

SAAS Accreditation Issue Update: December 2024

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1. Value-Chain Forced Labour Risks

We remind certification bodies and auditors to remain vigilant regarding potential value-chain risks when evaluating organizations’ social management systems. At the beginning of this month, the BBC drew attention to these risks in the below-linked article entitled, “‘Italian’ purees in UK supermarkets likely to contain Chinese forced-labour tomatoes” <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/crezlw4y152o>.

Such risks (which extend far beyond the geographical and industrial sectors cited in the article) may frequently be identified during audit preparation stage by performing basic ‘due diligence’ internet searches. A careful audit evaluation of the organisation’s ‘Risk Assessment’ and ‘Suppliers and Contractors’ process controls (SA8000 paragraphs 9.3 and 9.10 respectively) may also reveal supply chain obfuscations or omissions such as those reported by the BBC. In 2025, the SA8000 scheme will strengthen assurance of supplier controls through the introduction of the updated SA8000 standard and revised CB audit/monitoring controls.

2. APSCA & Sanctioning of APSCA Auditors

On behalf of SAI, we would like to remind CBs of SAI’s ongoing APSCA alignment plans and requirements. A copy of SAI’s most recent communication regarding APSCA is attached below. As this plan rolls out, watch out for further APSCA-related communications from both SAI and SAAS in 2025.

Additionally, in November 2024, APSCA informed member/applicant audit companies and collaborating schemes of sanctions being taken against two Pakistan-based auditors (Messrs. Amir and Ur-Rehman) who were determined to have contravened APSCA membership requirements.

Given SAI’s commitments to the APSCA program, CBs are expected to review and act upon such notifications from APSCA, ensuring that sanctioned audit company staff and auditors are not used to provide SA8000-related services.

3. Due Diligence During Certification Transfers

During 2024, we observed (in numerous cases) a disturbing lack of care by some Certification Bodies seeking to acquire an SA8000 certification client previously certified by another accredited CB. In particular, we urge CB Staff and auditors (once again!) to undertake a routine ‘due diligence’ internet search of the transferring organization’s public profile, legal status, and other readily available

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background information that may be important to the transfer. This should be accomplished before establishing any agreement with the certification client, or transferring CB. Additionally, as always, the requirements of SAAS Procedure 200:2020 (Transfer Audits) section 18, and ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015 Clause 9.5.3.3 apply. We also urge CBs to consider and follow the process requirements and guidelines defined in [IAF MD 2:2023](#).

4. IRIS – International Recruitment Integrity – System Growth & Auditor Training

We are pleased to report increasing interest in, and the continuing growth of, the IRIS Certification Scheme. Five labour recruiter organizations have now either completed, or are in progress towards achievement of [IRIS Certification](#).

SAI is delivering the next IRIS 4-Day Ethical Recruitment & Auditor Training Course in Mumbai (February 3 – 6, 2025) – Review details (including sign-up) [here](#). Please contact us if you have further questions.

5. SA8000 Updated Version

On behalf of SAI, we wish to thank all of you, and your staff, who contributed time and expertise to help shape the [revised version of SA8000](#). SAI is in the process of considering the thousands of comments received and will be communicating updates early in 2025. As previously communicated by SAI, the updated standard will not be employed for certification purposes until SAI & SAAS have solicited further feedback from CBs and auditors regarding the interpretation and implementation of revised SA8000 requirements within the SA8000 certification program. We anticipate that the updated SA8000 standard will be used for certification purposes from early 2026. Watch out for further communications from both SAI and SAAS.

6. 2025 Accreditation Program

SAAS is in the process of formulating a plan and Schedule for 2025 accreditation oversight. This will follow a similar pattern to that employed successfully in 2024. Lisa will be in touch regarding your CB's arrangements next month. Expect 'Kick-Off' meetings from Assigned SAAS Lead Auditors no later than February. Please keep in contact with your assigned SAAS Lead Auditor for updates etc.

7. 2023-2024 MSV Program

Thanks to your company and clients for making the 2023-2024 market surveillance program a success. SAAS and SAI are in the process of tabulating and finalizing the results, which we will share early next year.

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SAI's 'APSCA Expectations' email communication of December 9

From: Christopher Lamoureux <CLamoureux@sa-intl.org>
Sent: Monday, December 9, 2024 1:40 PM
To: SA8000 <SA8000@sa-intl.org>
Cc: Jane Hwang <JHwang@sa-intl.org>; John W. Brookes <JBrookes@saasaccreditation.org>
Subject: Interim SA8000-APSCA Expectations

Dear SA8000 Program Managers,

I am contacting you to share an interim communication concerning ASPCA, SA8000, and the June 2025 deadline for adherence to APSCA requirements.

This communication is a provisional step as SAI and SAAS engage with APSCA to clearly define the expectations as we all work toward adherence and the professionalization of social auditing. Please see below clarification on the current expectations and the way forward.

Current Expectations:

- *You have applied for APSCA membership at the CB level or are already a member*
- You have performed a gap assessment against adherence.
 - How many auditors?
 - At what stage of APSCA qualification?
 - At what level of readiness for exams?
- You have developed a plan for adherence, including:
 - The likely timelines
 - The necessary resources
 - The required training
 - The necessary engagement with stakeholders
- You are actively implementing and monitoring the plan
 - You have made resources available
 - You have started training and calibrating with your auditors
 - You have started engaging with SAI, APSCA, and other stakeholders

Compliance Expectations:

- You at minimum meet the current expectations above
- You make transparent reporting to APSCA on compliance
- Starting January 10th 2025, you make monthly reports (on the 10th of each month) to SAI/SAAS using the attached excel.

As long as you are meeting the above expectations of planning, resourcing, making progress and reporting, *SAI/SAAS will not censure you or restrict you or your auditors ability to do audits*. If you have taken adequate steps and invested the time and resources, but cannot meet full compliance expectations by June 2025 (through auditor challenges or external delay), *SAI/SAAS will not censure you or restrict you or your auditors ability to do audits*. However, there must be strong evidence that you have taken the necessary steps.

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In the coming months, SAI will monitor compliance gaps and challenges across different markets, work to create guidance and training for SA8000 auditors on how to approach APSCA exams, deliver workshops in key countries and languages for auditors to practice for the exams, and engage with APSCA to address outstanding issues and improve the process.

Please let me know if you have any questions or want to schedule a call to discuss.

Best,

Chris



SA8000_APSCA_Reporting Template.xlsx

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SAI – Human Rights at Work