



SIZA CARES

(A Second-Party Verification Programme)

PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

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1. INTRODUCTION

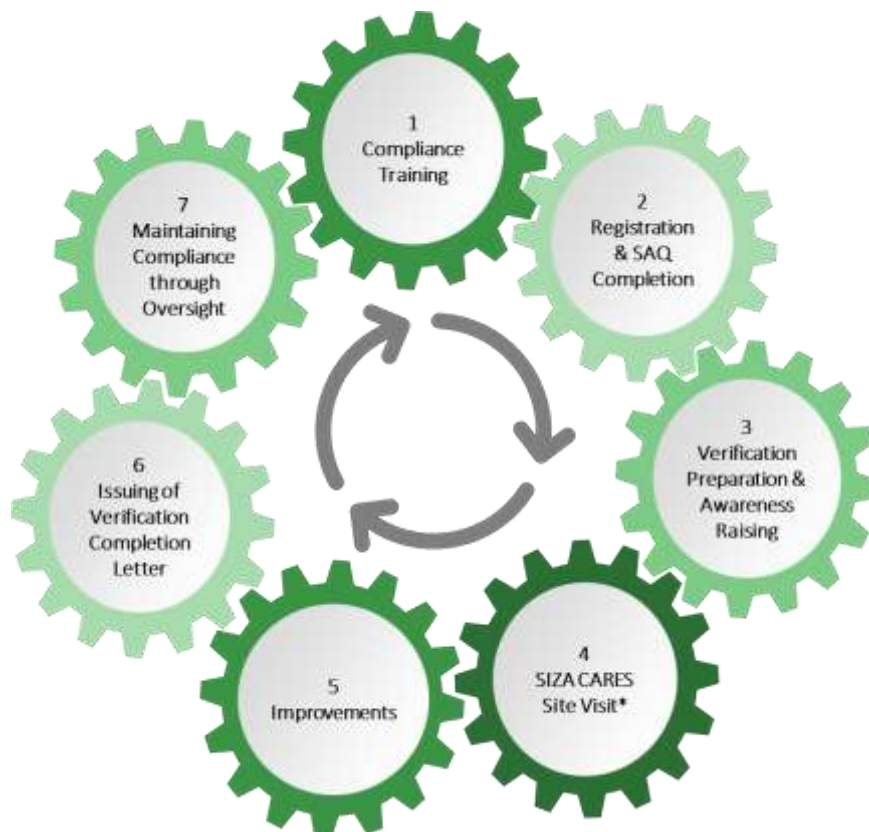
As part of SIZA's drive towards continuous improvement, the SIZA CARES programme has been implemented to manage environmental risks within the agricultural sector. With the vision of enabling South African agriculture to be a global leader in sustainability and environmental stewardship, the programme was developed with the purpose to Create Awareness and Resilience in Environmental Sustainability. The aim of the SIZA CARES programme is to improve the quality of data submitted on Environmental Self-Assessment Questionnaires (SAQs) and to drive meaningful, continuous, and sustainable improvement based on site-specific recommendations. During the SIZA CARES verification, the Environmental SAQ of the SIZA member will be verified and technical advisory services will be provided to suppliers/packhouses on the identified areas of improvement.

SIZA CARES forms part of SIZA's second-party between audit monitoring programme through which SIZA monitors compliance with the SIZA Environmental standard between audit periods. *Participation in the SIZA CARES programme is not the same as undergoing a third-party environmental audit and should not be mistaken as such.* This programme allows for a more rigorous and robust management of risk and drive towards improvement, ensuring that sustainable environmental practices remain in place between third-party audit periods. The second-party verification programme supports desktop verification through the completion of annual SAQs towards a goal of driving continuous improvement.

1.1. Overview and Approach of the SIZA CARES Programme

SIZA manages the Environmental verification process through an online platform, *MySIZA*, which aims to create visibility throughout the local and global agricultural value chain.

The programme follows a 7-step process:



- Step 1: Compliance Training
- Step 2: Registration and Annual Completion of Self-Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ)
- Step 3: Verification Preparation and Raising Awareness with Employees
- Step 4: SIZA CARES Site Visit*
- Step 5: Improvements
- Step 6: Verification Completion Letter Issued
- Step 7: Maintaining Compliance through Oversight

** SIZA also supports a third-party audit process, which can replace Step 4. If a member undergoes a third-party SIZA Environmental audit, the SIZA CARES programme will be considered as part of the capacity building step in the process.*

2. RISK ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

A buying company should implement an efficient process to measure environmental compliance and identify risk in its supply chain. This will enable the company to focus on potential key risk areas and direct its verification resources accordingly. Existing risk assessment tools for suppliers include criteria such as: geographical area, suitability of production areas, monitoring the usage and availability of natural resources, identifying, and measuring the residues of production activities, nature of production, level of supplier commitment and/or previous verification results. The risk assessment information is provided by the supplier either through a SAQ or through questions asked as part of the commercial relationship.

2.1. Registration on MySIZA

The supplier must register on the *MySIZA* online platform. It is important that the supplier chooses the correct membership level according to the specifications of the site/production facility. Membership renewal is due annually. The pricing structure will depend on the use of the different SIZA modules and on the level of visibility to be provided to the market. The supplier's chosen membership level option will be the base fee, plus add-on modules and current selection options such as SIZA Social and/or SIZA Environmental. The membership fee structure can be found on the SIZA website.

SIZA is a free-standing not-for-profit service entity in the agricultural industry. All membership fees are therefore used to create capacity and support through the SIZA office and to enable further development, functionalities, and benefits on *MySIZA*, and through capacity building programmes.

Once payment has been made, proof of the payment must be sent to SIZA admin to upload it to the member's profile to activate the account or the environmental module. Once all these steps are complete, the Environmental SAQ will be available for completion or annual update.

2.2. Environmental Self-Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ)

The SAQ must be completed by the SIZA member on the *MySIZA*. The SAQ enables a supplier or employment site to provide information about the employment site, how it manages environmental compliance, and its performance against local and international environmental conservation standards. The employment site will be requested to respond to a series of questions and provide supporting documentation.

Once all the questions have been completed, the SAQ must be sent for review (submitted) on *MySIZA*. The SAQ will then be reviewed and evaluated by SIZA for approval and the member is duly notified of said approval. If rejected by SIZA, the member is notified and must correct the areas indicated and resubmit the SAQ for review. Once membership registration and the SAQ have been completed and approved, the supplier will be eligible to take part in the SIZA CARES programme. The buying company may then register on *MySIZA* and access the supplier's information via the platform and use it as a

basis for conducting a risk assessment.

An Environmental Specialist will use information from the completed SAQ in preparation for the site visit and to focus on the high-risk areas and give site specific recommendations.

3. INCLUSION AND REQUESTS OF SECOND-PARTY VERIFICATION

3.1. How is the Sample Group Established?

The number of annual site visits are based on a 25% sample size of the approved Environmental SAQs for the specific year. Second-party verification can also be done on request of the industry, the supplier, exporter, or a global market representative (i.e., importer/retailer). The 25% sample identified by SIZA will not incur any additional costs to the identified suppliers, but any additional or specific requests for second-party verification can however relate into additional costs covered by the requestor. Furthermore, if a supplier has been identified as part of the annual 25% sample size, agrees to a mutual date and time for the site visit and cancels on short notice (after costs were incurred) without a reasonable explanation, a penalty fee may be applicable for operational and travel costs incurred by SIZA.

Once the members that will form part of the sample size have been identified, they will receive a notification via email from the requestor to confirm that they have been selected to be part of the verification process.

3.2. Scheduling of Site Visit

Once the SIZA member has been notified of their inclusion in the sample, they will be contacted by the SIZA office to agree on a date for the site visit through the online system. The time and date of the verification will be confirmed via e-mail. *It is important to note that this process will be conducted by the SIZA office and that it is not an independent third-party audit.*

3.2.1. To maximise the efficiency of the SIZA CARES visits, the SIZA verifier will use the following scenario's as a guideline to determine the verification scope for multi-site members:

Scenario 1

A multi-site with two or more sites located in the same province or region and the distance between sites is more than 50 km apart.

Scenario 2

A multi-site with sites located in different provinces (or outside the borders of South Africa).

****If a member prefers for all sites to be visited, they can request that all sites be visited, however, this will be at an additional cost to the member.**

Application:

During the scheduling phase, SIZA will contact the member telephonically to confirm which sites contain:

- Production facilities,
- Packhouses (if applicable),
- The head office
- The distance between each site and
- Higher complexity/risk.

Following this evaluation, only sites identified during the discussion with the member will be included in the scope of the verification and subsequently, in the verification report. The chosen sites will be the sites closest to the head office and which contain the highest environmental risks. The SIZA environmental specialist responsible for the verification will communicate the final verification scope to the SIZA member before proceeding with the verification.

The aim of this method is not to relax any requirement or remove any responsibility from a business in implementing the requirements, but rather to streamline the process to be more time- and cost-effective. The verification will maintain the same aim of establishing the applicable risks and potential improvements throughout the verification scope, which will enable the member to implement relevant changes across all sites.

4. PREPARATION FOR SITE VISIT

4.1. Environmental Specialist (Verifier)

In preparation of a site visit, verifiers must:

- Meet the competency requirements set by SIZA.
- Be accepted and chosen by SIZA.
- Be aware of the challenges and issues prevailing in the agriculture sector of South Africa.
- Should regularly gather information on issues affecting the environment.
- Have enough knowledge of sustainable agricultural practices.

Verifiers must at all times adhere to the Code of Conduct for SIZA Second-Party Site Visits and Verifications ([Annexure 5](#)).

4.2. Member

Employment site management should ensure that:

- A member of senior management (on the farm), who will participate in the verification process, attend SIZA Environmental Compliance training before the site visit, during which they will receive information inter alia on SIZA's approach to second-party verification (processes and methodology), the SIZA Environmental Standard and the Environmental Verification checklist.
- Documentation is available on the day of the site visit. This includes information and documents that are usually stored at another location (e.g., a central office where environmental management plan and legal documentation is kept).
- Relevant personnel are at the employment site on the day of the site visit.
- Supervisors and managers are instructed to allow unobstructed access to verifiers.

4.3. Workers

The employment site should communicate clear information about the SIZA CARES site visit to workers, explaining the purpose of the visit and the process. This information should be available in the principal languages spoken by workers and should include:

- Purpose and scope of SIZA CARES site visit.
- Introduction to verifier and their role.

It is advised that the SIZA Caring for the Environment video is shown to workers as part of awareness raising and training in preparation for the verification. The videos are available to view on YouTube by clicking on the below links:

Afrikaans: <https://youtu.be/Y6nIHNPqPrQ>

English: <https://youtu.be/xxlYH7EErqY>

isiXhosa: <https://youtu.be/ScaxziyA0vM>

5. LENGTH OF VERIFICATION

The duration of the site visit shall allow for an opening meeting with site management, complete evaluation of all standard requirements, completion of applicable checks and discussion of results and corrections to management. The usual duration for the SIZA CARES site visit is between 3 to 5 hours (but is subject to adjustment depending on the scope of the visit and arrangements made between the member and the verifier – see section 3.2.1.). The minimum of 3 hours duration shall apply to the simplest circumstances (one site, no packing facilities, no chemical storage facilities, and no natural biodiversity areas). Factors that will increase the minimum of 3 hours are as follow:

- Complexity of production activities
- Chemical storage facilities
- Packhouse
- Extent of natural areas
- Multiple sites and locations
- Availability of documentation
- Cooperation from management

It is crucial that the Environmental SAQ must include all the determining factors, for the site visit length to be scheduled accordingly.

6. EXECUTION OF SITE VISIT

The SIZA CARES site visit should include the following:

- Opening meeting
- Employment site tour
- Document review
- Closing meeting, including summary and agreement of findings
- Process forward to complete the verification process

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed emphasis on the importance of implementing adequate health and safety procedures to reduce the risks associated with diseases. To ensure the safety of everyone that will be involved in the SIZA CARES site visit, all parties will have to comply with the safety procedures as specified in [Annexure 2](#).

6.1. Opening Meeting

The opening meeting must be conducted in the language spoken by management. It should be attended by all relevant people including:

- Senior management
- Managers responsible for key environmental functions

This should be formally presented in a format agreed with the verification requestor to ensure the requestor's perspective is clearly communicated in an appropriate tone.

In the opening meeting, the verification team should:

- Introduce the verification team.
- Explain the purpose of the SIZA CARES programme
 - Potential benefits to the employment site
 - Clarify that the purpose of this site visit is to promote continuous improvement and to give site specific advice.
 - Clarify that all information is confidential and protected. In any event where a recording is made of whatever nature, it should at all times protect the person's anonymity and do not serve the purpose of harming any person in any way.
- Explain that the minimum requirements are transparency.
- Explain that no attempts to undue influence any party will override the objectivity of the SIZA CARES programme and the integrity of the verifier.
- Provide a layout of the verification site.
- Review the information provided in the Environmental SAQ.
- Confirm permission to take photographs ([Annexure 3](#)). Video, voice, phone or other forms of recordings may under no circumstances be used to unfairly or unethically impact a person's identity or break confidentiality of a complainant. The purpose of such recording being made must:
 - Be declared in a clear and concise manner, detailing the explicit purpose for the recording being made.
 - Protect the anonymity of all involved, agri-workers, supervisors, managers, owners etc., ensuring all persons who live and work on the farm are protected.
 - The sharing of the recordings outside the SIZA structure is strictly prohibited, and each audit firm must ensure that they have in place an adequate and secure system that to protect the recording and that it is not shared with any party without explicit consent by all parties

involved.

- Confirm process for communicating issues as they arise during the site visit. It is best practice to communicate issues as they arise to build consensus around findings and corrective actions and allow management to:
 - Provide additional evidence where necessary.
 - Address issues immediately.
- Confirm the importance of attendance at the closing meeting and ensure that all key personnel can attend.
- Provide an opportunity for questions and to address concerns.

6.2. Employment Site Tour

The purpose of the employment site tour is to enable the verification team to observe the physical conditions and current practices in all areas of the employment site and to form a view of how physical conditions measure up to the verification requestor's policy, applicable codes of conduct, legal and regulatory requirements, and any other requirements. The findings from the tour will be concluded with evidence from management and document review.

During the tour, the verifier must make use of the employment site's Environmental SAQ to observe if the practices implemented reflect those that were stated in the SAQ. It is important that verifiers should make every effort to ensure production is not disrupted during the employment site tour, whilst ensuring that they are able to view the production area during busy production periods. It should be possible to move around the site without delaying or halting production.

The ability of management to continue production at the site during a visit is crucial to gaining an accurate idea of working conditions and to securing management co-operation for the remainder of the visit. Verifiers should keep this in mind during the site tour.

In order to achieve this, the verifier should:

- Ask that they be accompanied by only one or two people: usually the site or environmental manager.
- Be aware of site traffic.
- Avoid walking in areas where workers are trying to move or transport products from one area to another.

The verification team should walk around the employment site, production areas, storage rooms, natural areas, and all other areas with managers in order to:

- Understand the type of work that is being done at the employment site.
- Evaluate good environmental practices.
- Identify potential environmental risks.
- Observe management systems and practices.

The verification team should raise issues as they arise during the employment site tour, giving managers the opportunity to seek clarification, respond, and provide explanations or further evidence.

The verifier should focus on:

- The execution of policies in daily farming activities.
- Identifying areas of improvement.
- Identifying areas of good practices.
- Ensuring that the Environmental SAQ of the site is a true reflection of their practices and policies.

6.3. Document Review

The documentation requested by the verifier should be available on-site, including management systems, machinery maintenance, fire equipment and hazardous materials. For a full list of documentation that should be available during the site visit, please refer to [Annexure 4](#).

The document review process may also take place remotely prior to the day of the site visit. Reviewing documentation prior to the site visit will assist the verifier in preparing for the site visit and allow for more comprehensive feedback from the verifier. If the remote document review process is followed, the SIZA member will have to upload the required documents (see [Annexure 4](#)) to a folder on Dropbox that will be created by the assigned SIZA verifier. The documents should be uploaded to the folder no

later than one (1) week prior to the on-site visit. File and document names should be relevant, clear, and numbered according to the list provided in [Annexure 4](#). A SIZA representative will be available to provide technical assistance if and when needed.

6.4. Verification Team Pre-Closing Meeting

The verification team, where applicable, should meet prior to the closing meeting to discuss the findings of the verification process (document checks and employment site tours) and identify inconsistencies, observations, and good practices. The analysis of evidence gathered is a prerequisite for the closing meeting. It must be completed even if the verifier is alone at the employment site.

The verification team should prepare for the closing meeting by identifying and agreeing on:

- Inconsistencies on Environmental SAQ
- Good practice examples
- Possible improvements
- Prioritisation of issues

6.5. Closing Meeting

The purpose of the closing meeting is to verify the findings and agree on an improvement plan which will clearly set out areas of improvement, actions to be taken and timeframes. Corrective actions should focus on long-term environmentally sustainable solutions which should consider the root cause of any problem. This meeting should involve all those who attended the opening meeting and should:

- Reconfirm the purpose of the assessment.
- Recognise good practices.
- Agree on the timelines for the implementation of improvements, timing, and responsibility (with management).
- Answer any questions management may have.
- Explain the timelines when the full report for the Environmental verification will be completed and how the supplier can access the report.
- Get sign-off on the summary of findings and improvements to be made by both verifier and employment site.

The purpose of the closing meeting is to go through the findings, agree on them, and to agree on a corrective action plan which sets out areas for improvement, actions, and timeframes. Corrective actions should focus on long term sustainable solutions which take account of the root cause of any problem. In any event where a recording (voice, video or other) has been made, on the request of either the auditor or the auditee, the purpose of this recording must be explicitly communicated and agreed to by both parties. The recording must be declared and state the reason for the recording being made. Under no circumstances may the recording negatively impact any party involved or breach anonymity or confidentiality of the person involved.

7. OUTPUTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL VERIFICATION PROCESS

7.1. Environmental Verification Report

The context, findings, good practices, and improvement actions against each area of the SIZA Environmental Standard and SAQ should be reported to the employment site.

The Environmental verification report must be completed online on the *MySIZA* platform and must be

written in English to ensure that it can be shared with various stakeholders. All reports must be reviewed and approved by a reviewer before any form of publication may take place. The report should be published on *MySIZA* to the employment site within 15 business days of the site visit. It is important to make sure that reports are well written and without spelling and language errors seeing that it will be visible to the global markets.

7.2. Improvement Plan

The improvement plan needs to be included as part of the Environmental verification report. These improvements must be site specific and site management must be able to incorporate improvements into their daily activities. It is important to note that SIZA will monitor the timelines connected to the improvements. In cases where suppliers do not adhere to the improvement plan submitted, their Environmental Verification Confirmation Letter will be cancelled.

7.3. Follow-up Visits

In case where follow-up visits are recommended for critical non-compliances, the supplier will be advised to contact an independent specialist consultant to assist them with the necessary guidelines on how to get proper authorisation for the identified activities and how to mitigate future risks. SIZA cannot fulfil the role of a consultant.

7.4. Extension on Corrective Actions

The SIZA member can ask for an extension to address the corrective actions listed in the improvement plan. This should be done in writing whereafter approval for the extension must be given by SIZA management. If the extension was approved by SIZA management, the supplier will not be penalised.

7.5. SIZA Environmental Second-party Verification Confirmation Letter

MySIZA will only issue an electronic SIZA Environmental Verification Confirmation Letter to a member once the second-party verification process has been completed in full and all improvements have been signed off by the verifier who visited the site. The Environmental Second-Party Verification Confirmation Letter will reflect basic details of the site verified which include the SIZA membership number and date of verification. Please note that the confirmation letter will only be valid for a period of one year from the date of visit.

7.6. Market Acceptance

The SIZA CARES programme is aimed at driving continuous improvement and is implemented in preparation for a third-party environmental audit. It is a second-party verification programme, and it is not the same as an independent third-party audit. As a result, it is not necessarily accepted by all markets as proof of environmental compliance. Although this verification is done on a sample size each year, it is important that suppliers confirm with their relevant markets whether they will accept this confirmation letter as proof of compliance, or if they require an independent third-party audit.

8. ANNEXURES

These annexures can be viewed in full on the SIZA website. Click on each title to view the full documents online.

[Annexure 1: SIZA Environmental Second-Party Verification Process](#)

[Annexure 2: Safety Procedures](#)

[Annexure 3: Permission Form for Photographs and Videos](#)

[Annexure 4: Documents Required for Document Review Process](#)

[Annexure 5: Code of Conduct - SIZA Site Visits](#)