



Cultivating a future for pollinators

Bee Friendly Farming Third-Party Certification Manual

Version 2.2

January 2026

A Program of Pollinator Partnership



Protect their lives. Preserve ours.



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1. Introduction

This document provides information on the third-party audit system for the Bee Friendly Farming® (BFF) Certification program, including guidance and procedures for program participants to achieve third-party certification in the program as well as processes for auditors to conduct audits.

This document serves as a companion to the BFF Handbook that includes an overview of the program as well as details on the required criteria for farms, producer groups, and supply chain entities to be certified to BFF.

1.1 Purpose

BFF provides guidelines for farmers and ranchers to promote pollinator health on their lands. BFF strives to set standards for sustainable farming on important concepts like planting pollinator food resources, providing nesting habitat, and incorporating an integrated pest management strategy. Through BFF, farmers can be directly involved in providing resources necessary to create beneficial habitat for pollinators. By providing a low-cost program, growers and ranchers can spend valuable time and money getting plants and seeds in the ground to support pollinators.

1.2 Program Scope

The third-party certification process applies to the BFF CERTIFIED program. At the current time, third-party certification does not apply to the BFF partners, sponsors, the BFF membership program, or Bee Friendly Gardener member categories.

1.3 Contact

For questions regarding the BFF Certification program and/or the system for third-party audits, please contact Pollinator Partnership by email at bff@pollinator.org.

2. Certification Process

The two options for BFF are provided in Figure 1 below. The focus of this manual relates to the option that includes third-party audits.

BFF Tier	BFF Program	BFF Third-Party Verified Certification
3% Forage	✓	✓
0.5% Permanent Habitat	✓	✓
Water Source	✓	✓
Integrated Pest Management	✓	✓
IPM Records		✓
Audit Type	Membership	Third-Party

Figure 1. Options for becoming a Bee Friendly Farmer. This manual covers the third-party option.

An overview of the certification process as it applies to participants that pursue the third-party audit option is provided in Figure 2 and is described in more detail below.

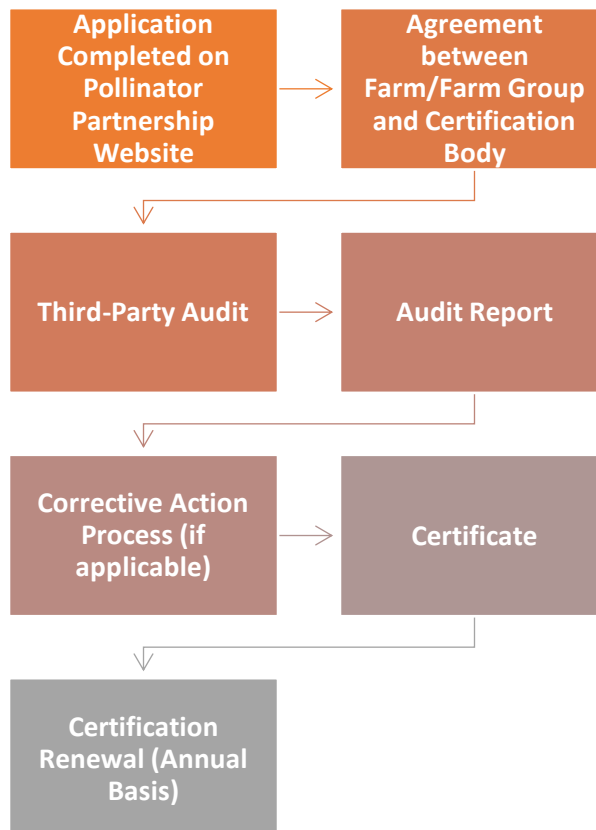


Figure 2. Steps for BFF third-party certification.

Application Form. The first step for BFF Certification is for an interested program participant to complete a BFF application form¹. An application form should be completed by all program participants, for either the membership program or third-party option. Forms can be accessed on either the BFF Program website or by contacting Pollinator Partnership at bff@pollinator.org. Once applications have been completed, Pollinator Partnership will confirm receipt of the application form and will send additional information requests or confirm approval of the application. Following initial review and confirmation by Pollinator Partnership, the applicant will be provided information to contact the certification auditors, hereafter referred to as the Certification Body.

Agreement with Certification Body. After contact with the Certification Body and confirmation of audit scope, a services agreement will be sent to the program participant. This agreement will confirm the scope of the certification, provide an estimated budget, outline confidentiality provisions, and grant the auditor access to the participant's information.

Third-Party Audit. Upon receipt of the signed agreement and applicable fees, the audit process will be initiated and the participant will be sent an audit plan which details the audit date, scope, contact information for the auditors, and the audit plan. All third-party audits are conducted by auditors from an approved Certification Body. Audits consist of document review, interviews, and direct observations.

Audit Report. Following the audit completion, an audit report is sent to the participant that details audit findings and provides a summary of any non-conformities, applicable corrective actions, and opportunities for improvement.

Corrective Action Process. If necessary, participants may be required to complete a corrective action process to address non-conformities identified during the audit.

Certificate. Upon completion of the audit process and confirmation of completed corrective actions, participants will be notified that they have been certified and certificates will be issued. If a participant is denied certification, the participant will receive a summary of the decision to not grant certification.

Certification Renewal. The certification process follows a three-year cycle. Following successful completion of the initial certification audit in Year 1, certification renewal requires maintaining conformance with BFF criteria in years 2 and 3 based on review through the process of remote surveillance audit or documentation review. A summary of the certification cycle is shown in Figure 3.

A participant may voluntarily withdraw from the program at any time by submitting written notice to the certifying body. In addition, participants who fail to complete required surveillance activities—including the annual remote documentation review or any scheduled audit—within six (6) months of the due date will be considered non-compliant and may be placed into withdrawal status. The effective date of withdrawal will be the date of notification or the date on which the compliance deadline was exceeded, whichever comes first. Upon withdrawal, all certification privileges are immediately suspended. Any product, packaging, marketing materials, or digital content bearing a Bee Friendly Farming (BFF) claim must cease use within a defined phase-out period (e.g., 30–90 days), after which all claims must be fully removed. Products already in distribution channels prior to the withdrawal effective

¹ The application form can be accessed at: <https://www.pollinator.org/bff/bff-us/applications#certified>
Applicants that are pursuing the producer group option for third-party certification or chain of custody audits should contact Pollinator Partnership directly at bff@pollinator.org for application instructions.

date may be sold through existing inventory, provided no new production carries the BFF claim and no misleading representations of current certification are made.

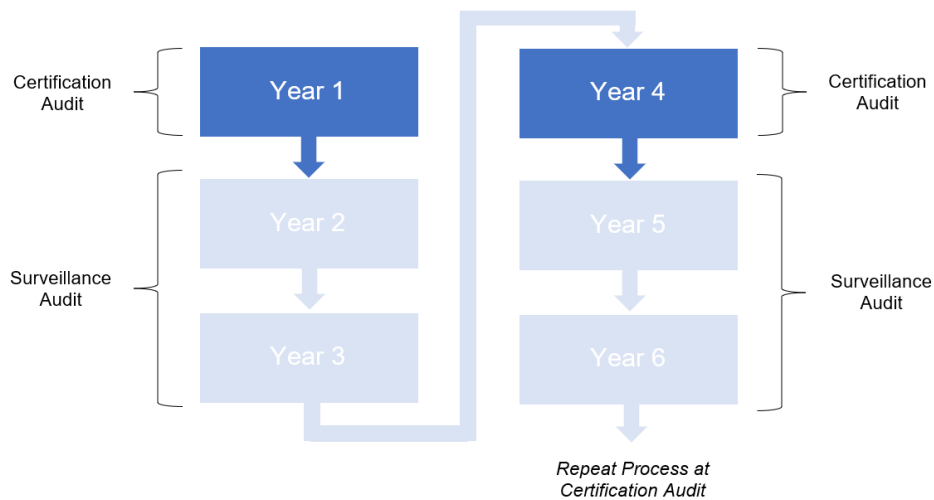


Figure 3. BFF Certification Cycle. BFF third-party certification program is based on a three-year cycle, including a certification audit that covers all criteria, with intervening surveillance audits or remote documentation review that occur in the second and third year of the cycle. In the example shown, the certification audit occurs in years 1 and 4, and the surveillance audits or remote documentation renewal occur in years 2/3 and 5/6. The cycle would continue again with a certification audit in year 7 (not shown).

2.1 Scope of the Third-Party Audit – Entity Types

The BFF Certified program is designed for farms, ranches, vineyards, and other land-use businesses that grow food or other agricultural resources. The focus of the program is related to promoting on-farm pollinator health. The BFF third-party certification process can be carried out by individual producers, producer groups, and/or downstream supply chain entities. For allowance of on-product logo use or claims on a final product, BFF chain of custody certification is required if there are additional supply chain steps after the production step on the farm.

A summary of the types of entities and eligibility for the third-party certification process is shown in Figure 4, and additional details are in Table 1.

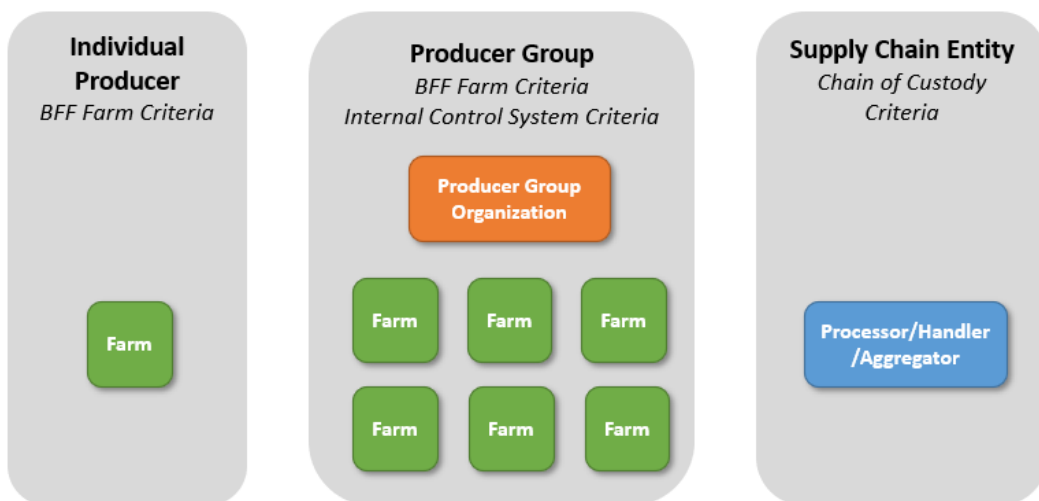


Figure 4. Summary of BFF third-party certification scope.

Certificate Holder	Description	Application	Criteria Evaluation
Individual Producer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One farm manager (e.g., single business) All parts of the farm are contiguous 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single Application 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BFF Farm Criteria
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One farm manager (e.g., single business) Some parts of the farm are not contiguous or under separate management systems (e.g., organic vs. conventional) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two or more applications corresponding to each part of the farm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BFF Farm Criteria for each part of the farm
Producer Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple organizations or individuals responsible for farm management Farms within the group may be contiguous or not contiguous 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applications corresponding to each farm or part of farm Application from Producer Group Organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BFF Farm Criteria for each farm or farm section Internal Control System Criteria
Processor, Handler, Aggregator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organization that takes ownership of BFF certified product 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application from processor, handler, or aggregator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chain of Custody Criteria

Table 1. Three types of BFF third-party certificate holders.

Individual Producers. For the individual producer model, a single certificate can apply to a single contiguous farm operation OR individual sections, orchards, or blocks that are not immediately adjacent to one another and are less than two miles apart or are under different management systems. If the farm consists of non-contiguous sections (i.e., separated by more than two miles) OR sections that are adjacent or within two miles but are under different management systems that will impact evaluation of

BFF criteria (e.g., organic vs. conventional), then those sections will need to be reported on separately for the purposes of the BFF program and will require separate applications for each part of the farm. In both cases, the farm can still apply as an individual producer for purposes of certification, provided that all parts of the farm are owned and managed by the same business entity. If parts of the farm are owned or managed by different people or organizations, then they would require separate certification processes, or the applicant may consider using the producer group approach.

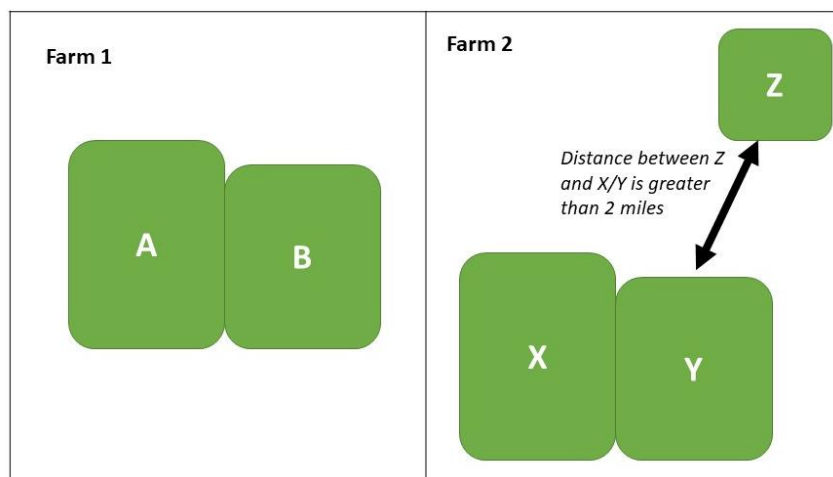


Figure 5. Individual farms – examples of contiguous and non-contiguous blocks. The farm in example 1 can apply for the program under a single application form that would apply to blocks A and B. Because one part of farm 2 (block Z) is more than two miles apart from the other part (blocks X and Y), farm 2 will need to complete two separate applications for Bee Friendly Farming Certification, one corresponding to block Z and another for blocks X and Y.

Producer Groups. Producer groups that participate in the program will be required to evaluate and complete a BFF application for all farms or farm units (e.g., if a farm has parts that are non-contiguous and separated by more than two miles) and the producer group organization will need to follow Internal Control System requirements for group management. The third-party audit will include review of a sample of farms in the group based on the BFF farm-level criteria, and the producer group organization will be required to undergo an audit against the BFF Internal Control System requirements (Appendix B).

Following certification, any changes to the producer group must be communicated to the Certification Body in advance. A change to the composition of the producer group may be permitted prior to the subsequent audit provided that the number of producers added or removed is: (i) no more than 10% of the total number of producers in the group AND (ii) the changes in producers represent no more than 10% of the total acreage of the group. In this case, the Producer Group Organization should contact the Certification Body to confirm the approach to making the changes. Updates to the producer list that result in a change of more than 10% of the total number or acreage of producers in the group are only permitted if updated and confirmed through the annual certification or surveillance audit. In some cases, the Producer Group Organization may consider creation of a separate producer group, rather than modifying the existing group.

All farms that participate in the producer group each year must undergo internal onsite audits by the producer group organization to ensure adherence to the BFF Certification criteria. The third-party

certification audit will involve a review of all internal audits carried out by the producer group organization at the time of the internal control system audit. In addition, the third-party certification process will include an audit of the square-root² sample of farms that are part of the group. For example, if the total number of farms in the farm group is 100, then the audit sample will be $\sqrt{100}$, or a total of 10 farms for the third-party audit. For the purposes of the sample, the total number of farms is based on individual farms, including those composed of contiguous or non-contiguous blocks. The certification body will ensure that the sample of farms is representative of the total based on farm size, location, aspects of farm management (e.g., irrigation type), whether the farms include contiguous or non-contiguous parcels, and other factors. Typically, the producers sampled each year during the third-party audit will be different such that over time, the third-party audit will include all producers in the group. However, in some cases the Certification Body may include producers from a previous year in the sample (e.g., based on risk assessment or other factors).

Processor, Handler, Aggregator. The processor, handler, and aggregator certification group refers to any organization that takes ownership of BFF certified product and is therefore responsible for maintaining the integrity of that product throughout the supply chain. Application to this group is open to any processor, handler, or aggregator seeking to make BFF third-party claims or use the BFF logo. Certification is based on compliance with the Chain of Custody Criteria (see Appendix C.), which requires documented traceability for all companies downstream from a BFF certified farm when making on-product claims or logo use. Chain of custody must be established at every supply chain step through to the consumer-facing product, including packers, processors, manufacturers, and other entities, unless vertically integrated operations handle only their own certified farm product. At minimum, operations must implement a mass balance (“mixed”) traceability system, ensuring that volumes sold as BFF certified correspond to volumes purchased as certified, accounting for appropriate conversion factors; products using this system must clearly specify “mass balance” or “mixed.” Segregation and identity preservation are supported but optional traceability models, with segregated products eligible to use claims or logos without mass balance designation when composed exclusively of certified inputs. Certified facilities must designate trained personnel responsible for the BFF traceability system; maintain supplier lists; verify certified status of incoming product; document traceability systems; retain receipts, invoices, and transaction records (including unique transaction numbers, volumes, dates, buyer and seller identification, and certified status) for at least three years; reconcile certified volumes at least quarterly; apply and justify conversion factors; ensure physical controls to prevent mixing of certified and non-certified product; and comply fully with BFF Claims and Logo-Use Guidelines.

Participants who have questions about eligibility for either individual producer, producer group, or processor, handler, or aggregator certification models should contact Pollinator Partnership at bff@pollinator.org.

² The square root sample approach is based on similar sampling approaches as implemented in other voluntary sustainability standards (e.g., Dietz et al., 2018).

2.2 Scope of the Third-Party Audit – Time Period

The third-party audit of the operation includes a review of all aspects of the farm for the current production year up to the time of the audit and can also account for the previous calendar year. Audits are retrospective. For harvested crop from a previous calendar year to qualify for certification, the operation must demonstrate compliance with all program criteria in that year³. The crop or production year that is covered by the audit will be confirmed during initial planning and specified in audit documentation, including the final audit report. Following certification, claims and the BFF logo can be used for farm products that were produced starting with the most recent crop or production year that was reviewed during the audit.

2.3 Remote and Onsite Audits

BFF third-party certification is typically based on remote audits, although onsite audits are required in some cases (e.g., certification audits of producer groups; program spot checks on a sample of all certified farms). While remote audits are standard in most cases, onsite audits may also be required due to specific buyer requests (e.g., sustainable sourcing requirements) or if based on a risk-assessment (e.g., multiple non-conformances observed in previous audits; audit suspension; farms with adjacent certified and non-certified blocks). Additional details on requirements for onsite or remote audits are provided below.

Individual Producers. Third-party audits for the BFF certification program for individual farm certificate holders are typically done remotely in both certification or surveillance audit years unless otherwise determined by either Pollinator Partnership, the Certification Body, or if required by external organizations (e.g., buyers, retailers). The program will periodically carry out onsite checks of a sample of individual producers to ensure overall adherence to the requirements of BFF certification. Producers will be notified if they are selected for an onsite audit.

Producer Group. Third-party audits of producer groups require an onsite audit during the certification year and will have remote audits during surveillance years. Unless otherwise determined by the Certification Body, this approach will mean that an onsite audit will occur at least once every three years. The audit of producer groups includes review of a sample of producers, the internal control system, and chain of custody.

Chain of Custody. Chain of custody audits in certification and surveillance years will be conducted remotely unless otherwise determined by Pollinator Partnership or the Certification Body. The allowance for remote audits applies to all levels of traceability, including approaches using mass balance or physical segregation.

³ In some limited circumstances, an auditor may allow for corrective actions to support compliance for the previous calendar year but those may be according to the auditor's judgement and typically only relate to requirements for documentation. Bee Friendly Farming criteria that may allow for corrective actions in this context include BFF-5a (pest monitoring), BFF-5c (monitoring records), BFF-5d (use of thresholds), BFF-5f (calibration and related records of application equipment), and BFF-5j (application records). All other criteria must be in place at the time of audit to qualify for third-party certification.

2.4 Third-Party Audit Process

The audit process described in this section applies to all types of third-party audits in the BFF program, including onsite or remote farm audits, review of the producer group internal control system, and for chain of custody.

Audit Plan. In advance of the audit, the auditor will provide an audit plan to the participant that includes details about audit process, documents to be submitted prior to the audit and will set expectations for delivery of the audit report and any related follow-up (e.g., non-conformities). The person who is responsible for implementing the program on the farm must be present and available during the audit and should review program documents prior to the audit. Participants should compile all documentation, including key records, before the scheduled audit. Requested documentation may be reviewed prior to the audit date and the auditor will provide the participant specific timelines for submitting the materials they request for review.

Audit Scheduling. Audits will typically review both the current and previous crop or production year. The timing of the audit will be determined by the Certification Body to ensure optimal timing for review of the BFF criteria, including but not limited to: (i) pollinator habitat or forage, including temporary cover crops if only grown for a certain period of the production season; (ii) integrated pest management records, including pest management recommendations and application records; and/or (iii) sources of water for bees.

Onsite or Remote Audit. During the audit, the auditor will verify compliance with all program requirements. Both onsite and remote audits will include an opening meeting, review of any evidence including documents, interview and observations, and a closing meeting that communicates initial findings.

Audit Report. An audit report that details findings and summarizes any non-conformities will be sent no later than 30 days after the audit.

Corrective Actions. Any non-conformities identified will be summarized in a Non-Conformity and Corrective Action Report (NC-CAR). Participants must provide the corrective action plan and/or evidence of completed corrective actions using the NC-CAR template to the Certification Body within 30 days of receipt of the original audit report. Additional review of evidence may be required prior to the closure of non-conformities. All required corrective actions must be completed prior to finalization of the audit process and the certification decision. The Certification Body will complete a review of corrective actions and make a final certification decision within 14 days of receipt of the corrective actions and a certificate will be issued within 30 days of an approved certification.

Certification Decision and Certificate. Following either successful completion of the audit report or closure of non-conformities, the Certification Body will confirm the certification decision and issue a certificate.



Figure 6. Summary of the audit process.

2.5 Claims and Logo Use

Following the audit and completion of the final audit report and certificate, representatives of Pollinator Partnership will send logo images, including guidelines about the allowed use of claims and use of the BFF logo. Participants will be required to submit their proposed use of the logo and associated claims to Pollinator Partnership for approval prior to use. The BFF logo and claim is to be used only by participants who have successfully met the criteria of the BFF Certification program and only with permission of Pollinator Partnership for the duration of the certificate’s validity.

2.6 Suspension of Certification

Once certified, participants must remain in compliance with BFF criteria by continuing to adhere to practices as demonstrated during the certification audit. Certification may be suspended at any time if the Certification Body or Pollinator Partnership has evidence that practices on the certified operation (farm, producer group, processor/handler/manufacturer) have changed in such a way that the operation can no longer maintain compliance. Following certification suspension, products may no longer be represented as certified. Depending on the details of suspension, the program participant may choose to re-apply for BFF Certification once changes are made to ensure compliance with the BFF criteria.

3. Auditor Requirements

Third-party audits will be conducted only by a Certification Body approved by Pollinator Partnership. Approved certification bodies must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- hold an ISO 17065 accreditation for programs with related scope (e.g., sustainability, food safety, etc.);
- be approved for audits by an ISEAL member certification standard; and/or,
- or be approved for a USDA certification program.

Individual auditors at the Certification Body must meet the following criteria:

- hold a bachelor’s degree in agriculture, environmental science or a related field *and* two years agricultural experience; OR
- a minimum of 5 years agricultural auditing or certification experience; AND
- Successful completion of BFF Third-Party Certification Program Auditor trainings.

4. Chain of Custody

Chain of custody is required for BFF third-party claims and logo use for any companies or organizations that are downstream from the BFF certified farm. For on-product claims or logo use, chain of custody must be established at all supply chain steps to the point of the consumer-facing product, including packers, handlers, processors, manufacturers or other types of entities. Operations that are vertically

integrated (e.g., including both a farm and packhouse or packaging facility under the same ownership) may not be required to carry out a chain of custody audit provided that the processing or handling facility does not process or handle products from outside farms.

All operations will be required to maintain a minimum of a mass balance (“mixed”) level of traceability. For supply chains that use the mass balance approach, any volume sold as BFF certified must correspond to volume purchased as “BFF certified”, taking into account necessary conversion factors for processed materials. Logo, claims, or associated text must specify “mass balance” or “mixed” for products using the mass balance traceability system. In some cases, there may be crop types that have multiple varieties of the same species grown on the same farm (e.g., self-incompatible crops that require different varieties for pollination). For those types of crops that are using the mass balance traceability model, the full production volume of the farm (i.e., production of all varieties) can be included as part of the mass balance provided that at least one of the varieties will be included in the final product.

Product segregation and identity preservation are supported levels of traceability in the BFF program but are not required. Final products that include materials based on segregated BFF products can use claims or logos without specification of “mass balance” or “mixed”. These products must be composed exclusively of certified inputs that include the original product from certified farms.

The certification and audit process for chain of custody audits follows the general BFF approach as outlined in Section 2.

5. Combining BFF with Other Audits

Pollinator Partnership recognizes the benefits and efficiencies of combining audit processes between programs. The third-party certification program is established for combining BFF with other auditable standards or including additional criteria as an addendum to those reviewed for regular BFF audits. For questions on options to combine BFF third-party certification with other programs or Standards, please contact Pollinator Partnership at bff@pollinator.org. For certifications where BFF is a contracted direct partner (i.e. LIVE), BFF audits can and will be conducted concurrently with other on-farm inspections.

6. Appeals and Complaints Process

If an applicant feels that a decision to deny certification was made without sufficient information or based on inaccurate data, they may appeal the decision within 30 days of the certification decision. The appeal should be submitted to Pollinator Partnership and must include a summary of the applicant’s claim and any supporting documentation. Once Pollinator Partnership receives the appeal, they will request reevaluation by the Certification Body and any further evidence. The applicant will be notified of the results of the reevaluation by Pollinator Partnership within 30 days of the appeal submission.

Complaints against a BFF certified operation or regarding the BFF Certification Program should be sent to Pollinator Partnership and must clearly describe the complaint, provide any supporting evidence, and must be signed and include a return address. Pollinator Partnership will contact the Certification Body and investigate the complaint. The name of any individual making a complaint against an operation will remain confidential. A response will be sent to the complainant upon completion of the investigation.

All appeals and complaints should be sent to Pollinator Partnership at bff@pollinator.org.

7. Revision Process

The Bee Friendly Farming Third-Party Certification Manual and associated certification criteria may be periodically revised and updated. Typically, updates are made at least once in a five-year period. Guidance for existing certified participants to transition to the revised criteria or program will be provided in cases where program materials are updated. For questions or feedback related to revisions of the Bee Friendly Farming Program Manual or associated certification criteria, please contact bff@pollinator.org.

8. Glossary

Assesment: The combined processes of audit, review and decision on a client’s conformance with the requirements of a standard or of the assurance provider’s conformance with requirements for assurance (ISEAL, 2018).

Types of assessment below from “*ISO 17000 Conformity Assessment – Vocabulary and General Principles*” (ISO, 2020a).

- **First-party assessment:** conformity assessment activity that is performed by the person or organization that provides or that is the object of conformity assessment.
- **Second-party assessment:** conformity assessment activity that is performed by a person or organization that has a user interest in the object of conformity assessment.
- **Third-party assessment:** conformity assessment activity that is performed by a person or organization that is independent of the provider of the object of conformity assessment and has no user interest in the object.

Audit: A component of an assessment. A systematic, documented process for obtaining records, statements of fact or other relevant information and assessing them objectively to determine the extent to which specified requirements are fulfilled (ISEAL, 2018).

Auditor: Person who performs the audit (ISEAL, 2018).

Certification Audit: An onsite or remote audit conducted every three years to verify conformance against the BFF criteria.

Certification Body: Organization responsible for third-party audits. Also referred to as ‘audit organization’.

Chain of Custody: Refers to all steps in a supply chain that take possession of a product (modified from Responsible Minerals Initiative, 2021). (See also Traceability)

Claim: A message used to set apart and promote a product, process, business, or service with reference to one or more of the pillars of sustainability: social, economic and/or environmental (ISEAL, 2018).

Corrective Action: An action taken to eliminate the cause of a non-conformity identified by an auditor to prevent recurrence.

Farm: Any place that sells, or normally could sell, at least \$1,000 of agricultural commodities, including both crop and livestock operations (USDA, 2022).

Identity Preservation (IP): A model of traceability that requires segregation of certified material from the non-certified material and does not allow mixing of certified materials throughout the value chain to provide traceability from a specific farm to the final user(s) (BSR, 2014).

Integrated Pest Management (IPM): IPM is an ecosystem-based strategy that focuses on long-term prevention of pests or their damage through a combination of techniques such as biological control, habitat manipulation, modification of cultural practices, and use of resistant varieties. Pesticides are used only after monitoring indicates they are needed according to established guidelines, and treatments are made with the goal of removing only the target organism. Pest control materials are selected and applied in a manner that minimizes risks to human health, beneficial and nontarget organisms, and the environment (UCANR IPM, 2021).

Mass Balance: A model of traceability in which certified and non-certified materials can be mixed. The exact volume of certified material entering the value chain is controlled and an equivalent volume of the certified product leaving the value chain can be sold as certified. (BSR, 2014)

Non-Conformity: Any failure to meet a requirement.

Producer Group Organization: Organization responsible for a farm group. Examples could include a processor, handler, or other types of organization (e.g., non-profit entity).

Segregation: A model of traceability that requires certified product from a certified site is kept separate from other sources but permits the mixing of certified products/ingredients from a variety of sources (ISEAL, 2016).

Surveillance Audit: Remote audits occurring in year two and three of the BFF three-year certification cycle in which select practices are audited to ensure that participants are continuing to conform to the BFF criteria.

Traceability: Ability to follow the product along the supply chain by monitoring and tracking chain of custody (modified from Responsible Minerals Initiative, 2021). (see also Chain of Custody)

9. References

- *Bee Friendly Farming Handbook 2026*. <https://www.pollinator.org/bff/bff-us>
- *Bee Friendly Farming Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Templates*
- *Bee Friendly Farming Third-Party Audit Checklist - Chain of Custody*. V2.2. 2026
- *Bee Friendly Farming Third-Party Audit Checklist - Farm*. V2.2. 2026
- *Bee Friendly Farming Third-Party Audit Checklist - Producer Group*. V2.2. 2026

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Appendix A. Bee Friendly Farming – Farm Criteria

The table below includes 16 criteria applicable to participating operations in the Bee Friendly Farming third-party certification program. All criteria are evaluated by an auditor for compliance with potential evaluation of Comply, Not Comply, and in some cases, Not Applicable. BFF 1 to 4 are always applicable. BFF 5a to 5l may be considered as not applicable in some cases. For example, livestock operations that only administer disease control internally, and that do not apply control materials to any land or structures may be exempt from these requirements. Documented evidence of the livestock disease and pest management would be required to justify non-applicability of BFF 5a to 5l.

The guidance includes information on potential sources of evidence for an auditor. There are three requirements (BFF-5c, 5f, 5j) that require certain documents/records to be presented for evaluation during the audit. For other requirements, an auditor may review documentation but verbal confirmation through interview with the farm manager, Pest Control Adviser (PCA) or other, qualified representative may be sufficient.

No.	Criterion	Guidance
Bee Forage and Habitat		
BFF-1	The farm offers forage providing good nutrition for bees and other pollinators on at least 3% of land. Forage may be temporary.	<p>Forage can include cover crops, if they are left to bloom. Pollinators require year-round food and habitat other than crops. By planting flowering plants that produce nectar and pollen, pollinators can be supported year-round.</p> <p>Pollinator forage area must be at least 3% of total farm area. The farm must be able to demonstrate, and the third-party auditor will confirm calculation of, the 3% value. Forage can be temporary and available only during part of the year.</p> <p>Documented evidence can include a map indicating area with pollinator forage, photographs of forage, and receipts/invoices for cover crop seed or other forage (e.g., hedgerow planting). Observations will be made during an onsite or remote audit to confirm the area with forage. If the forage is temporary, it may not be possible to observe at the time of the audit.</p> <p>Evidence should specify type of pollinator habitat that meets the 3% farm area requirement. The type of pollinator habitat to provide pollinator forage can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> cover crops within the field; <input type="checkbox"/> cover crops adjacent to the field (within two miles of the farm); <input type="checkbox"/> hedgerows along the farm edge; <input type="checkbox"/> natural habitat areas (within two miles of the farm); and/or, <input type="checkbox"/> set-aside plantings. <p>For cover crops within the field or adjacent to the field please indicate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> annual cover crops have bloomed, or are projected to bloom (evidence should specify bloom date)

No.	Criterion	Guidance
		<p>For other types of habitat, including hedgerows, natural habitat areas, and set-aside plantings, please indicate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> vegetation was established and growing <input type="checkbox"/> bloom timing (evidence should specify bloom date) <p>Evidence should include species names of plants that provided bloom.</p>
BFF-2	The farm provides bloom of different flowering plants throughout the growing season, especially in early spring and late autumn.	<p>There is no minimum land coverage for seasonal bloom. During the growing season, it is important to provide pollinators with alternate food sources that offer a complete diet. Both commercial honeybees and native pollinators benefit when provided with diverse food sources.</p> <p>Blooming bee forage should be available during all growing seasons, including spring, summer, and fall. For some growing regions, fewer than three seasons of bloom may be acceptable.</p> <p>Documented evidence can include a map that shows bloom areas and information about timing of bloom, photographs of areas of bloom, and receipts/invoices for seed or planting materials for bloom. Observations will be made during an onsite or remote audit to confirm the areas of bloom, with an understanding that not all areas will be in bloom at the time of the audit.</p> <p>Evidence should specify the type of pollinator habitat that meets the requirement of providing bloom throughout the growing season. The type of pollinator habitat can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> cover crops within the field; <input type="checkbox"/> cover crops adjacent to the field (within two miles of the farm); <input type="checkbox"/> hedgerows along the farm edge; <input type="checkbox"/> natural habitat areas (within two miles of the farm); and/or, <input type="checkbox"/> set-aside plantings. <p>For cover crops within the field or adjacent to the field please indicate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> annual cover crops have bloomed, or are projected to bloom (evidence should specify bloom date) <p>For other types of habitat, including hedgerows, natural habitat areas, and set-aside plantings, please indicate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> vegetation was established and growing <input type="checkbox"/> bloom timing (evidence should specify bloom date) <p>Evidence should include species names of plants that provided bloom.</p>
BFF-3	The farm provides clean water for bees when managed honey bees are	In commercial farming operations, it is important to provide clean water for managed pollinators. Irrigation canals, holding ponds, lakes, or natural bodies of water can count for certification.

No.	Criterion	Guidance
	present on-site, if not inhibited by government-mandated water restrictions.	<p>Documented evidence can include a map indicating areas with clean water and photographs of areas where water is provided.</p> <p>Observations will be made during an onsite or remote audit to review the area where water is provided and/or associated equipment (e.g., buckets with water for honey bees). BFF-3 is only required when managed honey bees are located on-site.</p>
BFF-4	Farms must incorporate 'permanent pollinator habitat,' which contains pollinator forage features, equivalent to 0.5% of their total cropped area.	<p>Permanent habitat can include, but is not limited to, hedgerows, shelter belts, conservation cover, field borders, filter strips, wildlife habitat plantings, and flowering trees. Permanent is defined as being established and maintained for a minimum of 3 years. Habitat area requirements scale with farm size—from a minimum requirement of 2,000 sq ft of permanent pollinator habitat for farms less than 10 acres in production (for example, a 200 ft x 10 ft hedgerow) to a maximum requirement of 25 acres of permanent pollinator habitat for farms more than 5,000 acres in production. Permanent pollinator habitat must incorporate flowers that bloom at least two of three seasons (spring, summer, fall) and at least 30% of the permanent habitat area must be made up of plants that bloom and provide nectar/pollen to pollinators. Bloom requirements can be met by incorporating forbs, shrubs, and trees and are known to provide pollen and/or nectar for pollinators. Bare ground, downed trees, grasses, sedges, rushes, ferns, and conifers can be included in the permanent habitat and can be valuable for nesting and host plant resources but are not considered towards the bloom requirements. Permanent habitat, areas that are not, or minimally, disturbed for at least 3 years will naturally provide nesting resources for pollinators, such as plant stems, woody debris, and bare ground beneath and around plants. We do not require specific additions or management for nesting but encourage management of the permanent area that will benefit a variety of bee nesting resources, such as reduced mowing, retention of woody debris and herbaceous plant material, and minimal or no disturbance of soils.</p> <p>Documented evidence can include a map that shows areas with permanent nesting habitat and photographs of the nesting habitat. Observations will be made during an onsite or remote audit to confirm the areas of nesting habitat.</p> <p>Evidence should include description of type of habitat provided, including plant species names if applicable.</p>
Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Requirements		
BFF-5a	The farm conducts regular monitoring for pests.	<p>Monitoring for pests is vital in determining effective management strategies.</p> <p>Documented evidence can include records of monitoring and a pest management plan that describes approaches to monitoring. Observations will be made during an onsite or remote audit to check evidence of monitoring (e.g., pest traps).</p>

No.	Criterion	Guidance
		Some farms may contract with a Pest Control Adviser (PCA) to support pest monitoring. In those cases, it may be necessary to have the PCA and associated materials available for review during the audit.
BFF-5b	Individuals responsible for pest monitoring can describe features of key pests and understand pest biology.	<p>Monitoring requires that individuals responsible for pest management (staff or contracted PCA's) can correctly identify all key pests and understand key pest biology, including life cycle stages and how they damage the crop. Correct identification is essential for early detection, effective decision making and timing management related to pest life cycles.</p> <p>Documented evidence can include a pest management plan that lists and briefly describes all key pests and their damaging life cycle stages and describes approaches to monitoring. Interviews with farm staff may be used to assess understanding of pest biology.</p> <p>Some farms may contract with a Pest Control Adviser (PCA) to support pest monitoring. In those cases, it may be necessary to have the PCA and/or associated materials available for review during the audit.</p>
BFF-5c	The farm collects and maintains records of pest monitoring.	<p>Documented evidence can include records of monitoring and pest management plan that describes approach to monitoring.</p> <p>Some farms may contract with a Pest Control Adviser (PCA) to support pest monitoring. In those cases, it may be necessary to have the PCA and associated materials available for review during the audit.</p> <p>***REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION FOR COMPLIANCE: Records of Pest Monitoring*** Pollinator Partnership has developed templates to support this documentation requirement. Templates are available online through the Pollinator Partnership/Bee Friendly Farming website.</p>
BFF-5d	The farm uses economic thresholds or modeling related to pests to determine if intervention is needed.	<p>Management decisions need to be based on monitoring and assessing whether threshold levels have been met. Certified members must adhere to established threshold guidelines, if established, developed by extension agencies, commodity groups, or other leaders in their respective systems. Decisions can also be made using models. By using these types of models, growers can make science-based decisions in developing management plans and predicting potential damage. This is important because it ensures that growers are applying management strategies at the proper time and avoiding unnecessary applications, and thereby reducing pesticide exposure to pollinators.</p> <p>Documented evidence can include records of monitoring and pest management plan that describes approach to economic thresholds and modeling.</p>

No.	Criterion	Guidance
		Some farms may contract with a Pest Control Adviser (PCA) to support pest monitoring and threshold determination. In those cases, it may be necessary to have the PCA and associated materials available for review during the audit.

No.	Criterion	Guidance
BFF-5e	The farm uses techniques to prevent and avoid potential pest infestations.	<p>An important aspect of IPM is the principle of avoiding potential infestations. Small steps can be taken to mitigate outbreaks, many of which directly benefit pollinators. Growers are required to practice at least two preventative measures.</p> <p>Documented evidence can include records of monitoring and pest management plan that describes approach to avoid infestations and pest mitigation. Some farms may contract with a Pest Control Adviser (PCA) to support pest management. In those cases, it may be necessary to have the PCA and associated materials available for review during the audit.</p> <p>Evidence must specify the techniques employed by the farm used to avoid infestations and outbreaks. In order to comply with this requirement, the farm must employ at least two of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Beetle Banks <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation Cover <input type="checkbox"/> Companion Planting <input type="checkbox"/> Crop Rotation <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural practices to improve air flow <input type="checkbox"/> Eliminate alternative hosts for pests and diseases <input type="checkbox"/> Intercropping <input type="checkbox"/> Scheduling irrigation to avoid situations conducive to disease development <input type="checkbox"/> Mulching <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Barriers <input type="checkbox"/> Sanitation - equipment <input type="checkbox"/> Sanitation - removal of debris/infested plant material <input type="checkbox"/> Selecting cultivars with genetic resistance <input type="checkbox"/> Selecting cultivars with maturity dates that allow for harvest before key pest populations build up <input type="checkbox"/> Selecting certified pest-free seeds, transplants, or rootstock <input type="checkbox"/> Pruning and canopy management <input type="checkbox"/> Adjusting row spacing <input type="checkbox"/> Nutrient management - matching nutrients to crop need
BFF-5f	Pesticide application equipment used on the farm	Documented evidence should include records of calibration and general procedures for calibrating pesticide application equipment.

No.	Criterion	Guidance
	has been calibrated at least annually, and records of calibration are maintained.	<p>Some farms may contract with a Pest Control Adviser (PCA), Farm Management Company or other service provider to support pesticide application. In those cases, it may be necessary to have the PCA, Farm Management Company, or other representative and associated materials/documents available for review during the audit.</p> <p>***REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION FOR COMPLIANCE: Records of Pesticide Application Equipment Calibration*** Pollinator Partnership has developed templates to support this documentation requirement. Templates are available online through the Pollinator Partnership/Bee Friendly Farming website.</p>
BFF-5g	The farm takes steps to limit pollinator contact with pesticide chemical treatments.	<p>Farms are required to use a multi-faceted approach that combines physical, biological, chemical, and cultural control methods. IPM benefits from a combination of management approaches that can use different modes of action and strategies, taking advantage of physiological, ecological, and behavioral characteristics of the target pests. Non-pesticide approaches reduce potentially toxic exposure to pollinators. The method used for pest management products is also important in mitigating pollinator exposure. Growers are required to demonstrate which management strategies they are implementing.</p> <p>Documented evidence can include a pest management plan that describes approach to limit pollinator contact with pesticide treatments. Observations will be made during an onsite or remote audit to confirm examples of approaches to limit pollinator contact with chemical treatments.</p> <p>Some farms may contract with a Pest Control Adviser (PCA), Farm Management Company or other service provider to support pesticide application. In those cases, it may be necessary to have the PCA, Farm Management Company, or other representative and associated materials/documents available for review during the audit.</p> <p>Evidence must specify the steps taken by the farm used to limit pollinator contact with pesticide chemical treatments. In order to comply with this requirement, the farm must employ at least 6 out of the following 10 practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Read and comply with labels <input type="checkbox"/> Never apply in the presence of bloom that may attract pollinators <input type="checkbox"/> No use of dust or wettable or soluble powder formulations <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid tank mixing <input type="checkbox"/> Use low toxicity, rapidly degradable chemicals <input type="checkbox"/> No spraying on windy days or near water sources <input type="checkbox"/> Never apply when unusually low temperatures or dew are forecast following treatment

No.	Criterion	Guidance
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Establish buffers between treated areas and hives or pollinator habitat <input type="checkbox"/> Inform neighboring growers and applicators of hive locations <input type="checkbox"/> Inform neighboring beekeepers of possible pesticide use in adjacent crops
BFF-5h	The farm uses non-chemical pest management strategies (e.g., cultural, biological, and physical) in addition, or instead of, chemical strategies.	<p>The farm must have employed at least one non-chemical pest management strategy, including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Mating disruption <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical pest removal <input type="checkbox"/> Mulching, hand-weeding, mechanical weeding, or grazing <input type="checkbox"/> Soil solarization <input type="checkbox"/> Use of biocontrol/beneficials/natural enemies
BFF-5i	The farm considers and takes steps to reduce risk to pollinators when making decisions about pesticide chemical treatments.	<p>The farm should reference published and credible information on pollinator risk and incorporate an understanding of risk to pollinators in making decision about pesticide treatments.</p> <p>An example of a risk assessment for pollinators is the University of California Integrated Pest Management (UC-IPM) Bee Precaution Tool (https://ipm.ucanr.edu/bee-precaution-pesticide-ratings/).</p>
BFF-5j	The farm maintains records of pesticide applications that include, at minimum, product name, application rate, and date of application.	<p>Documented evidence should include pesticide application records with information as specified in the requirement (i.e., product name, application rate, application date).</p> <p>Some farms may contract with a Pest Control Adviser (PCA), Farm Management Company, or other service provider to support pesticide application. In those cases, it may be necessary to have the PCA, Farm Management Company, or other representative and associated materials/documents available for review during the audit.</p> <p>***REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION FOR COMPLIANCE: Pesticide Application Records*** Pollinator Partnership has developed templates to support this documentation requirement. Templates are available online through the Pollinator Partnership/Bee Friendly Farming website.</p>

No.	Criterion	Guidance
BFF-5k	The farm annually evaluates the efficacy of their integrated pest management (IPM) program and makes improvements when needed.	<p>Adapting farming practices to new methods, changes in the environment, or emerging pests are essential to developing impactful IPM programs. Annual assessments of the effectiveness of current IPM practices should be conducted to make improvements to the program or incorporate new techniques or technologies.</p> <p>Documented evidence can include a pest management plan and examples of updates that were made to the program.</p> <p>Some farms may contract with a Pest Control Adviser (PCA) to support pest management. In those cases, it may be necessary to have the PCA and associated materials available for review during the audit.</p>
BFF-5l	The farm takes steps to manage for pesticide resistance.	<p>Pest populations can develop resistance to specific pesticides through continued use of the same Mode of Action (MoA). Alternating MoAs, applying at appropriate rates and timings, calibrating equipment, crop rotation, and many other techniques can all help prevent resistance evolution. A farm is required to demonstrate the use of resistance management techniques (e.g., recommended by the Insecticide Resistance Action Committee (IRAC), Herbicide Resistance Action Comment (HRAC), etc.).</p> <p>Documented evidence can include a pest management plan that shows approach to resistance management (e.g., pesticide rotations) and pesticide application records.</p> <p>Some farms may contract with a Pest Control Adviser (PCA) to support pest management. In those cases, it may be necessary to have the PCA and associated materials available for review during the audit.</p>

Appendix B. Bee Friendly Farming – Internal Control System Criteria for Producer Groups

Producer groups that consist of multiple farms are eligible for Bee Friendly Farming (BFF) certification under a single certificate. Producer groups include an organization that is responsible for support and oversight of the group, as well as ongoing internal audits. The requirements below are required for the organization responsible for the producer group.

The producer group organization will be audited for Internal Control System (ICS) criteria as well as applicable Chain of Custody criteria (CC-4 to CC-12).

Section	No.	Criterion
ICS Staff and Procedures	ICS-1	There are designated personnel at the producer group organization responsible for managing the BFF Certification program, requirements of the Internal Control System, and traceability of BFF product.
	ICS-2	Designated personnel at the producer group organization have been trained on BFF and the Internal Control System.
	ICS-3	The facility has created a documented Internal Control System that addresses requirements of BFF.
Producer Engagement	ICS-4	A list of producers in the group is maintained and updated annually.
	ICS-5	The list of producers in the group includes their name, physical address, dates active in the group, certified acreage, and annual certified production.
	ICS-6	The producer group organization maintains an up to date map of the total farm area and locations of BFF participating farms.
	ICS-7	The producer group organization has carried out training or outreach activities with producers in the group related to the BFF certification program.
Internal Inspections	ICS-8	The producer group organization carries out annual onsite inspections of all farms participating in the group to confirm adherence to BFF requirements.
	ICS-9	The producer group organization maintains records of internal inspections, including documentation related to conformance with BFF criteria.
	ICS-10	The producer group organization maintains records of any necessary corrective actions or follow-up with producer group members following internal inspections.
Record-Keeping	ICS-11	The producer group organization keeps records/documents on all aspects of BFF Certification and the Internal Control System for at least three years.

Appendix C. Bee Friendly Farming – Chain of Custody Criteria

A system of chain of custody is required to allow on-product claims and logo use related to Bee Friendly Farming third-party certification. Chain of custody criteria as described below are applicable for all supply chain entities that receive certified product from an individual producer, producer group, or other upstream supply chain entity. Chain of custody is required for any operation that transacts certified product up to and including the point that it is in the form of the final consumer-facing product.

Section	No.	Criterion
Chain of Custody Staff	CC-1	There are designated personnel responsible for the BFF traceability system.
	CC-2	Designated personnel have been trained on the traceability system and are aware of the BFF program.
Documents and Record Keeping	CC-3	The facility maintains a list of farms or other suppliers that provide certified BFF product.
	CC-4	The facility has a mechanism to confirm the certified status of product received as BFF certified.
	CC-5	The facility has a documented system of traceability to track volumes of certified BFF product.
	CC-6	The facility keeps all relevant receipts and invoices for BFF certified product.
	CC-7	Receipts and invoices that involve the purchase or sale of BFF certified product include the following information: unique transaction reference number, total amount of product (e.g., lbs), date of the transaction, names of the buyer and seller, and identification of product as BFF certified.
	CC-8	The facility keeps records and documents on all aspects of the BFF traceability system for at least three years.
Mass Balance (<i>if using the mass balance model</i>)	CC-9	The facility ensures that the amount of product sold as BFF certified does not exceed amount of product received as BFF certified. The balance must be maintained on at least a quarterly basis.
	CC-10	The facility uses necessary volume conversion factors for BFF product and can demonstrate how the conversion factors were determined.
Physical Segregation (<i>if using the segregation model</i>)	CC-11	The facility has physical mechanisms to ensure segregation and to prevent mixing of BFF certified product and non-certified product.
Claims and Logo-Use	CC-12	The facility adheres to the BFF Claims and Logo-Use Guidelines.