

Annual Report 2024



about **60**
countries worldwide in
which we are active

40
Subsidiaries and
partners company
in the network

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Management report of the managing directors 2024



Bernhard Schulz
Managing Director
CERES GmbH

Hans Matzenberger
Managing Director
CERES GmbH

Franziska Staubli
Managing Director
CERES-CERT AG

Dear customers and partners,
Valued employees,

We are publishing an annual report for the first time in 2024. The aim is to give our valued customers and employees an insight into the company's developments – in addition to all the information provided on the website.

When CERES GmbH was founded in 2004, few believed in the success of a new, additional inspection and certification body for organic products from third countries. However, the company has grown over the years and has built up a worldwide network. This was only possible with a great deal of commitment and motivation from the founders and a growing number of highly motivated employees and partners.

In 2019, the founders then transferred the ownership shares to EASY-CERT group AG (ECG) – ECG, which until then had mainly been active in the EU and Switzerland, thus ventured into the wider world. Then came corona and an economically difficult time for us as CERES GmbH, but also for our worldwide partner and subsidiary companies.

Together with ECG, we have gone through the valley of tears, repositioned ourselves as a company and partially reinvented ourselves without losing our roots. The digitalization of processes, the consistent integration of a central customer database and close communication with partners and label providers support us in our efforts to consistently implement the requirements of the standard setters without losing sight of the legitimate interests of our customers.

In 2022, ECG founded CERES-CERT AG in Switzerland, which works in tandem with CERES GmbH between Germany and Switzerland. Together with CERES-CERT AG, we serve the rapidly growing certification sector for sustainably produced textiles. We are meeting the constantly growing requirements of standard setters with internal IT developments. We expect major changes here, from which our customers will also benefit

from in the near future. Since 2023, CERES-CERT AG has established a new business area for the verification of climate-relevant services, such as the creation of carbon sinks through the production of biochar or tree planting.

In the area of certifying sustainability standards for the production of agricultural products (e.g. Rainforest Alliance or GLOBALGAP), we have more than tripled our sales and number of customers since 2021. As a result, we are also active in many countries outside the organic sector and are now the market leader in some regions.

In our core business – the certification of organic food – we are currently active in over 60 countries and are continuing to grow steadily. We were able to successfully and promptly implement the changeover to the new EU regulation and the new requirements in the USA in 2024. This was and is only possible thanks to the excellent cooperation with our more than 40 partners worldwide and the commitment of our motivated employees.

By taking on additional employees in Germany and abroad, we want to be equipped to deal with the high volume of inquiries in the area of import certificates and the seasonal bottlenecks for the evaluation of inspection reports in the future.

Finally, we would like to thank our customers, partners and employees for the trust they have placed in us, their often longstanding cooperation and their willingness to break new ground with us.

Best regards,
Bernhard Schulz , Hans Matzenberger and Franziska Staubli

Report Bio Division 2024



*Eva Maria Friedrich
Head of Department
Bio CERES GmbH*

Our organic certification body is a central partner for sustainable and trustworthy organic products. As a department within our company, we make a significant contribution to ensuring the quality and integrity of organic food and strengthening the trust of our customers.

Our work is essential to ensure compliance with legal requirements and industry-wide standards, which benefits both our customers and the environment.

News within the department

We currently serve around 2.350 customers who trust in our expertise and reliability. Our most important certification standards include the EU Organic Regulation, the USDA's National Organic Program, the Japanese Agricultural Standard as well as Naturland and Demeter, to name but a few.

We carry out an average of 3.500 inspections per year to ensure compliance with the standards and guarantee the quality of the products.

We are constantly expanding our team and strengthening it through targeted training and further education so that we are always to keep abreast of the latest developments. We have also introduced new certification processes that make procedures more efficient. Interfaces with the databases of standards owners enable us to exchange data efficiently and issue certificates easily via the standards owners' databases, as required by them.

The EU approval of the 'new' EU organic standard, which has been valid in all third countries from 1 January 2025, was a major success. We also successfully obtained approval for the Regenerative Organic Alliance's ROC standard.

Outlook and innovations

In the future, we plan to introduce new standards to make our certification processes even more comprehensive and sustainable. One important project is the digitisation of our processes, for example through an online portal that makes it easier for our customers to access reports and documents, through which our customers can submit applications quickly and easily, thus shortening processing times.

These innovations bring our customers benefits such as faster processing times, greater transparency and support in meeting new legal requirements. In this way, we help to ensure that our customers are always up to date and can successfully launch their products on the market.

Conclusion

To summarise, our department plays a central role in ensuring high-quality organic products. We are committed to the satisfaction of our customers and continuously invest in innovations to improve our processes. Our aim is to continue to a more reliable Partner for sustainable organic certifications and to achieve sustainable success together with our customers.

Expansion of our services Textile and Recycling Department 2024/2025



Angela Zinni
Head of Textile and
Recycling Department

With the introducing of GOTS 7.0 by Global Standard in March 2023 and the successful implementation at CERES since January 2024, we are sending a strong signal for more sustainability and transparency in the textile industry. We have informed our partners and customers about the key changes in an information newsletter.

Particularly noteworthy is the introduction of binding due diligence processes and seamless traceability along the entire supply chain – not just for GOTS-certified products, but company-wide.

Another milestone: since February 2025, our transaction certificates (TCs) have been provided with a QR code. This enables our customers to trace them even more easily and quickly – for maximum transparency at a glance.

We have also expanded our range of certifications: since April 2024, in addition to the existing standards, we now also offer certification in accordance with the following renowned Responsible Standards from Textile Exchange: Responsible Down Standard (RDS), Responsible Wool Standard (RWS), Responsible Alpaca Standard (RAS) and the Responsible Mohair Standard (RMS).

This opens up new opportunities for our customers to credibly document their commitment to animal welfare and sustainable materials.

Another powerful tool has been part of our portfolio since October 2024: the HIGG Index. This internationally recognised assessment basis makes it possible to record sustainability performance in an even more comprehensive, comparable and meaningful way.

In addition, since October 2024, we have been transmitting all data for scope certificates relevant data directly to the Global Traceability Base (GTB) from Global Standard. This not only

ensures more efficient processes, but also increases transparency and traceability throughout the entire certification process - for more trust at all levels.

Customer status

01.01.2025	773
Growth in %	137 %

Number of audits performed in 2024

In addition to new customers, there are also facilities and contract processors that are audited and certified by us. This makes a total of 1'022 audits carried out in 2024.

Number of transaction certificates created in in 2024

Total	15.683
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Outlook 2025

As already announced, the GOTS license fees were adjusted slightly at the beginning of the year. We have already informed you about this in our newsletter and would like to take this opportunity to remind you once again that an additional fee will be charged per GOTS transaction certificate (TC) issued from the second half of the year.

A real highlight also awaits you with the introduction of our new TC portal via the tried-and-tested cloud module: Customers can log in easily and securely, have access to their relevant data at all times and benefit from a system that automatically remembers newly entered information. The tool not only helps you to create your TC applications faster and more accurately, but also simplifies the entire processing considerably.

With these innovations, we want to make your work easier and at the same time ensure greater transparency and quality in processing.

Sustainability department Inspection and certification services – A look at our successes and our vision for the future



Marko Tarandek
Head of Sustainability
Department CERES-
GmbH

With over **1.000 customers** and more than **1.100 inspections in 2024**, our Inspection and Certification department continues to have a strong impact on global supply chains. We provide services that support key areas such as **social responsibility, workers' rights, environmental protection, prevention of deforestation, biodiversity conservation, climate-smart production and food safety.**

In 2024, we not only maintained market stability, but also reaffirmed our commitment to excellence by cementing our position as one of the largest global certification bodies for the Rainforest Alliance. This achievement underlines both our expertise and the trust that our partners place in us.

We currently offer services for seven internationally recognised standards:

- **Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture 2020 Standard**
- **GlobalG.A.P.**
- **C.A.F.E. Practices**
- **4C**
- **UEBT**
- **BirdFriendly**
- **SPP**

and all associated sub-standards. These frameworks enable us to meet a wide range of certification requirements in the agricultural and food industry. In addition to these standards, numerous customers have entrusted us with the auditing of their internal standards.

Our team reached important milestones in 2024:

- **Successful fulfilment of all compliance and audit requirements,**
- **Expansion of our Rainforest Alliance services to the Ivory Coast and Turkey,**
- Introduction of C.A.F.E. practices in India and
- Introduction of 4C certification in Brazil.

In addition, our GlobalG.A.P. department has successfully completed the accreditation process and received recognition for the IFA v6 SMART and GFS standards, enabling us to offer our customers a high level of guarantee food safety and sustainability.

Looking to the future, we are preparing for further growth and innovation. Our next priorities include:

- **Expansion of our services to North America and the Pacific region,**
- **Introduction of new certification standards** with a focus **on social and environmental issues and**
- **Implementation of the latest version 1.4 of the Rain Forest Alliance standard together with its new data platform.**

We remain firmly committed to listening to our customers and responding proactively to their changing needs. Our mission is to provide **faster, more reliable and high quality certification services** that enable producers and businesses to prosper sustainably in a changing world.

With commitment, innovation and a clear vision we are ready to move forward – for the people, for the planet and for a better future.



CERES-CERT AG Climate and Environment Department

Your validation and verification partner for high-quality climate services



*Alexandra Schleiner
Head of Climate and
Environment Department
CERES-CERT AG*

CERES-CERT AG can look back on a successful 2024. As an independent **verification and certification body** for the standards of **Carbon Standards International (CSI)**, we have expanded our **services** to include and supported numerous new

project partners in the submission and implementation of their projects with our **expertise**, thereby strengthening the **trust of customers**, project developers and partners in the long term.

Since taking over the **climate services** in 2023, CERES-CERT has established itself as the central point of contact for the **certification of industrial biochar production** and for the **validation and verification of international climate protection projects**.

In 2024, we carried out **196 audits** at a total of **137 customers** – based on the following international standards

- European Biochar Certificate (EBC)
- World Biochar Certificate (WBC)
- EBC C-Sink / Global Biochar C-Sink
- Global Artisan C-Sink
- Global Tree C-Sink

A significant milestone was **the expansion of our range of services** through the further development of our internal processes. As a result, we are now not only able to carry out product certifications, but also **validate** and

verify ambitious **climate protection projects in the voluntary carbon market** as a reliable partner.

We expect the **voluntary carbon removal market to remain stable** in the coming years – with continued high interest in the standards of Carbon Standards International and therefore in our services. We are seeing strong growth in our involvement in the **Global Artisan C-Sink** area in particular. In low-income countries, these projects make a **double contribution**: they create high-quality, permanently documented carbon sinks and open up new sources of income for small farmers through the production of biochar. At the same time, they promote **soil fertility** through the targeted use of biochar – a key lever for regional food security and **climate resilience**.

With a clear **focus on quality** and a growing global demand for **credible climate services**, CERES-CERT AG is **optimistic about the future**.

Imprint

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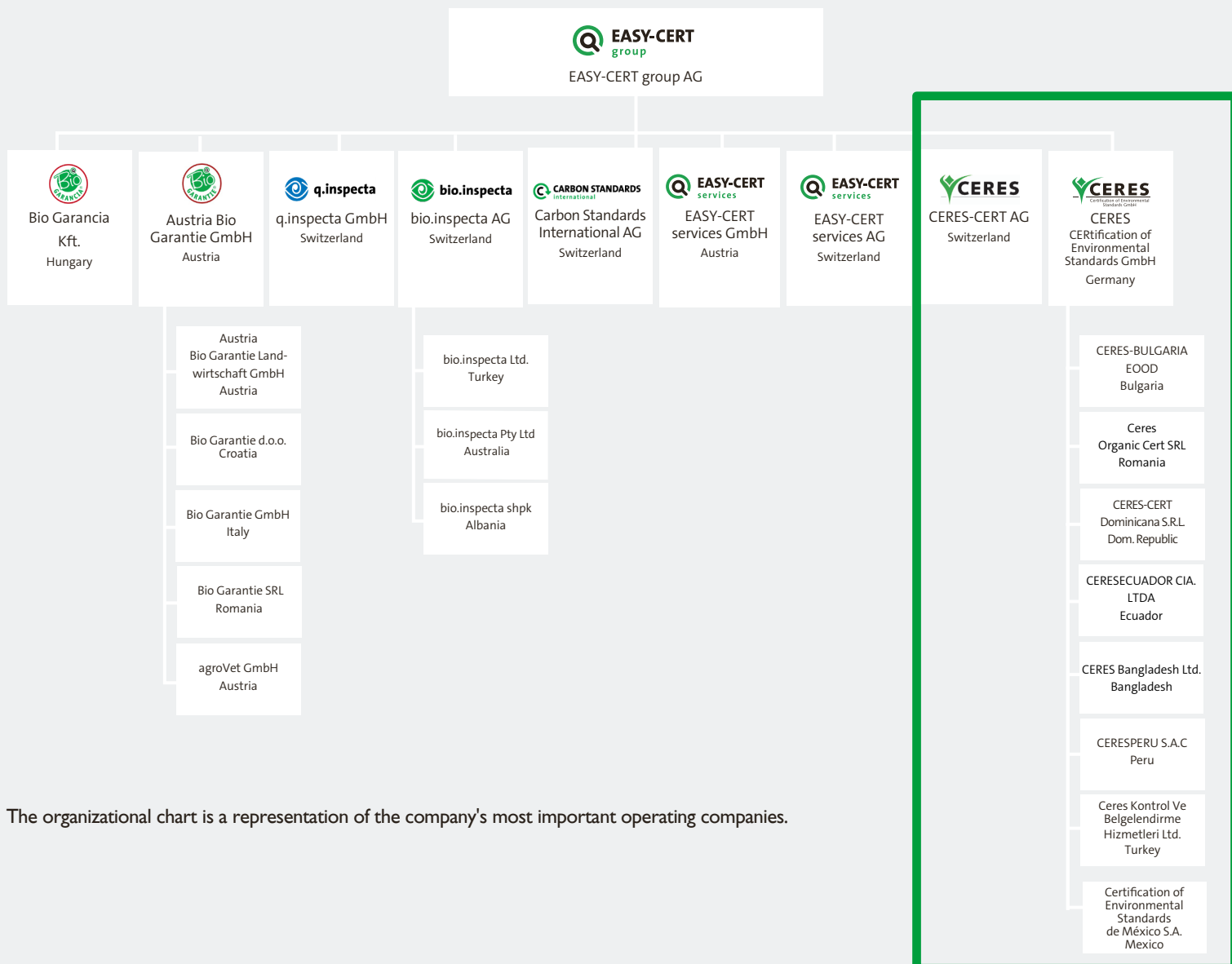
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CERES GmbH
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Corporate structure May 2025



The organizational chart is a representation of the company's most important operating companies.

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