

New Promise to Facilitate Sustainable Farming

The Declaration of Abu Dhabi collaboration develops a process for identifying a common set of good agricultural practices

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The Declaration of Abu Dhabi for Global Food Security through Good Agricultural Practices announces the development of an innovative process to arrive at a common set of good agricultural practices. This milestone achievement is in alignment with the United Nations Global Compact's Food and Agriculture Business Principles and offers an umbrella of practices to support principles for sustainable agriculture globally. The novel process will be discussed at the International Trade Centre's [Trade for Sustainable Development \(T4SD\) Forum 2015](#), 1 October in Geneva. The Forum provides a platform to discuss sustainability standards and benchmarking approaches to improve standards implementation, usability and positive impact for suppliers and buyers.

The common set will emerge through a new technical solution that engages standards owners in an ongoing harmonization process. The solution is based on International Trade Centre's Standards Map, an online platform which enables its users to explore and compare over 170 sustainability standards, and build their personalized business' roadmap towards sustainable trade. Through new functionality in Standards Map, standards owners will have the opportunity to recognize the language of other standards *on the individual criterion level* as fully or partially equivalent. Each recognition event will be visually identified in the Standards Map interface, and trigger prompts to other standards to evaluate the relevant criteria for reciprocal recognition. The result will be an ongoing chain of recognition. Criteria language that is most widely recognized as equivalent will automatically populate the common set.

Ultimately, with broad participation of standards, the ITC Standards Map platform will allow any farmer to select standards of their choice, and automatically generate a single checklist that includes all criteria with no duplication. This will ease the current confusion created by multiple standards with minor differences in technical language but not in meaning.

The common set of criteria will *not* define a means of verification. This is the role of a standard owner designing standards to meet their specific market needs and this is the role of the market players such as processors, manufacturers and retailers to determine their own level of required performance and method of verification. Additionally, standard owners will continue to include customized criteria that address crop/region/issue specific conditions. Thus, the common set will allow for harmonization of language while preserving the features of individual standards that create meaningful differentiation.

ITC is currently developing the technology to enable the new functionality in the Standards Map. Fellow signatories SAI Platform and GLOBALG.A.P. are offering to initiate the recognition process

using the criteria in the SAI Platform Farm Sustainability Assessment and the GLOBALG.A.P. Integrated Farm Assurance standard.

Broad adoption of the common set language promises to dramatically improve the communication throughout the agri-food and feed supply chain, enabling efficiencies in training, compliance and reporting of safe and sustainable agricultural practices, with application in the public and private sectors. Standards setters, tool builders, training programs and other users will voluntarily adopt, reference or benchmark to those criteria that are relevant to their scope of work. The common set language may be used by certification programs to reduce duplication during audits, streamlining the process for achieving multiple certifications. It may be used by national governments when designing requirements using language that is consistent with voluntary standards for trade. It may be used by farmer training programs to teach in alignment with the requirements of national and voluntary standards. In all cases, the farmer benefits from clear and consistent communication about good agricultural practices and the associated market opportunities.

About the Declaration of Abu Dhabi:

The Declaration of Abu Dhabi for Global Food Security through Good Agricultural Practices is an open call for global collaboration to find new approaches that will make it easier, more cost effective, and more attractive for farmers worldwide to adopt safe, responsible and sustainable production practices. In alignment with the United Nations Global Compact's Food and Agriculture Business Principles, the Declaration unites public and private partners committed to developing practical, technical solutions, including a common set of good agricultural practices.
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