

Achieving the Sustainable Food Group Sustainability Standard: *FAQ for Sysco Fresh Produce Suppliers*

Q1: Which farms should I choose for the initial audit?

A: For the first year, select at least one farm and at least one facility (if applicable) that supply Sysco, and at least one crop from the ten selected by Sysco. You may also select a group of similar crops (crops that are grown and processed in similar ways). We recommend selecting farm(s) that already have a strong IPM program and/or other sustainability initiatives.

Q2: What farms should I prioritize in subsequent rounds of audits?

A: It is up to your company to determine the best course of action for your operation, and describe your approach in a three-year certification plan that will be reviewed and approved by Sysco. One approach is to begin expanding certification first to farms where you have the greatest amount of control over production practices. These may be owned farms or contracted growing operations with which you have strong relationships.

Q3: How many farms and facilities contributing to my supply chain must be certified?

A: Ideally, you should pursue certification for all of your company's facilities and the farms that your company sources from, whether or not you own or operate those farms. If you do not own or operate any facilities, facilities can be excluded from certification. Spot purchases or fill-in purchases for recovery are not required to be from certified operations.

Q4: Should I certify farms or facilities in my operation that don't supply Sysco?

A: Including additional farms or facilities that do not supply Sysco is not required but may be beneficial. For example, if some facilities use renewable energy and some do not, including all facilities allows your company to earn points for renewable energy. Sysco is encouraging other food retailers to align with and accept/recognize the Sustainability Standard, e.g., Sustainability Standard is accepted by Walmart in their 2025 pollinator health commitments, and other retailers may align in the future. We therefore encourage certifying additional farms and facilities in order to improve efficiency and reduce duplication of efforts and audits.

Q5: Do I have to follow the timeline outlined in the roadmap?

A: Yes, follow the timeline depicted in the roadmap (p. 1). Some flexibility is built into the roadmap timing to accommodate different types of operations.

Q6: Can I group multiple farms together in one audit?

A: Each farm and facility in the scope of certification will require a separate audit. Farms and facilities can be grouped together in the Group Certification option, which requires that a group of farms is following the same set of practices, which are defined and governed by an Internal Management System (IMS). See the Sustainability Standard General Regulations for more information on Group Certification.

Q7: Can I have multiple auditing cycles occurring simultaneously?

A: Yes, it is possible to have multiple simultaneous auditing cycles to accommodate different crop seasonalities and/or to more evenly distribute the workload of audits over a period of time. The number of auditing cycles possible and other similar details must be worked out with the CB.

