

## Brief introduction: Steps to Validation and Verification for Global Biochar C-Sink Operators

	Procedure	Applicant or client	CERES
1	<b>Request</b>	Commonly, applicants present a first general request, asking about requirements, procedures, prices for certification	The applicant receives from CERES a first package of information, by e-mail, often combined with individual additional information by phone. This package is composed of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• this present document,</li> <li>• the current applicable standard of CSI</li> <li>• a link to the application form.</li> </ul>
2	<b>Formal application</b>	Client completes application form	CERES reviews application. If we can offer the requested service, the application is approved. CERES will request from CSI if the client has applied with CSI and all pre-conditions have been fulfilled (pre-audit, contract etc)
3	<b>Offer</b>	Offer preparation	Based on the current price list published on our website, as well as the number and size of operations to be verified, CERES calculates the applicable validation, inspection, and verification fees. A written offer is then submitted to the applicant. This offer is typically an estimate and does not include travel, accommodation, or other additional costs. The Inspection and Certification Contract 7-2-14 is submitted together with the offer.
4	<b>Contract</b>	Once the applicant and CERES have agreed on the offer, the applicant signs the contract. By doing so, he/she is committed to fulfil the applicable standards and agrees with CERES General Terms of Business	CERES sends a counter-signed copy of the contract and the invoice (pre-payment) to the client
5	<b>Pre-payment</b>	The client deposits the agreed advance payment.	CERES confirms the payment and assigns the relevant audit team to the operator for validation and verification/ inspection.
6	<b>Submission of PDD</b>	The client prepares the Project Design Document (PDD) and all relevant data that should be submitted as annex	CERES conducts PDD- validation and, where necessary, requests clarification or additional documentation from the client
7	<b>Corrective actions</b>	If non-conformities are identified during the validation of the PDD, they must be addressed and corrected prior to the first inspection. <i>Example: Improvement of the internal quality management system.</i>	CERES reviews the updated PDD submitted by the client, after which the document is forwarded to CSI for public consultation.
8	<b>Validation Documents</b>	The Client will receive all the relevant validation documents once all the non-conformities are closed. The client must	CERES will close all the findings after reviewing the corrective actions and will issue the Validation Report,

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	<b>Prepared and published</b>	review and verify all the information in these documents.	Validation Statement and Validation Finding Report. Once these documents have been reviewed by the client, CERES will submit them to CSI for publication in the ICROA Endorsed Registry ( <a href="#">Global C-Sink Registry</a> ). However, if any non-conformities remain unresolved, the validation process will not be concluded until those issues are addressed during an on-site inspection. In such cases, validation and verification will be conducted simultaneously.
9	<b>Resubmission of PDD</b>	PDD validation is valid for five years. If there are no significant changes to the project the validation period can be prolonged by CERES. However, if there are any changes to the client's process—such as a change in feedstock, a different production unit, or the addition of a new location with different conditions, a revised PDD must be submitted once these changes occur. In such cases, the client must inform CERES of the changes and provide an updated PDD for review and revalidation.	
10	<b>Registration of batches in the Biochar Tool</b>	The client registers on the <a href="#">Biochar Tool</a> . Once login credentials have been received, the client proceeds to register their first batches in the system. Please note that each batch must be registered individually in the Tool, and an analysis report must be uploaded for each one. Samples may only be taken by sample takers who have been officially endorsed by CSI.	
11	<b>Scheduling inspection</b>	Inspector and client schedule a date for the inspection within 21 days of registration. If the EBC and Global Biochar C-Sink audits are to be conducted jointly, the validation process must either be concluded beforehand or any outstanding non-conformities must be addressed and validated during the on-site inspection.	
12	<b>Inspection</b>	Responsible staff must be present, records must be prepared. Use preparation checklist ( <a href="#">EBC, WBC, GBCS Preparation Inspection</a> ) to prepare for the inspection. After inspection the inspection report is signed by the client or responsible person.	The CERES inspector evaluates various aspects of the pyrolysis process and record keeping. All production sites are visited. Open non-conformities identified during validation phase will also be reviewed during the inspection.
13	<b>Inspection report</b>	The client receives a copy of the non-conformities found during the inspection and countersigns. The client will submit corrective actions to <a href="mailto:climate@ceres-cert.de">climate@ceres-cert.de</a> within the deadline given by the inspector.	An "Inspection Finding Report" is generated summarizing all findings of all inspected sites. Immediately after the inspection, the inspector finishes his/her report and submits it to the CERES headquarter. (no later than 14 days)
14	<b>Evaluation</b>	The client receives a copy in case of additional non-conformities found during the evaluation and will have to submit corrective actions for those.	The report and corrective actions submitted are reviewed by the responsible evaluator. Additional questions must be clarified with the inspector. In case additional non-conformities are raised by the evaluator those are communicated to the client in the name of evaluation report. The evaluator will also check the data provided on the biochar tool.
15	<b>Review</b>	The Resolution of Non-Compliance, including non-conformities, as well as the draft Verification Report and Verification Statement, will be passed on to an independent reviewer. The reviewer will verify all documents in accordance with	

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		the six-eye principle. After completion of the review, the client will receive the final Resolution of Non-Compliance, including non-conformities and corrective actions, together with the Verification Report and Verification Statement.							
16	<b>C-Sink Potential and Final Validation</b>	<p>Any remaining open non-conformities from the validation will be closed, and the generated documents will be sent to both the client and CSI. Additionally, based on the evaluator's comments, the C-Sink Potential will be provided to the client by the reviewer. This marks the point at which the client can begin claiming their C-sinks.</p> <p>Please note that a precondition for publishing the C-Sink Potential attestation is that the batch must be EBC certified. The release of the C-Sink Potential is also subject to the certification decision by EBC. For more details on EBC certification, please see below.</p>							
17	<b>Final invoice</b>	Payment of the remaining fees according to offer, plus travel cost.	Issues the invoice						
18	<b>Precondition in the 1<sup>st</sup> year of recognition: EBC/WBC Certification decision</b>	To issue a C-Sink Potential attestation it is compulsory that the batch is registered in the Biochar Tool and an analysis report of an endorsed laboratory is available for EBC/WBC certification.	<p><b>CERES makes the Certification Decision (EBC), normally within 4 weeks after the inspection. There are basically three possibilities:</b></p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>a) Client complies with the standard</td> <td>Certificate for EBC/WBC is issued and sent to client together with a C-Sink Potential attestation along with Verification Statement and Verification Report</td> </tr> <tr> <td>b) Client has non-conformities, which need to be corrected. This may include missing documents, or more substantial things.</td> <td>CERES issues Resolution of Noncompliance for Global Biochar C-Sink and Certification Decision for EBC/WBC EBC/WBC Certificate and C-sink Potential attestation is issued once CERES has evidence of correction of non-conformities, along with Verification Statement and Verification Report (in some cases, this may involve an additional inspection).</td> </tr> <tr> <td>c) Client has major non-conformities which cannot be corrected in the short term</td> <td>CERES issues a Adverse Verification Statement</td> </tr> </table>	a) Client complies with the standard	Certificate for EBC/WBC is issued and sent to client together with a C-Sink Potential attestation along with Verification Statement and Verification Report	b) Client has non-conformities, which need to be corrected. This may include missing documents, or more substantial things.	CERES issues Resolution of Noncompliance for Global Biochar C-Sink and Certification Decision for EBC/WBC EBC/WBC Certificate and C-sink Potential attestation is issued once CERES has evidence of correction of non-conformities, along with Verification Statement and Verification Report (in some cases, this may involve an additional inspection).	c) Client has major non-conformities which cannot be corrected in the short term	CERES issues a Adverse Verification Statement
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c) Client has major non-conformities which cannot be corrected in the short term	CERES issues a Adverse Verification Statement								
Client corrects non-conformities and sends evidence to CERES									
19	<b>C-Sink Credits Verification and Approval</b>	All factory gate emissions are included in the C-Sink Potential attestation. However, any emissions occurring after the factory gate—such as those from transport or	<p>CERES will assess the plausibility of the data provided by the first C-Sink owner. Key aspects verified include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Production date or period</li> </ul>						

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		<p>further processing—must be reported using a CSI-endorsed dMRV provider. To receive C-Sink credits, the client must respond to all open questions and submit the documents requested by CERES.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantity of biochar</li> <li>• Gross amount of stored CO<sub>2</sub>e</li> <li>• Carbon content</li> <li>• H/Corg ratio</li> <li>• GHG emissions</li> <li>• C-Sink Potential Attestation</li> <li>• Sink matrix (must align with the Global Biochar C-Sink Matrix Positive List)</li> <li>• GPS location of the sink site</li> <li>• Application documentation</li> </ul> <p>If there are open questions or missing details, CERES will request clarification or additional information. Once all data have been verified and confirmed, CERES approves the C-Sink Unit, which triggers the official issuance process.</p>

**Please be aware that, in addition to this routine procedure, CERES may conduct unannounced inspections at any time. Clients for unannounced inspections may be selected risk based, or randomly. Since conducting such unannounced inspections is compulsory for CERES, the costs are charged to the client.**

This entire procedure may appear lengthy and complex. However, many of the steps presented here sequentially often take place in parallel. Clients can help accelerate the process by:

- paying on time
- immediately filling in and thoroughly the necessary forms, contracts etc.
- immediately implementing necessary corrective actions.
- Ensuring that samples are taken and sent to an endorsed laboratory before the inspection so that C-Sink Potential certificates can be issued together with the first EBC/WBC certification.

Please be aware that Biochar Producers who want to trade their C-Sink credits need to request a Global C-Sink Potential Attestation for each batch. This is issued by CERES

During the entire process -from application to validation, verification, certification and the annual renewal, the client has the right to file complaints or appeals to CERES. These will be handled in accordance with CERES internal procedures and the client will be informed of the outcome of the complaint or appeal assessment.