whenever required.
- m. All handling and production practices must respect animal welfare conditions, minimizing any pain or harm to the animal.

1.7. Animal health

- a. Animals must be identified and records must be maintained showing entries, births, deaths, events, vaccinations, diseases and treatments, and exits.
- b. The establishment must have a veterinary professional responsible for the health program implemented at the establishment.
- c. A Health Book / Treatment Record must be maintained.
- d. Only authorized and approved veterinary products may be used, and strict control must be maintained to comply with the withdrawal periods specified for each product, proper use, dosage, routes of administration and frequency in order to minimize the development of resistance. Any administration of medication carried out within the health plan must be discontinued 45 days before slaughter in order to avoid residues in the meat.

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e. A General Health Plan must be maintained: herd health treatments only by vaccines (bacterial strains).

- Vaccination against Foot-and-Mouth Disease is carried out according to the health authority responsible for the National Foot-and-Mouth Disease Eradication Program and establishes mandatory vaccination campaigns.
- Vaccination against Brucellosis is carried out according to the health authority requirements, which establishes and regulates the official vaccination program.

The following is a tentative health plan depending on each establishment and the production area.

- Preventive vaccines in cows: Before calving, to prevent neonatal diarrhea. Cows are vaccinated because during the beginning of lactation these antibodies pass to calves through colostrum.
- Clostridial complex (blackleg, malignant edema, enterotoxemia, sudden death, shipping disease) and respiratory complex (IBR, BVD, etc.).
- Preventive vaccines in calves from 3 months of age. 2 doses at intervals of 20–30 days.
- Vaccines against reproductive diseases. At breeding of cows and heifers and/or upon confirmation of pregnancy.

f. The use of hormones, regulators and growth promoters or metabolic modifiers is prohibited throughout the animal's life.

g. Any animal showing symptoms of disease must be separated from the herd until the symptoms have completely regressed, thus preventing transmission to the other animals.

h. Routine use of veterinary products is not permitted without a prescription from the veterinarian responsible for the establishment.

i. The use of antibiotics is prohibited.

2. PRODUCTION OF “GRASS FED” BEEF CUTS

2.1. Definition of the product to be produced

The beef cuts, portions or certifiable pieces are extracted from boneless beef quarters originating from carcasses of animals previously certified as Beef Production based on grass fed.

2.2. Origin of the animals

The cattle from which the certified cuts, portions or pieces originate come from Rural Establishments authorized by the competent national authority.

2.3. Livestock control

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It is verified that the cattle included in the groups to be presented under the “Grass Fed” Program have the Official documentation required for their transit and subsequent processing at the establishment.

2.4. Assignment of the herd-group number and animal entry record

The animals arrive at the plant by previously authorized trucks. Before unloading the animals, the transporter must go to the corrals office, where the documentation for the incoming group will be requested.

- DTe, TRI and Seal Control.
- Verification of the transport washing certificate.

The animals are weighed and assigned to a resting pen where they will remain until slaughter.

2.5. Slaughter program

The Official Slaughter List includes those groups that meet the requirements set out above. They may be identified for subsequent identification using the initials GF.

2.6. Communication to the certification body

..... Official Establishment No., communicates by e-mail to CMS Agroconsultora the days on which the animals will be slaughtered and quartering and deboning will be carried out for “Grass Fed “ certification.

2.7. Identification of animals to be slaughtered and carcasses

- Identification at slaughter → The Official Slaughter List consecutively includes the total number of cattle to be slaughtered each day, using the following for identification:
- The number of the herd group to which they belong.
- Number of animals per herd group to be slaughtered.

2.8. Identification of half carcasses

Identification of the half carcasses is carried out by:

- Consecutive slaughter number stamped on the hock and forearm.
- Traceability labels printed through the computer system containing the health authorization number, company legal name, herd-group number, consecutive slaughter number, weight, slaughter date, classification.



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