

# STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT, MAINTENANCE AND OVERSIGHT POLICY

Approved by the Board of Directors: November 16, 2023

Effective date: November 16, 2023

Oversight Committee: Governance Committee

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## 1. BACKGROUND

CSGA is designated by the *Seeds Act* and its regulations as Canada's varietal purity standard-setting and seed crop certification body for all crop kinds, except potatoes. Each year, CSGA certifies approximately 1.2 million acres of over 40 different crop kinds and 2,200 different varieties produced by Canadian seed growers. CSGA also certifies Select status seed and certifies or approves Breeder seed.

CSGA is a not-for-profit organization committed to growing an innovative, profitable, and internationally competitive Canadian agricultural sector. Because of its dual role as a government-mandated standards setting and certification body as well as a member-based organization, the Board of Directors has determined the need to create an explicit policy setting out the principles and processes for standards development to demonstrate CSGA's science-based, objective and collaborative approach to fulfilling its mandate.

## 2. PURPOSE

CSGA By-law Section 8 states that *'it shall be the duty of the Board of Directors... to make Regulations and establish procedures with respect to the requirements and standards for the production of Pedigreed seed and Pedigreed seed crops, crop inspection, crop certificates and or keeping records of Pedigreed seed crops.'* The purpose of this Policy is to explicitly set out the principles and processes required for CSGA to assure the efficacy and objectivity of its seed crop certification processes and its conformance to the ISO 9001:2015 quality management system standard.

## 3. DEFINITIONS

**Standard:** The Standards Council of Canada (SCC) defines a standard as a document, established by consensus and approved by a recognized body, that provides for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for activities or their results aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree or order in a given context. For the purpose of this Policy, the standards of CSGA are set out in the Canadian Regulations and Procedures for Pedigreed Seed Production (Circular 6) and the Breeder Seed Requirements (BSR).

**PBC:** CSGA Plant Breeders Committee

**RSC:** CSGA Regulatory Services Committee

**CSWG:** CSGA Crop Specific Working Group

**Seed Crop:** All agricultural seed crop kinds except potatoes

## 4. POLICY STATEMENTS

As Canada's national seed crop certification authority, CSGA establishes and maintains seed crop certification requirements for all agricultural crop kinds, except potatoes. CSGA has delegated authority under the *Seeds Act* and its regulations to establish standards for varietal purity and to determine the varietal purity of seed crops. To fulfill its mandate, CSGA adheres to the following principles:

- i. Standards are based on scientific analysis and sufficient, reliable research data.
- ii. The standards development process includes appropriate members of the seed sector, including plant breeders, variety developers, seed growers, processors, distributors, seed crop inspectors, seed analysts, and government representatives.
- iii. Sector consultation is an essential element of CSGA's standards development and maintenance process to achieve consensus.

- iv. The standards development and maintenance process is transparent and protected from any potential or perceived conflict of interest.
- v. Standards are developed on a timely basis to support the competitive position of the Canadian seed sector.
- vi. The ISO 9001:2015 standard for continual improvement and quality control provides the framework for developing procedures to implement this Policy.
- vii. The processes for development, review and approval of certification standards are conducted with the level of confidentiality and data security required to ensure no information is shared other than on an as-needed basis.

## **5. STATEMENT OF IMPARTIALITY**

The CSGA, our committees, and our employees understand the importance of impartiality and the consideration of any potential conflict of interest in carrying out our business activities. We are committed to providing standards development and conformity assessment services that are objective and impartial. To this end, our processes are designed to uphold confidentiality, effective consultation, non-discrimination, and consensus.

## **6. RESPONSIBILITIES**

### ***i. CSGA Board of Directors***

- Develops and oversees the implementation of approved policies for standards development.
- Reviews this Policy at least every two years or sooner if required.
- Annually appoints the members of the RSC, considering the need for both expertise and broad stakeholder representation. CSGA may have agreements in place with external organizations to assist in the nomination and appointment of members of the RSC.
- Receives and reviews regular reports on the work of the RSC.
- Reviews and approves draft standards submitted to the Board (which is comprised of experienced grower directors, a science advisor and advisors appointed by provincial governments) or returns them to the RSC for further consideration. Draft standards may be returned to the RSC for further consideration if the standards development process has not been followed, the standards proposed are in contravention of the federal Seeds Act and Seed Regulations, or the standards are not adequately harmonized with the OECD Seed Schemes or the Association of Official Seed Certifying Agencies (AOSCA) standards.
- Abides by the CSGA Director Code of Conduct and Confidentiality policy.

For greater clarity, the CSGA Board of Directors does not develop standards but rather ensures that CSGA's standards development process has been followed and its approval of standards is based on recommendations from the Regulatory Services Committee.

### ***ii. CSGA Regulatory Services Committee (RSC)***

- As the main technical committee of the CSGA related to standards, evaluates requests to develop or maintain standards.
- Proposes, prepares and recommends, for consideration by the CSGA Board of Directors, the detailed technical requirements for the production of pedigreed seed crops, including the procedures that shall be followed and the standards that such material shall meet to be certified by CSGA.
- Reviews and recommends revisions to CSGA's standards and procedures for seed crop certification, and for the certification of Breeder seed and Select seed, that are consistent and practical for maintaining the high standards of Canadian certified seed.
- Ensures CSGA's Crop Specific Working Groups (CSWG) are populated with independent subject matter experts (including plant breeders, seed growers, processors, distributors, inspectors, analysts, and government representatives) that represent the value chain and not dominated by any particular stakeholder group.
- Reviews recommendations from CSGA's CSWG to advise the committee on specific technical aspects of certification standards and procedures for seed and seed crops.
- Determines whether CSWGs have considered both intended and unintended consequences, including costs, benefits and risks, involved in their recommendations for change.
- Forwards recommendations on which there is consensus for consideration by the CSGA Board of Directors.

- Returns recommendations, from CSWGs, for which there was not consensus at the RSC with a request to address those concerns which have been identified.
- Considers matters related to certification requirements that have been referred to the RSC by the CSGA Board of Directors, by a standing committee of the CSGA, by other CSGA committees or working groups as may be established from time to time, or by external parties (e.g., CFIA) involved in seed and seed crop certification.
- Advises and makes recommendations on those matters related to certification requirements that have been referred to it.
- Advises and makes recommendations to the Board of Directors on any other matter that it determines is relevant to seed varietal certification and pedigreed seed production.
- Provides an ongoing forum where issues related to seed varietal certification and CSGA's interests in such issues can be discussed and studied.
- Reviews the results of appeals and determine whether any changes to CSGA standards, policies or procedures should be recommended.
- Maintains the confidentiality of information it generates or receives on specific certifications.
- Members who miss three (3) consecutive meetings without informing the Chair shall be deemed to have resigned from the committee and will be notified of this in writing by the Chair or CSGA's Executive Director.
- CSGA will keep a summary of each meeting that contains a record of attendance, agenda items, conclusions reached, committee recommendations, and action items assigned.

**iii. *Crop Specific and ad hoc Working Groups***

- Raise issues related to seed crop certification as potential agenda items to be investigated by the CSWGs.
- As directed by the RSC, reviews proposals presented by the RSC and drafts standards, ensuring alignment with international standards, fit for purpose and best management practices.
- Present their independent technical recommendations based on their field of expertise, respective organizations, etc.
- In collaboration with the RSC, reviews feedback from stakeholder consultations and revises draft standards as necessary.
- Provides independent, crop-specific, expert advice on regulatory and technical aspects related to specific standards development and maintenance as set out in the board-approved Terms of Reference for the CSWG.
- Members who miss three (3) consecutive meetings without informing the Chair shall be deemed to have resigned from the committee and will be notified of this in writing by the RSC Chair or CSGA's Executive Director.
- CSGA will keep a summary of each meeting that contains a record of attendance, agenda items, conclusions reached, recommendations, and action items assigned.

**iv. *Plant Breeders Committee***

- Reviews and recommends revisions to CSGA's standards and procedures for seed crop certification, and for the certification of Breeder and Select seed, that are science-based, consistent and practical for maintaining the high standards of Canadian certified seed.

**v. *Observers***

- Any person who wishes to observe a Crop Specific Working Group meeting must send a request to the Regulatory Services Committee Chair at least 48 hours prior to that meeting.
- The Chair decides whether to approve or deny a request for observer status.
- Observers cannot participate in committee votes and do not count towards quorum of the RSC or CSWG.
- Observers may only participate in discussions if the Chair grants them prior approval or invites them to during the meeting.

**vi. *Executive Director***

- Ensures adequate resources are available to fulfil CSGA's mandate to establish varietal purity standards for seed crops.
- Implements changes approved by the Board in an efficient and effective manner.
- Informs stakeholders of changes to standards, the standards development process, and this Policy.

**Canadian Seed Growers' Association**  
**Association canadienne des producteurs de semences**

- Ensures that standards are developed in accordance with this Policy and any associated procedures and frameworks.
- Ensures that all staff, committee members, working group members and others involved in CSGA standards development act impartially throughout the process.
- If a risk to the impartiality of CSGA's standards development process is identified, takes immediate action to eliminate or minimize such risk.

**vii. Stakeholders Impacted by a Proposed Standard**

- Volunteer to participate in the CSGA's CSWGs
- Participate in public stakeholder consultations and provide feedback on draft certification standards.

**7. RELATED POLICY INSTRUMENTS**

1. CSGA Certification Administration and Oversight Policy, approved November 16, 2023

8. **LAST REVIEWED:** November 16, 2023

9. **NEXT REVIEW NO LATER THAN:** November 2025

## Appendix A: CSGA's Standard Development Process

