

# QUALITY MANUAL

Based on ISO/IEC 17065



# Green Caucasus CAUCASCERT and ECOGLOBE

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Green Caucasus Quality System is know how and exclusive property of Caucascert Ltd and ECOGLOBE Ltd.

Correct interpretation and explanation of Green Caucasus Quality System is provided by Caucascert Ltd and ECOGLOBE Ltd only.

Green Caucasus Quality System is confidential and it envisages different level of access to it. All public information, which is defined by ISO 17065 as proof of transparency of Green Caucasus is published and has full access to any interested Party.

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The Green Caucasus Quality System is based on the requirements of Standard Guidelines ISO / IEC 17065 “General Requirements for Agencies Applying Production Certification Systems”.

This Quality Manual is published document, accessible for all bodies interested in activities of GC.

Green Caucasus “Standard for the Production, Processing, Labeling and Marketing of Organically Produced Foods” was developed on the basis of standards of the Codex Alimentarius “Guidelines for the Production , Processing, Labeling and Marketing of Organically Produced Foods” and IFOAM, and is equivalent to Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007, 889/2008 and 1235/2008.

Caucascert Ltd and ECOGLOBE Ltd are included in the EU official equivalence list of certification bodies according to Article 33 of EC regulation 1235/2008. This list is published in EC Regulation 1267/2011 first. The updates are published based on new scopes and geography.

The provisions of the Green Caucasus Standard comply fully with the requirements of listed documents. While developing the standard all the specificity’s of the national, Armenian and Georgian, legislation have been taken into account, which enables to broadly and without hindrances implement the Green Caucasus Standard also in the domestic markets.

## **INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE USERS**

The guidelines, which are followed by Green Caucasus in organic certification, are described in the document below. This manual describes all services, as well as the means and mechanisms of their implementation.

Also, this manual describes generally procedures of internal auditing, which aims at achieving of high quality in the provided services.

This manual can be accessed by any interested party, interested in Green Caucasus’s activity.

This Quality Manual is an integral part of the Green Caucasus’s quality system, which has been approved by the company together with the Procedure Manual and Document Manual.

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## 1. JURIDICAL STATUS OF GREEN CAUCASUS

Georgian Certification Body Caucascert Ltd and Armenian Certification Body ECOGLOBE LLC agreed to collaborate and:

- Use common Organic Standard
- Use common Quality System
- Use common name “Green Caucasus”
- Use common logo
- Have common Quality Management system.

Both certification bodies are accredited by DAP, Germany since 09 January 2008. The maintenance of accreditation has been continued by the DAP successor DAKKS, Germany.

ECOGLOBE LLC and Caucascert Ltd are included in the list of equivalence certification bodies for European Union according to EC Regulation 1235/2008, Article 33 and EC Regulation 1267/2011.

ECOGLOBE LLC is accredited by USDA NOP as organic certifying agent of USDA NOP since 10 June 2009.

The relationship between Caucascert and ECOGLOBE is regulated by the agreement signed and registered in both countries.

### 1.1 Legal status of Caucascert

Legal status of Caucascert – limited liability company.

Founded by the meeting of the shareholders on September 12 of 2005 by protocol #1 and registered by the order of Tbilisi Tax Inspection based on September 16 #153/0004.

Caucascert is guided by its charter and the Georgian legislature.

Legal address of Caucascert:

Georgia, Tbilisi 0186, Jiqia street #5

Tel: (+99532) 38 05 20

E-mail: [Caucascert@gol.ge](mailto:Caucascert@gol.ge)

### 1.2 Legal status of Ecoglobe

Legal status of ECOGLOBE – limited liability company.

ECOGLOBE LLC is a commercial organization specializing in providing services in inspection and certification of ecological agricultural products, on the basis of the requirements of national and international norms and standards.

On February 12 2003 ECOGLOBE LLC registered with the State Registry of the Republic of Armenia and was granted a certificate of state registration of a legal entity 273.110.03425.

Legal address of ECOGLOBE LLC (for correspondence):

18/3 Mkhitar Heratsi, Yerevan 0025, Republic of Armenia

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Operational address of ECOGLOBE LLC:

80 Arami, 0002 Yerevan, Republic of Armenia

Telephone / Fax: +37499221295; +37455575527; +37491418311

E-mails: [info@ecoglobe.com](mailto:info@ecoglobe.com); [fa@ecoglobe.com](mailto:fa@ecoglobe.com); [nd@ecoglobe.com](mailto:nd@ecoglobe.com); [ep@ecoglobe.com](mailto:ep@ecoglobe.com)

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## 2. THE GOAL AND POLICY OF GREEN CAUCASUS IN TERMS OF THE QUALITY

2.1 The goals of Green Caucasus (hereinafter GC, under which both Ecoglobe Ltd and Caucascert Ltd should be understand) are the following:

- 2.1.1 Create and operate common quality and certification systems in the field of organic production.
- 2.1.2 Internationally recognized organic certification systems
- 2.1.3 Inclusion in the EU equivalence list according to Reg 1235/2008, Article 33
- 2.1.4 Constant improvement of the quality management and system of GC
- 2.1.5 Expanding services to the new regions and countries.

2.2 To achieve goals, GC has established its own quality system. In the process of development of common quality system, GC followed the principles of ISO-17065, as well as national and international standards and legislation.

GC has qualified staff and all necessary technical equipment. GC is financially sustainable.

2.3 A precise system of common documents and procedures has been elaborated, which describes in detail all procedures and actions starting from submission of application by an interested applicant and finishing by making a decision on certification.

**Ref: GC Procedures Manual (chapter 3)**

2.4 The effective and completed quality system of GC is described in:

- Quality Manual
- Procedure Manual
- Documents Manual

2.5 All employees of GC are well aware of the goals/objectives of GC, as well as the methods and approaches subject of their professional responsibility for achieving them using the present quality system.

2.6 Services provided by GC are available for all applicants without any limitation.

2.7 The policies and procedures under which GC operates are non-discriminatory and GC is administered in a non-discriminatory manner.

2.8 GC doesn't provide any consultation service in organic production, processing and handling.

2.9 GC confines its requirements, evaluation and decision on certification to those matters specifically related to the scope of the certification being considered.

2.10 The GC's staff notifies applicants about the requirements of the quality system at the first meeting and assures the transparency of the whole certification process. The applicants receive the full version of the inspection report after inspection. The transparency of operation of GC is provided through the Governing Board of GC, which is represented by interested stakeholder of different sectors, including consumers.

**Ref: GC Procedures Manual (chapter 1. chapter 3)**

2.11 GC top management (directors, deputy directors) are responsible for making sure that the quality system is applied at all stages and levels of GC operations.

**Ref: GC Procedures Manual (chapter 2)**

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2.12 The directors are responsible for competence of the staff and their improving qualification. Regular training are designed and implemented in GC.

**Ref: GC Procedures Manual (chapter 2)**

2.13 Regular internal audits are used for identification of deficiencies in the quality system. Deficiencies are removed based on the analysis of the internal audit reports.

**Ref: GC Procedures Manual (chapter 5)**

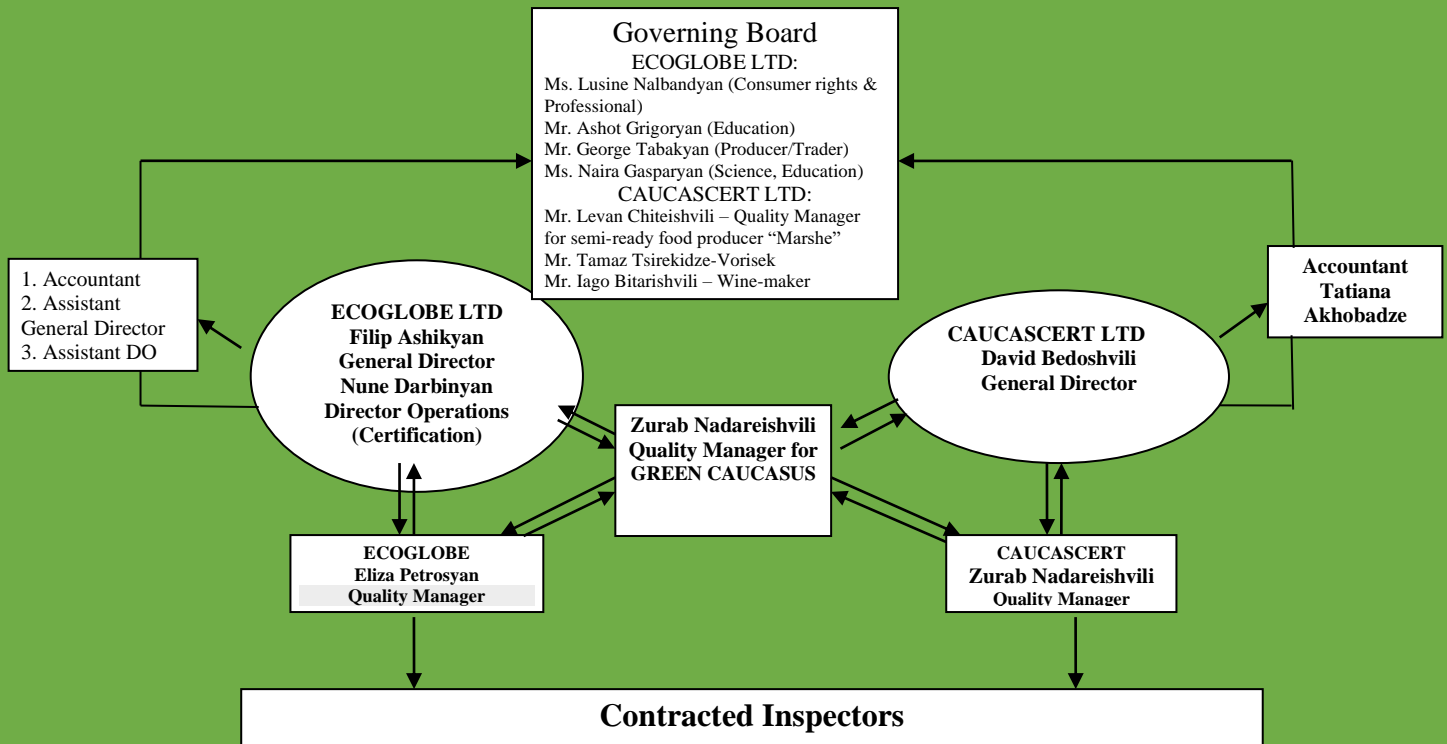
2.14 Management reviews are conducted by the directors annually to analyze the previous year results and to promote future strategy of GC.

**Ref: GC Procedures Manual (chapter2)**

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### 3. GC STRUCTURE AND DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES AMONG THE PERSONNEL

#### 3.1 Organigram of GC



#### 3.2 Governing Board

The Governing Board has 3 to 4 members for each GC certification body, which represent different groups of stakeholders. The length of the rotation period is three years.

The Governing Board meets at least once a year.

The Governing Board has the following authority:

- Safeguard the impartiality of activities of CB's
- Review/approval of the quality/certification system and Green Caucasus standard.
- Supervision of quality system
- Discussion of the annual report of GC
- The last step in appellation system (before the court).

Ref: GC Procedures Manual (chapter 1)

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### 3.3 Personnel and its functions

To ensure successful operation of the company, personnel is hired according to its qualification and evaluated against certain criteria. All personnel must be competent in agricultural and / or bio-production practices, aware of the local and international standards of organic products and know well the quality system of GC.

The main personnel of GC is shown on the organigram and are responsible for control, certification, quality management and financial functions of GC.

**Ref: GC Procedures Manual (chapter 2)**

Founders, employees and members of Governing Board of GC are not engaged in the activities that can give raise to conflicts of interests.

**Ref: GC Procedures Manual (chapter 4)**

#### 3.3.1 Directors

The directors are responsible for implementation of the quality system at all levels of the GC and general management of each company under GC agreement.

Each Director is responsible for proper functioning of the certification system in own company and makes decisions on GC certification.

He/she makes sure that all employees meet the requirement of the GC quality system He/she makes guarantees reliability and trustworthiness of the quality system for all consumers.

Directors report to Governing Board, however, their certification activities must be transparent for internal audit.

The Directors prepare annual report before the annual meeting of the Governing Board will take place.

Director appoints other staff and it is his/her responsibly to take care of regular updating their skills and knowledge.

In some cases the Director can carry out inspection visits. In such cases, the decision on certification is made by an inspector or other competent person.

**Ref: GC Procedures Manual (chapter 2)**

#### 3.3.2 Quality System management of GC

GC Quality Manager responsibilities:

To ensure proper operation of Green Caucasus Quality Management System

To prepare internal audit plan of GC.

To conduct internal audit of GC.

To prepare internal audit report, to indicate nonconformities and corrective actions and to submit them to the directors of ECOGLOBE and Caucascert.

To conduct training regarding Quality System for GC staff.

ECOGLOBE Quality Manager Responsibilities:

To monitor implementation of the corrective actions in ECOGLOBE and submit the results to the GC Quality Manager.

To review s first step of complaints, appeals and disputes in ECOGLOBE and to monitor implementation of decisions and submit the results to the GC Quality Manager.

At the beginning of the year and according to necessity collects comments and suggestions on the improvement of the GC quality system from ECOGLOBE staff and 10 days before of internal audit to summarize the comments and to submit them to the GC Quality Manager.

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**Caucascert Quality Manager Responsibilities:**

To monitor implementation of the corrective actions in CAUCASCERT and submit the results to the GC Quality Manager.

To review s first step of complaints, appeals and disputes in CAUCASCERT and to monitor implementation of decisions and submit the results to the GC Quality Manager.

At the beginning of the year and according to necessity collects comments and suggestions on the improvement of the GC quality system from CAUCASCERT staff and 10 days before of internal audit to summarize the comments and to submit them to the GC Quality Manager.

**Ref: GC Procedures Manual (chapters 2 and 5)**

**3.3.3 Inspectors**

Inspector knows operational organic standards of GC and is responsible for inspections.

He/she knows GC Quality and Certification Systems, and is responsible for implementation of their requirements on inspection level.

The Inspector does not have any kind of conflict of interests regarding applicant whom he inspects.

He/she keeps confidentiality. The Inspector constantly cares for professional development. He/she is reportable to the Director.

**Ref: GC Procedures Manual (chapter 2)**

**3.3.4 Accountant**

Each GC company has own accountancy and own staff responsible for smooth operation of the company accounting system. He/she is responsible for improving his/her own knowledge and skills in appropriate area and is subordinated to Director. The GC policy recommends that accountant has basic knowledge of the organic certification activities of the company and , if necessary, can combine his direct responsibilities with some administrative assistance to Director.

**Ref: GC Procedures Manual (chapter 2)**

**3.4 Selection of personnel, training and evaluation**

3.4.1 Personnel are selected through assessment of their qualifications based on certain criteria that correspond to their responsibilities.

3.4.2 Personnel are required to keep their skills and knowledge of the organic certification standards and company quality system updated.

The Directors perform knowledge level and efficiency of the personnel regularly.

**Ref: GC Procedures Manual (chapter 2)**

#### 4. GC QUALITY SYSTEM

4.1 The GC quality system comprises of following main documents:

- GC Quality Manual
- GC Procedures Manual
- GC Document Manual
- GC Standard for the Production, Processing, Labeling and Marketing of Organically Produced Foods.

They all contain precise and detailed information about all rules, procedures, which are used in GC during its organic certification activities, as well as documents, which provide proper ground for efficient implementation of those rules and procedures. The internal audits provide constant improvement of the GC Quality System.

**Ref: GC Standard, GC Quality Manual, GC Procedures Manual, GC Documents Manual.**

4.2 Mainly the quality manager elaborates the documents, or otherwise he/she coordinates process of elaboration of documentation based on changes of national and international legislation, as well as the conclusions of the internal audit.

**Ref: GC Procedures Manual (chapter 9)**

4.3 GC Quality System ensures objectivity, impartiality and non-discriminatory principles of its organic certification activities

GC undertakes all necessary measures to prevent conflict of interests at all levels of its operations.

GC doesn't supply, design or market products of the type it certifies,

GC doesn't give advice or provide consultancy services to own applicants on organic production.

GC doesn't provide any other products or services which could compromise the objectivity or impartiality of its certification process and decisions.

**Ref: GC Procedures Manual (chapter 4)**

4.4 GC has a special policy to ensure its independence and impartiality: none of the clients can be provider of more than 10% of the company income.

4.5 All documents are coded and stored appropriately in GC.

Any changes in the documents or in the rule of their use are implemented through a respective procedure and documented appropriately.

**Ref: GC Procedures Manual (chapter 9)**

4.6 The GC defines and ensures access at all documentary and operational levels.

**Ref: GC Procedures Manual (chapter 9)**

4.7 GC has an insurance, which covers liabilities arising during the inspection and certification processes (personnel damages, damages at the inspection sites and damages from decision-making), which provides for its impartiality.

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## 5. GC SERVICES

5.1 GC offers the following main services to its customers:

- Inspection and certification of organic farm production.
- Inspection and certification of organic food processing.
- Inspection and certification of organic food marketing.

Caucascert Ltd and Ecoglobe Ltd operate under Green Caucasus organic standard equivalent to EU Regulations 834/2007, 889/2008 and 1235/2008 (Article 33).

At the request of applicant organic certification based on other organic standards can be done.

In such cases if professional competence of GC allows such certification can be conducted, but the applicant shall be clearly informed about markets where the Green Caucasus certificate is valid.

5.2 GC guarantees impartiality and objectivity in at all certification process and prevents any conflict of interests of its employees during realization of their responsibilities.

### 5.3 Other Activities

For the reasons of financial stability GC can extend business activities in other spheres, which do not cause any conflict of interests with the organic certification activities.

GC services are paid. The fees are calculated based on the approved realistic rates/ tariffs. Tariffs are available through publications.

**Ref: GC Procedures Manual (chapter 3)**

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## 6. CERTIFICATION SYSTEM

6.1 The certification process consists of several operations. It starts with submission of an application and finishes with decision on certification, which is followed by further monitoring. The whole process is transparent and based on the respective procedures and documents.

6.2 The following operations are carried out to achieve the transparency of the process:

- The applicant is provided by information about the GC quality system and services.
- The applicant must complete the application form and submit the comprehensive information and confirmed data on his/her production unit.
- GC starts providing its certification services from the signing a contract with applicant.
- Signing of contract can coincide with the application time or during the preparation to evaluation (preliminary evaluation) after the positive self assessment of GC on capabilities to perform evaluation.
- During the application and/or preparation for evaluation:
  - a) the requirements for certification are clearly defined, documented and understood;
  - b) any difference in understanding between the certification body and the applicant is resolved;
  - c) certification body has the capability to perform the certification service.

### 6.3 Evaluation

- Inspector reviews the available documentation and conducts an inspection.
- While inspecting and preparing report, the inspector assess compliance of applicant with GC organic standards.
- Inspection is accomplished with the preparation of inspection report. Part of inspection report are identified non compliances and corrective measures for implementation by applicant.
- Based on the inspection report the Director makes a decision on certification.
- Cases of violations of organic standard are regulated by Sanctions Catalogue, which is published document.
- The Director is responsible to decide on and undertake Sanctions in cases of violations.
- Both documents, inspection report and certification decision are provided to applicant in whole.
- The scope of certification defined under the agreement between GC and applicant are subject of regular inspections, at least once a year.
- Validity of organic certificate is 1 year, as usual.

The only criteria against which the products of a supplier are evaluated are those outlined in GC organic standards.

All above-listed operations are based on respective procedures and documented correspondingly.

### 6.4 Complaints to suppliers (applicants)

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GC requires the applicant/supplier of certified products to:

- a) keep a record of all complaints made known to the applicant/supplier relating to its products;
- b) take appropriate action with respect to such complaints;
- c) document the actions taken.

Provide full access to GC on issues related to complaints and items indicated in a), b), c) above.

**Ref: GC Procedures Manual (chapter 3)**

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## 7. INTERNAL AUDIT AND CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

7.1 GC carries out regular internal audits to ensure perfection and smooth operation of the quality and certification systems.

7.2 The plan of internal audits is prepared at the end of the preceding year. The plan allows for comprehensive checking of all documents during the next year.

7.3 The internal audit of the quality system and certification system is carried out by the GC quality manager.

7.4 Based on the report of the internal audit, respective corrective actions are taken and deficiencies removed.

7.5 GC Quality manager monitors implementation of the corrective actions.

**Ref: GC Procedures Manual (chapter 5)**

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## 8. SUBCONTRACTORS

8.1 GC selects the subcontractor and signs contracts with them for delegating those specific tasks to them, which are beyond the expertise of GC (e.g. lab tests for soil, water and plant residues, any other sub contracting activity).

8.2 The applicant agrees with decision of certification body to use services of subcontractors.

8.3 GC ensures the quality of service provided by its subcontractor.

8.4 GC ensures that:

- The subcontracted laboratory is competent and ISO 17025 accredited.
- Conflict of interests doesn't exist
  
- The applicant covers the cost of the service provided by the subcontractor.

**Ref: GC Procedures Manual (chapter 8)**

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## 9. CONFIDENTIALITY

9.1 GC assures the confidentiality of the information obtained in the course of its certification activities in all the levels of its organization, including part-time or hired personnel, consultants, subcontractors, Governing Board.

9.2 GC recognizes the rights of applicants to require from the certification agency keep confidentiality of information obtained during the certification process and assures that this information (written, oral or visual) won't be passed to the third party without consent of the applicant.

9.3 Therefore, GC requires its personnel and subcontractors sign a document stating the promise of confidentiality.

9.4 Information about the applicant can be disclosed by GC only in the case of a requirement of the law.

The contract between GC and applicant regulates disclosure under the law requirement. In such cases GC notifies applicants without delays, in possible short term.

**Ref: GC Procedures Manual (chapter 6)**

9.5 GC has document control system which guaranties that documents with codification "confidential" are available only to the persons who has access to them according the respective procedure.

**Ref: GC Procedures Manual (chapter 9)**

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## 10. APPELLATION, COMPLAINTS AND DISPUTES

GC has special procedures for handling appellations, complaints and disputes.

### 10.1 Appellation on Certification Decisions

10.1.1 If the applicant doesn't agree with the decision of GC, he/she has the right for appellation.

10.1.2 Consideration of appellations is responsibility of quality manager.

10.1.3 Quality manager carries out an assessment and presents results to the Director.

10.1.4 The applicant is officially informed about the decision on the appellation.

**Ref: GC Procedures Manual (chapter 7)**

### 10.2 Complaints and Disputes

10.2.1 All complaints and disputes brought to GC by its clients, contractors, stakeholders and other organizations and persons are registered and handled according to the special procedure.

10.2.2 The complaints and disputes are handled by quality manager. He/she carries out an assessment and presents results to the Director. All necessary clarifications to applicant and corrections, if necessary, are taken and documented.

**Ref: GC Procedures Manual (chapter 7)**

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## 11. PUBLICATIONS

GC has information package – publications for applicants and interested individuals. It includes:

- Quality Manual
- Green Caucasus organic standards
- Accreditation certificate/-s
- Certification service price list
- Register of subcontractors
- Register of the certified operators
- Register of annulled certificates
- Application form
- Sanctions catalogue

The documents subject for publication are available in the Caucascert / Ecoglobe offices and are accessible to all the employees and visitors.

**Ref: GC Procedures Manual (chapter 10)**

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## 12. REFERENCES

12.1 ISO/IEC GUIDE 17065; “General Requirements for Agencies Applying Production Certification Systems”.

12.2 ISO 10011-1:1990, “Guidelines for the quality system audit. Part 1. Audit”.

12.3 ISO/IEC Guidelines 17025:201, General requirements for assessing the competence of the testing laboratories.

12.4 Council Regulations (EC) No 834/2007 "on organic production and labelling of organic products and repealing Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91", 889/2008, 1235/2008 and 1267/2011.

12.5 Codex Alimentarius “Guidelines for the Production, Processing, Labeling and Marketing of Organically Produced Foods”.

12.6 IFOAM “Basic standards for organic production and processing”.

12.7 Green Caucasus “Standard for the Production, Processing, Labeling and Marketing of Organically Produced Foods”.

12.8 Green Caucasus Procedures Manual.

12.9 Green Caucasus Documents Manual.

12.10 USDA NOP 7CFR 205.