FIAS Scheme Rules

1 Introduction

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1.1

FIAS covers the assurance of all fertilisers intended for agriculture, horticulture, forestry, amenity and any other such commercial use. It does not apply to fertilisers packaged for home garden use. The issues and risks vary according to the type of fertiliser and it is for this reason that the entire scheme has adopted a business process risk assessment approach to achieving the necessary level of assurance.

1.2

FIAS is a voluntary scheme developed by AIC in response to the need to prevent the misuse of fertilisers.

1.3

FIAS provides a safe and controlled environment for the sourcing, import, manufacture, packing, storage, merchanting and transport of fertilisers.

1.4

FIAS provides a credible independent assessment to demonstrate that the Participant complies with requirements for:

- relevant legislation
- security
- traceability
- product safety

1.5

FIAS is managed by AIC, who developed and implemented the scheme. The fertiliser industry, other stakeholders and end users are consulted during revisions of the scheme.

1.6

FIAS is a Certification Scheme delivered by a Certification Body accredited to International Standard ISO/IEC 17065. A list of Participants is publicly available via the AIC website: www.agindustries.org.uk/trade-assurance-checker

1.7

To become FIAS certified, a fertiliser business must be assessed by the Certification Body and demonstrate full compliance with the current version of the standard as applicable to their operations.

The Certification Body administers the scheme and, in most cases, performs the on-site audit. However, a Participant may select, if they wish, an alternative organisation to carry out the on-site audit activity from a list of approved Inspection Bodies appointed by the Certification Body for this purpose. The list of approved Inspection Bodies is available from the Certification Body.

1.8

By applying for certification to FIAS, the Applicant agrees that, if accepted, they will comply with requirements of the FIAS Standard and the FIAS Scheme Rules, putting in place the resources required to do so.

1.9

All fees and costs of certification as charged by the Certification Body are published on the AIC FIAS website www.agindustries.org.uk/fias-membership, with the exception of costs related to extra/immediate audits.

2 FIAS Scope

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2.1

The FIAS standard encompasses all the operations and activities of a Participant that may have a bearing on the legal compliance, product safety, security and traceability of the fertilisers supplied: from raw material procurement through to the point at which any fertilisers produced are transferred to an end user. The scope of operation must be clearly defined and agreed with the Certification Body.

Audits will therefore include:

- General requirements
- Manufacturing
- Storage
- Product sales and distribution/ Merchanting
- Transport

3 Claims associated with FIAS certification

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3.1

Participants who achieve successful certification against this FIAS Standard are reminded that FIAS is a certification programme. Claims of FIAS certification may only be made by Participants in relation to their declared scope of operation.

3.2

The FIAS acronym and logo are registered certification marks and must only be used in compliance with the rules laid down by AIC which can be found on the AIC website www.agindustries.org.uk/ta-brand-guidelines

4 Confidentiality

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4.1

All information concerning Applicants and Certified Participants will be treated in confidence. Specific information, such as details of individual audit reports, will not be divulged to any third party without the written agreement of the Applicant or Participant. The exceptions are:

4.1.2

The Certification Body and/or AIC will confirm the Scheme ID number, name and address and if the company is a certified Participant, along with the expiry date and scope of certification. These details are also available on the AIC website at www.agindustries.org.uk/trade-assurance-checker.

4.1.3

The provision of information to AIC in relation to audit findings and non- conformances as required to maintain the standards and credibility of the Scheme.

4.1.4

In the event of a Participant being involved in a fertiliser related security or safety incident, details may be discussed in confidence between representatives of AIC and the Competent Authority.

5 Becoming certified to FIAS

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5.1

FIAS is open to any company involved in the fertiliser supply chain subject to complying with these scheme rules. In order to become a certified Participant of FIAS, applicants shall:

5.1.1

Complete an application form for certification and return it to the Scheme Certification Body. At this point the Applicant can nominate a preferred inspection body providing that inspection body has appropriately qualified auditors and is approved by the Certification Body.

5.1.2

Cooperate with the Certification body on confirming scope and establishing the audit duration.

5.1.3

Confirm they agree to comply with the Scheme Rules, current FIAS Standard and Certification Body Terms and Conditions by signing the Certification Agreement contained in the quotation and returning it to the Certification Body. The quotation will indicate the duration of the initial and subsequent routine audits.

The duration of the audit is dictated by the time needed to make the required assessments of the premises, systems and procedures of the Participant.

5.1.4

Pay all relevant fees as published on the FIAS pages of the AIC website.

5.1.5

Agree to an initial audit and rectify any non-conformances within the timeline specified in the scheme rules.

5.1.6

On receipt of application the business name is listed on the AIC Trade Assurance website with a description of “Applied” status. This status can exist only for 6 months after which time the business must be fully approved or will be identified as “Resigned/Withdrawn”. Re-application within 12 months will be permitted only at the discretion of the Certification Body.

5.2

When the Applicant has been audited, has rectified any non-conformances that have been identified and these have been verified by the Certification Body, then the Certification Body will undertake a certification decision and issue a Certificate. The details of the successful Applicant will be added to the list of Participants on the AIC website.

5.3

By applying to join FIAS, the Applicant agrees that, if accepted, they will maintain compliance with the requirements of the FIAS Standard and any relevant associated documents.

5.4

The Applicant or Participant will have no claim against any officers, members or employees of AIC in the event of Expulsion, Suspension or a lesser sanction and/or the publication thereof as appropriate, nor have any claim against any of the above for any damages and/or compensation or costs for any financial loss occasioned thereby.

6 Maintaining FIAS certified status

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6.1

FIAS Certificates will be valid from the date on which the Applicant demonstrated conformance with the Standard and expire on the anniversary of the date of the audit.

6.2

Certificates are issued subject to:

- payment of all relevant fees to the Certification Body
- subsequent satisfactory audits

6.3

Participants will be contacted by a representative of the Certification Body prior to the anniversary of their initial audit to arrange a routine surveillance audit. The audit date must be within 6 weeks of the anniversary unless otherwise agreed with the Certification Body.

6.4

Participants shall comply with the Scheme Requirements at all times as defined in the FIAS Standard.

6.5

Participants shall advise the Certification Body of any changes to the business, typically but not limited to:

- company ownership
- scope of operations
- key management

6.6

Participants and Applicants shall immediately advise the Certification Body in the event of:

- being subject to legal action that relates to their FIAS accredited activities
- having Earned Recognition revoked by the Competent Authority (transport only)
- significant incidents on site that may restrict the ability of the Certification Body to carry out an audit (including extra/immediate audits)
- damage the reputation of the FIAS scheme

6.7

Where a Participant becomes aware of any suspicious activity that has the potential to affect fertiliser safety or security, AIC should be informed – for contact details see www.agindustries.org.uk/resource/tell-aic.html.

7 Assessment of participant compliance with the scheme

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7.1

The Certification Body or the nominated inspection body will assess a Participant's compliance with the Standard. The Certification Body shall be given access to all relevant information needed to confirm compliance with the Standard and the right to inspect third parties subcontracted to perform work covered by the Standard, at the Participant's cost. FIAS audits are not of a fixed duration but are determined on a case-by-case basis.

7.2

The Certification Body will ensure that the same assessor will not assess the same company beyond a consecutive 3 year period. An assessor should have a break of at least 1 year, at the discretion of the Certification Body.

7.3

Types of audit within the FIAS scheme:

7.3.1

Initial audit – a formal, in-depth, on-site assessment for new applicants to confirm that Applicants comply with the requirements of FIAS.

7.3.2

Routine Surveillance audit – a formal annual assessment for certified participants of the FIAS scheme.

7.3.3

Assessment of contractors - at the discretion of the Certification Body, further assessments of contractors approved by the FIAS Participant or Applicant may be required.

7.3.4

Extra/immediate assessment - the Certification Body will carry out extra/immediate audits at their discretion - these audits may incur a cost. Circumstances where these may be required include, but are not limited to:

- in response to reports or intelligence suggesting a significant fertiliser safety or security issue or breach of FIAS rules and requirements
- signing off action points following an audit, particularly if the action points relate to major or critical non-conformances

7.4 Reporting

7.4.1

The Certification Body will produce a report for its own audit purposes and identify any non-conformances to the Participant at the end of the audit. Non-conformances will be classified as shown in section 7.5 and acted upon as per section 8.

7.4.2

Once a Participant has rectified the areas of non-compliance to the satisfaction of the Certification Body and within time limits specified in section 8, the Certification Body issues a FIAS certificate of compliance.

7.5 Classification of non-conformances

Classification	Cause
Critical	A regulatory violation, serious safety or security failure, total loss of traceability such that recall of unsafe goods would be impossible, and/or complete unwillingness to cooperate in the audit.
Major	A complete failure to implement a requirement of FIAS or a failure that may result in a serious safety, security or traceability failure. A recurrence of a minor non-conformance raised at the preceding assessment.
Minor	A partial failure to implement a requirement of FIAS or poor evidence to demonstrate implementation.

8 Response to non-conformances

8 Response to non-conformances

Classification	Initial audit	Routine Surveillance audit
Critical	Certification refused. Full re-application and audit required.	Certification suspended with immediate effect. Satisfactory re-assessment required before Participant is reinstated.
Major	Certificate not granted until non-conformances resolved. Plan of corrective actions to be submitted within 15 calendar days of audit and timescales for completion and submission of evidence to be agreed with the Certification Body. Verification of effectiveness of corrective action to be undertaken by Certification Body before certification is granted. Failure to resolve non-conformances within the agreed timescales will lead to a repeat initial assessment or archiving of application.	Certification continues subject to plan of corrective action being submitted within 15 calendar days of audit, and timescales for completion and submission of evidence to be agreed with the Certification Body, typically no more than 60 days from assessment. Verification of effectiveness of corrective action to be undertaken by Certification Body before certification is maintained/renewed. Failure to implement corrective actions and provide evidence to the Certification Body within agreed timescales, will lead to suspension.
Minor	Certification not granted until non-conformances rectified. Plan/evidence of corrective actions to be submitted within 30 calendar days of audit, and timescales for completion of evidence to be agreed with the Certification Body. Verification of effectiveness of corrective action to be undertaken by Certification Body before certification is granted.	Certification continues subject to plan of corrective action being submitted within 30 calendar days of audit, and timescales for completion and submission of evidence to be agreed with the Certification Body, typically no more than 60 days from assessment. Verification of effectiveness of corrective action to be undertaken by Certification Body before certification is maintained/renewed. Failure to implement corrective actions and provide evidence of the Certification Body within agreed timescales, will lead to suspension.

9 Observations

9 Observations

9.1

Observations may be raised during FIAS audits. These are:

- points noted by an assessor that are not technical breaches of the Standard, but could assist the Certification Body, Scheme Owner or Participant
- points which constitute a non-conformance but the assessor is unable to confirm this during the audit

Observations do not require a formal response to the Certification Body, unless upgraded to a non-conformance during the report review.

10 Report review

10 Report review

10.1

Upon completion of an audit report, it is submitted to the Certification Body for review. As part of this review process, the Certification Body may, based on the evidence collected for the report:

- seek additional information
- remove non-conformance(s)
- add non-conformance(s)

- change the classification of non-conformances
- change observation(s) to non-conformance(s) or vice versa

11 Multi-sited Participants

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11.1

Where a business entity operates on multiple sites with the same scope, common system and effective central controls, then, at the Certification Body's discretion, sampling of sites may be possible.

11.2

Applicants and Participants must inform the Certification Body of all sites where FIAS related activities are carried out. All sites must undergo initial audits before a certificate can be issued, however, the routine surveillance audit programme may include sampling of sites in subsequent years provided all sites are covered in an agreed period.

For sites covered in this way, one certificate is issued to cover all sites. In the event of the certificate being withdrawn or suspended, all sites will cease to be certified.

12 Certificate suspension and withdrawal

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12.1

The Certification Body, following discussion with AIC, may suspend or withdraw a Participant's Certificate when the Participant has:

- critical non-conformances that have or are likely to have an adverse effect on product safety or security.
- non-conformances against the FIAS Standard that are not resolved within the required time limits.
- refused access for an audit or extra/immediate assessment.
- refused or failed to supply information requested by the Certification Body.
- failed to pay relevant fees.
- failed to comply with FIAS Scheme Rules or Certification Body Terms and Conditions.
- brought the FIAS Scheme into disrepute

12.2

Suspended Participants must correct non-conformances and have a follow-up assessment by the Certification Body to confirm that all the non-compliances have been fully resolved within 30 calendar days of suspension, in order to have their certification re-instated.

12.3

Participants that do not meet the requirements of the Certification Body to have their suspension lifted within 30 calendar days of suspension will have their certificate(s) withdrawn.

12.4

Participants that have their certification withdrawn will be required to undergo the complete audit process and will be considered as Applicants, subject to satisfactory evidence that any issue(s) which led to certificate withdrawal have been rectified.

12.5

The Certification Body will pass all necessary information to AIC to allow the AIC website to be updated with details of a Participant's changing certification status. The names of suspended and withdrawn Participants will be published in the form of AIC Assurance Alerts.

12.6

Suspended Participants must not claim to be FIAS approved nor undertake contracts that specify FIAS registration without advising the client, until suspension has been lifted.

12.7

Participants that no longer require FIAS certification must inform the Certification Body in writing.

13 Complaints

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13.1

Complaints about either a FIAS Participant or the Certification Body should be directed to the Certification Body where they will be acknowledged, reviewed and action taken to resolve the cause of any problems.

13.2

The Certification Body is accredited by the UK Accreditation Service (UKAS) and works to strict codes of conduct. If Participants are not satisfied with the way in which the Certification Body handles the complaint, then they should refer the matter to AIC.

14 Appeals

14 Appeals

14.1

A Participant has the right of appeal against decisions made by the Certification Body.

14.2

Appeals shall be made in writing to the Certification Body within 14 days of being advised of the decision that is the subject of the appeal.

14.3

The Certification Body will acknowledge the appeal and nominate a manager independent of the decision to carry out an initial investigation to check the merits of the appeal.

14.4

If the nominated manager concurs with the appeal then the Certification Body will correct the erroneous decision.

14.5

If the nominated manager does not concur with the appeal then an independent panel will be convened within 30 days to handle the appeal.

14.6

The Certification Body, including the Scheme Manager, AIC and the Participant are entitled to attend the Appeals Panel and present information to the Panel.

14.7

The independent Appeals Panel makes a ruling based on the information supplied during the hearing.

14.8

The ruling of the Appeals Panel is binding and final on the Certification Body and the Participant.