



# GUIDELINE

## Audit of horticulture export accredited properties

### Direction to staff

This document is instructional material for the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (the department) under its Practice Statement Framework. All staff must comply with it.

### Direction to Industry

This guideline outlines the requirements for the audit of horticulture export accredited properties. All parties with roles and responsibilities explicit in this guideline and legislation must comply with it.

### Summary of main points

This document outlines the policy and process for the audit of horticulture export accredited properties. It includes:

- audit principles
- audit types
- audit process
- audit performance standards
- non-compliance ratings
- appeals process.

### In this document

This document contains the following topics.

Purpose of this document .....	2
Definitions.....	2
Legislative framework.....	4
Roles and responsibilities .....	4
Work health and safety .....	5
Personal protective equipment .....	5
Audit principles .....	6
Performance standards .....	6
Audit types .....	6
Initial audit .....	6
Advisory findings.....	6
Surveillance audit .....	8
Non-compliance ratings.....	8
When to issue corrective action requests .....	8

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When a critical non-compliance is identified .....	9
Suspension or revocation of the accredited property by the department .....	9
Audit report .....	9
Conducting a surveillance audit of an accredited property .....	9
Fees and charges .....	11
Appeals policy .....	12
Appeal to the secretary .....	12
Appeal beyond the department .....	13
What are the performance standards for accredited properties?.....	13
Farm activities.....	13
Crop activities .....	13
Packhouse activities.....	13
Record keeping .....	13
Related material .....	14
Contact information .....	14
Document information .....	14
Version history.....	14
Attachment 1: Process map for audit of horticulture export accredited properties.....	15

## Purpose of this document

This guideline details the policy and process for the audit of horticulture export accredited properties.

**Note:** An overview of this process is in **Attachment 1: [Process map for audit of horticulture export accredited properties](#)**.

## Definitions

The following table defines terms used in this document.

Term	Definition
Accredited property	A property (farm or packhouse) that is required to be registered with the department to produce or prepare goods for recognition by an importing country authority.  <b>Note:</b> This may be referred to as 'registration' or 'export approval' in protocol documents.
Accreditation period	The period the accreditation of the property remains in effect.
Auditor	Qualified person under section 45 of the Export Control (Plants and Plant Products) Order 2011, who can undertake audits of horticulture export accredited properties.
Audit Services Group (AuSG)	The service delivery stream of the department responsible for conducting audit activities.
Block	Any farm, grove, orchard, patch, pivot, vineyard or section of a farm, grove, orchard, patch, pivot or vineyard which can be defined by set boundaries.  <b>Important:</b> A block must be a contiguous unit and not be separated by structures such as a building, public road or body of water.

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Term	Definition
Bud burst	The emergence of new vegetative growth or flowers on a plant at the beginning of each growing season.  <b>Note:</b> Bud burst is considered to have occurred when 50 per cent of plants have 50 per cent new growth or flowers of the earliest variety, where more than one variety is in a block.
Crop monitor	A person who is approved by the department to undertake pest and disease monitoring during the growing season.
Farm	An area of land and its buildings used for growing crops.
Growing season (excluding citrus)	The time period from bud burst until the completion of harvest.
Growing season (citrus)	The time period from December to the completion of harvest.
Horticulture Exports Program (HEP)	The department team based in Canberra responsible for horticulture export policy development and market maintenance.
Manager	The manager of a farm or packhouse who applies for and assumes legal responsibility for the accredited property under the Export Control (Plants and Plant Products) Order 2011.
Packhouse	A premises where horticulture produce is packed for export.  <b>Note:</b> This is also known as a 'packing house'.
Performance standards	A benchmark derived from legislation and departmental requirements against which actual performance of third parties is measured.
Plant Export Operations Manual (PEOM)	A webpage maintained by the department that outlines the policy and processes for exporting plants and plant products from Australia. It also lists instructional material, forms and user guides related to the export certification process.
Program Integration, Assurance and Capability (PIAC)	The AuSG team that manages the auditor and audit framework for the department, including the provision of technical advice, auditor competency, auditor verification and mentoring and determination and management of sanctions.
Property	Includes premises, which is defined as a building or place (whether enclosed, or built on, or not), or a part of a building or place for example a farm or packhouse.
Unannounced audit	An audit conducted with little to no prior notice to the entity as permitted under section 45.3 of the Export Control (Plants and Plant Products) Order 2011.  <b>Note:</b> Unannounced audits can be triggered by a catalyst and may deviate from the entities existing audit schedule.

## Legislative framework

The following list outlines the legislation that applies to the audit of horticulture export accredited properties.

- *Export Control Act 1982*
- Export Control (Prescribed Goods – General) Order 2005
- Export Control (Plant and Plant Products) Order 2011
- Export Control (Fees) Order 2015
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*
- Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011
- *Privacy Act 1988*
- *Public Service Act 1999*

## Roles and responsibilities

The following table outlines the roles and responsibilities undertaken in this guideline.

Role	Responsibility
Accredited property manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting departmental standards.</li> <li>• Being available for audit.</li> <li>• Providing requested documentation.</li> <li>• Providing submission to support appeal when appropriate.</li> </ul>
Audit Services Group (AuSG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scheduling audits.</li> <li>• Auditing properties against the departmental standards and importing country requirements.</li> <li>• Accrediting properties.</li> <li>• Notifying managers (applicants) of audit outcomes.</li> <li>• Overseeing the issuance of accreditation numbers.</li> <li>• Collating the accreditation lists and providing to HEP.</li> </ul>
Crop monitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being available for audit.</li> <li>• Providing requested documentation.</li> </ul>
Horticulture Exports Program (HEP, Canberra)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintaining the performance standards.</li> <li>• Reviewing appeals and providing the outcome in a response to AuSG and the applicant if initial outcome is not upheld.</li> <li>• Advising importing country authority of current accredited property status.</li> </ul>

## Work health and safety

Auditors must:

- comply with applicable Commonwealth, state and territory work health and safety (WHS) legislation
- comply with the departments WHS policy and procedures
- read and be familiar with the Reference: [Work health and safety in the plant export environment](#)
- not enter work sites unless it is safe and they are wearing the required personal protective equipment (PPE) and have considered any WHS hazards
- comply with site-specific requirements, unless they assess the requirements as placing them at risk, in which case they must take reasonable action to ensure their safety
- continually assess the possible risks while performing their duties.

## Personal protective equipment

Auditors must have the following PPE when it is required on site:

- hi-visibility vest
- enclosed shoes
- steel cap boots
- hearing protection
- hard hat
- long sleeve clothing
- thermal clothing for cold rooms
- safety glasses
- face mask
- portable gas detector
- first aid kit
- water
- sunscreen
- emergency communication equipment such as a phone carrier with coverage or satellite phone.

## Audit principles

The overarching audit framework and principles of the Plant Export Operations branch are outlined in [Volume 17: Audit policy](#).

## Performance standards

Accredited properties and crop monitors must be audited for compliance against a set of performance standards derived from the standards outlined in the Guideline: [Management of horticulture export accredited properties](#), relevant legislation and importing country requirements.

## Audit types

The following table lists audit types for accredited properties.

Audit type	Conducted	Frequency	Announced/unannounced
Initial audit	After application	Once each export season	Announced
Surveillance audit	During the accreditation period	As required by the department	Announced or unannounced

## Initial audit

- Horticulture export properties applying for accreditation or renewal must be audited to assess their ability to comply with the performance standards and importing country requirements before accreditation is approved for the property.
- The manager of the property seeking accreditation, as well as any nominated individuals such as crop monitors, must be present at the audit.

## Advisory findings

If a non-compliance is detected during an initial audit, the auditor must issue an advisory finding. Each advisory finding must:

- describe the identified non-compliance
- state the due date for rectification of the non-compliance, which is no more than seven calendar days from issue of the advisory finding
- be issued in writing by auditors immediately upon completing the audit.

The following table outlines the process for conducting an initial audit of a property.

Stage	What happens	Responsible party
1.	An entry meeting is conducted that outlines the objectives, scope and process of the audit. <b>Note:</b> Where there is a more appropriate representatives managing horticulture export operations on the property the manager may nominate this person to represent them during the audit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Manager</li><li>• AuSG</li></ul>

Stage	What happens	Responsible party						
2.	<p>The manager provides the auditor with copies of all required documentations. Documents may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• crop monitoring records</li> <li>• trapping program</li> <li>• trapping records</li> <li>• pest and disease control program</li> <li>• spray diaries</li> <li>• traceability systems</li> <li>• cleaning and waste removal program</li> <li>• cleaning records</li> <li>• training program</li> <li>• training records.</li> </ul>	Manager						
3.	The auditor completes a site inspection and assesses compliance against the performance standards in the audit checklists.	AuSG						
4.	<p>An exit meeting is conducted where the audit findings are presented, non-compliances are identified and any further actions are explained.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>When non-compliances are...</th> <th>Then...</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>identified</td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an advisory finding is issued</li> <li>• an audit report is issued</li> <li>• <b>continue to Stage 5.</b></li> </ul> </td> </tr> <tr> <td>not identified</td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the property passes the audit</li> <li>• an audit report is issued</li> <li>• process stops here.</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><b>Note:</b> Where a number of non-compliances are found at audit, the auditor can defer the presentation of the findings.</p>	When non-compliances are...	Then...	identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an advisory finding is issued</li> <li>• an audit report is issued</li> <li>• <b>continue to Stage 5.</b></li> </ul>	not identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the property passes the audit</li> <li>• an audit report is issued</li> <li>• process stops here.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manager</li> <li>• AuSG</li> </ul>
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closed out	the property passes the audit.							
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## Surveillance audit

Accredited properties may be audited during the export season to assess their compliance with the performance standards and importing country requirements.

**Note:** Any evidence of non-compliance in the export supply chain may trigger a surveillance audit of the accredited property.

## Non-compliance ratings

The following table outlines the non-compliance ratings given at a surveillance audit.

Rating	Applies when any...
Critical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• action, inaction or contravention of department requirements that would be reasonably expected to result in the phytosanitary status of goods being compromised</li><li>• action, inaction or contravention of department requirements that results in a breach of the Export control Act.</li><li>• deliberate failure to comply with legislative requirements</li><li>• deliberate failure to follow a legal direction of an AO.</li></ul> <p><b>Note:</b> Critical non-compliances may lead to suspension, revocation, refusal of property accreditation, or criminal prosecution.</p>
Major	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• action, inaction or contravention of departmental requirements that results in a situation that may lead to the phytosanitary status of prescribed goods to be compromised</li><li>• action, inaction or contravention of departmental requirements that leads to export of prescribed goods that are not export compliant.</li></ul>
Minor	action, inaction or contravention of departmental requirements that results in a situation that may compromise the integrity of systems, processes or premises that are designed to maintain phytosanitary status of prescribed goods

## When to issue corrective action requests

If a non-compliance is detected during a surveillance audit, the auditor must issue a corrective action request (CAR). Each CAR must:

- describe the identified non-compliance
- state the due date for rectification of the non-compliance
- be aligned with the appropriate type of non-compliance (critical, major or minor)
- be issued in writing by the auditor immediately upon completing the audit

**Note:** When there are a number of non-compliances the auditor may defer presenting the CARs.

- be acknowledged by the manager (either accepted or not accepted and signed).

**Important:** The timeframe for closing out a CAR at a later date must be no longer than seven calendar days. However, extensions for additional periods may be granted at the discretion of the AuSG manager.



## When a critical non-compliance is identified

When an auditor identifies a critical non-compliance, the audit result must be referred to Program Integration, Assurance and Capability (PIAC), who will determine how to escalate the issue.

Examples of critical non-compliance include:

- accredited property fails to meet the obligations of their accreditation (including avoiding audits)
- accredited property has been intentionally non-compliant, fraudulent or corrupt
- accredited property has been repeatedly non-compliant in related incidents
- CARs not being closed out to the satisfaction of the auditor/PIAC.

Future action to address the non-compliance and audit result is at the discretion of PIAC. Further action may include:

- the issuance of major CARs
- imposing a timeframe for a follow-up audit or increased audit schedule
- suspension or revocation of accreditation
- referral to the department's Enforcement and Sanctions Branch.

## Suspension or revocation of the accredited property by the department

Non-compliance may constitute grounds for the suspension or revocation of a property's accreditation without liability to the department as outlined in the Guideline: [Management of horticulture export accredited properties](#).

## Audit report

The auditor must produce an audit report upon completion of the audit and issue this to the property within 10 working days of completion.

## Conducting a surveillance audit of an accredited property

The following table outlines the process for conducting a surveillance audit of an accredited property.

Stage	What happens	Responsible party						
1.	It is determined whether the surveillance audit will be announced or unannounced.	AuSG						
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>When the audit is to be...</th> <th>Then...</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>announced</td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contact the manager of the property to schedule the audit</li> <li>• <b>go to Stage 2.</b></li> </ul> </td> </tr> <tr> <td>unannounced</td> <td><b>go to Stage 2.</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		When the audit is to be...	Then...	announced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contact the manager of the property to schedule the audit</li> <li>• <b>go to Stage 2.</b></li> </ul>	unannounced	<b>go to Stage 2.</b>
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2.	An entry meeting is conducted that outlines the objectives, scope and process of the audit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manager</li> <li>• AuSG</li> </ul>						

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3.	<p>The manager provides the auditor with copies of all required documentation. Documents may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• crop monitoring records</li> <li>• trapping program</li> <li>• trapping records</li> <li>• pest and disease control program</li> <li>• spray diaries</li> <li>• traceability systems</li> <li>• cleaning and waste removal program</li> <li>• cleaning records</li> <li>• training program</li> <li>• training records.</li> </ul>	Manager						
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## Fees and charges

Audits are charged at a fee-for-service rate and where a scheduled audit is cancelled charges may still apply.

**Note:** Information about the fee-for-service rate for audits is available in the department's [Charging guidelines](#).

## Appeals policy

The department accepts that on occasion the decision to refuse to accredit, suspend or revoke the property may be subject to dispute. In accordance with Part 16 of the Export Control (Prescribed Goods–General) Orders 2005 the accredited property has the right to appeal the decision.

The appeals mechanism is progressive and must be considered in the following order:

- appeal to the secretary
- external review under the provisions of the *Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act 1977*.

**Important:** This appeals policy does not apply where the horticulture export accredited property is subject to a department Enforcement and Sanctions investigation.

**Note:** The onus of the department appeals process is on the accredited property to provide either objective evidence or proof of extenuating circumstance as to why they believe the non-compliance or the audit result to be incorrect.

### Appeal to the secretary

The following table outlines the process for an appeal to the secretary.

Stage	What happens	Responsible party						
1.	A submission to the Secretary is lodged, within 28 days of the notification of refusal to accredit, suspend or revoke being received, with the <a href="#">Horticulture Exports Program</a> detailing the reasons for the appeal.	Manager						
2.	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>When the initial appeal findings are...</th> <th>Then...</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>agreed with</td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the appeal will be rejected and the audit finding upheld</li> <li>• <b>continue to Stage 3.</b></li> </ul> </td> </tr> <tr> <td>not agreed with</td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the accredited property has due cause to continue their appeal</li> <li>• HEP will advise AuSG of their findings and request the original decision be amended</li> <li>• <b>continue to Stage 3.</b></li> </ul> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	When the initial appeal findings are...	Then...	agreed with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the appeal will be rejected and the audit finding upheld</li> <li>• <b>continue to Stage 3.</b></li> </ul>	not agreed with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the accredited property has due cause to continue their appeal</li> <li>• HEP will advise AuSG of their findings and request the original decision be amended</li> <li>• <b>continue to Stage 3.</b></li> </ul>	HEP
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3.	Notification is provided in writing to the accredited property manager detailing the outcome of the appeal including reasons for the decision.	HEP						

Stage	What happens	Responsible party						
4.	The notification is received.	Manager						
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### Appeal beyond the department

Where the accredited property feels that the department has not given their objection due consideration through the appeals process, the accredited property may seek legal redress beyond the terms of this policy.

### What are the performance standards for accredited properties?

Performance standards are organised into groups known as activities.

An audit must cover all applicable activities selected from farm activities, crop monitor activities and/ or packhouse activities.

#### Farm activities

The activities for farms are:

- general requirements
- pest and disease control
- harvest requirements.

#### Crop activities

The activities for crop monitors are:

- training
- record keeping.

#### Packhouse activities

The activities for packhouses are:

- general requirements
- traceability
- hygiene and security
- packaging and labelling.

### Record keeping

Accredited properties, AuSG and HEP must retain documentation in relation to audits, accreditation and export certification for a period of at least two years.

## Related material

The following related material is available in the [Plant Export Operations Manual](#) on the department's website:

- Guideline: *Management of horticulture export accredited properties*
- Guideline: *Charging guidelines 2017*
- Volume 17: *Audit policy*
- Reference: Performance standards – Farm
- Reference: Performance standards – Crop monitors
- Reference: Performance standards – Packhouses

The following related material is available on the IML for departmental auditors:

- Guideline: *Managing fatigue*
- Guideline: *Managing hazardous manual tasks*
- Guideline: *Personal protective equipment*
- Work instruction: *How to report a health and safety hazard*
- Work instruction: *How to report a health and safety incident*
- Reference: Protocol audit checklist – Farm
- Reference: Protocol audit checklist – Packhouse
- Reference: *Corrective Action Request form for accredited properties*

## Contact information

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[auditservices@agriculture.gov.au](mailto:auditservices@agriculture.gov.au)
- Horticulture Export Program: [horticultureexports@agriculture.gov.au](mailto:horticultureexports@agriculture.gov.au)

## Document information

The following table contains administrative metadata.

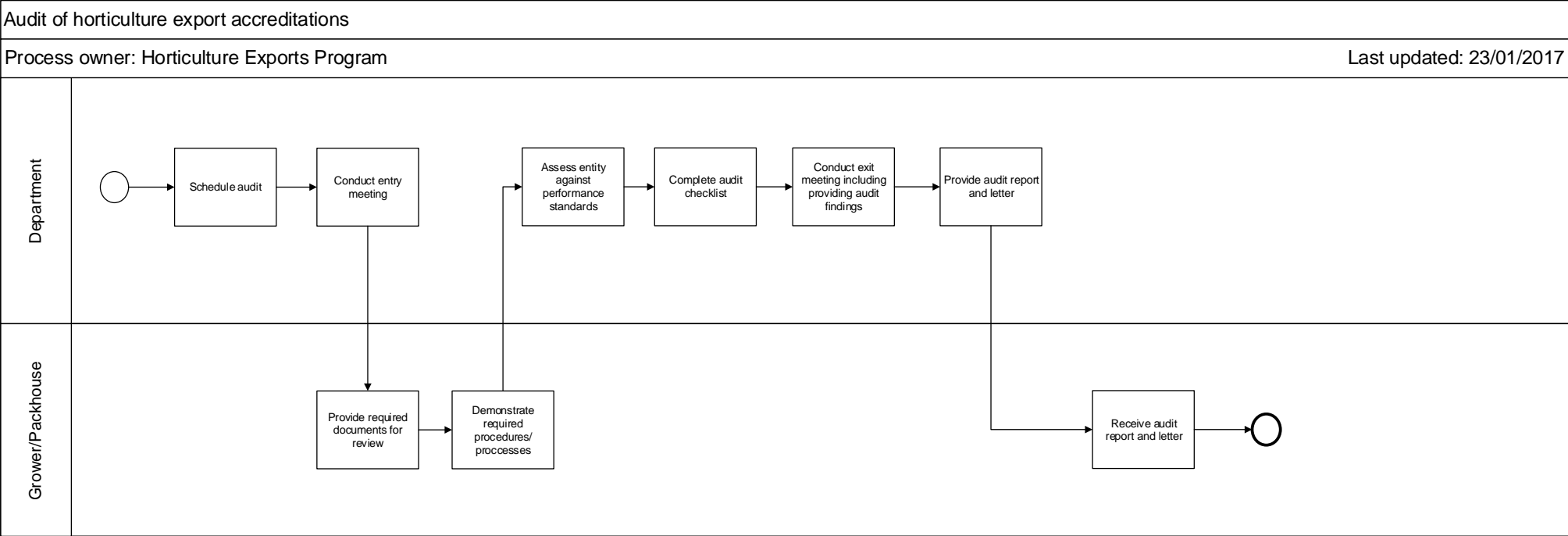
Instructional Material Library document ID	Instructional material owner
IMLS-12-3240	Director, Horticulture Exports Program, Export Operations Branch.

## Version history

The following table details the published date and amendment details for this document.

Version	Date	Amendment details
1	19/06/2018	First publication of this guideline.

# Attachment 1: Process map for audit of horticulture export accredited properties



This is a CONTROLLED document. Any documents appearing in paper form are not controlled and should be checked against the IML version prior to use.