

SIZA sets gold farm sustainability standard for SA

In an equivalency project to understand the gaps between the [Sustainable Agriculture Initiative Platform](#) (SAI Platform) and the Sustainability Initiative of South Africa ([SIZA](#)), SIZA's two separate standards for South African producers - one covering social criteria and the other environmental criteria - were thoroughly reviewed against SAI Platform's [Farm Sustainability Assessment](#) 2.0 (FSA).

The result was a maximum Gold level of equivalence (100% essential, 100% basic and 100% advanced).



©Peter Titmuss via [123RF](#)

“This level of equivalence is a first as no scheme has ever included the full scope of the FSA before”, said Joe Rushton, FSA Manager. “It’s great that SIZA sees the value of the FSA equivalence, and has aligned so comprehensively. Having this recognition furthers our progress in driving transparency and adds value to the FSA programme as the industry reference for sustainable agriculture. It means any raw material certified in accordance to the SIZA standard can now also be counted as FSA Gold level volume,” he added.

“The benchmark with the FSA was a strategic exercise for us as SIZA’s goal is to provide a locally relevant yet internationally recognised sustainability standard for South African producers”, explains Retha Louw, SIZA’s general manager. “The Gold rating of equivalence will give the market confidence that the SIZA standards are credible and this will support their adoption throughout the supply chain.”

Assist growers with ethical labour and environmental practice standards

SIZA is a membership-based programme designed to assist growers with ethical labour and environmental practice standards whilst minimising costs by reducing the number of audits required for market assurance. To date, there are nearly 1,800 registered members on the SIZA Platform.

“Our standards complement the FSA as they bring in more detail on local legislation requirements and expand on specific priority risk areas that are particularly important in South Africa, such as water management. The end product is a comprehensive standard that is relevant for local conditions and will ensure the highest level of assurance for the various markets that our producers supply to,” added Retha. “At the same time, it is also important to provide a standard that all industry members can adopt, whether they are a small operation or part of a larger international business.”

Supporting the improvement of environmental risk management

In 2016, as part of the longer term SIZA vision to include environmental stewardship as an integral offering within sustainability, SIZA partnered with WWF-SA (the World Wide Fund for Nature, South Africa) to develop a comprehensive Environmental Standard, and appropriate tools to support the improvement of environmental risk management. WWF's role was to ensure the relevance and credibility of the environmental criteria within the standard, and they remain involved both a technical advisory role in the implementation of the environmental module, as well as within the governance structure of SIZA.

"Developing the criteria that are relevant within South African context is one thing, but what is most important to us at WWF SA is that the method of reporting against the standard is based on tracking improvement and empowering the users to manage their key environmental risks in the short, medium and long-term," says Shelly Fuller, the project lead for the SIZA Environmental module from WWF SA.

"It is great to see that the retailers are also now encouraging a more transparent and flexible form of reporting sustainability practices, over and above minimum legal compliance. This acknowledges that measuring and managing environmental risk is a long-term commitment and this cannot be judged on a static report with a percentage pass/fail mark as was the conventional way of reporting."

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>