

5.0. Grower Group Responsibilities

Grower groups under the AJP standards have responsibilities to farmers (section 1.0), to buyers (section 2.0), to employees on member farms (section 3.0), and to the grower group administrative staff (section 4.0). In addition grower groups are required to meet the standards outlined below regarding the structure and organization of the grower group (section 5.0).

5.1. Grower Group Structure

5.1.1. Compliance

- a. Grower groups can apply as a group only if less than 15% of member farms in the entire group have hired workers and if the total number of employees in the entire group is less than 10 (even if all on 1 farm), not including co-op administrative staff.
- b. Grower groups must be compliant with all standards in sections 1.0, 2.0, 3.0 and 4.0 of these standards.
- c. Grower Groups must be certified by an AJP accredited certifier.

5.1.2. Democratic structure

- a. Grower groups must be owned by member farmers.
- b. Farmer cooperatives and grower groups will be democratic in organizational structure.

5.1.3. Record keeping

- a. Grower group will keep records on member growers that are accessible to growers and on their relationship with grower group management. These records will include:
 - i. Agreements for farm product
 - ii. A list of all member farms and basic characteristics (including name, identification number if relevant for tracking, dates of internal inspections, number of employees and interns, size of operation)
 - iii. Standardized format for gathering information regarding farm practices that are relevant to AJP certification and compliance.
 - iv. Sales, purchasing, and processing records,
 - v. Internal inspection reports
 - vi. Identified internal and external non-compliances and follow up actions
 - vii. Complaints and appeals and follow up.
 - viii. Internal Control System (ICS) trainings.

5.1.4. Notification of certifier

- a. Grower group will report annually to certifier any changes in structure, governance, and composition of group.
- b. Grower group will notify certifier of internally detected non-compliances and remedy annually.

5.1.5. Internal control system (ICS)

- a. The grower group will establish an internal control system that avoids conflict of interest regarding education and outreach, internal auditing decision making, and price negotiations and internal auditing.
- b. Grower group will evaluate effectiveness of ICS annually and make necessary improvements.
- c. Grower group members will commit to comply with AJP standards (in writing), to providing grower group with information about farm operation that is required for internal monitoring and certification, and to participate in the grower group internal audit (including allowing worker representatives to interview workers on farms) and external certification audit.
- d. Grower group ICS will include annual check in with all member farmers regarding compliance with AJP standards and regarding relationships with grower group representative negotiating on their behalf. This includes at a minimum:
 - i. Annual on-farm internal audit of all member farms with any labor (seasonal, year-round, part-time or full-time) with an AJP approved worker representative.
 - ii. On-farm internal audit of all member farms without labor every other year.
 - iii. A separate risk assessment mechanism designed to identify farms that have added labor and a mandatory on-farm, internal audit of these farms in the same year added labor is detected.
- e. Internal auditor must have training in AJP standards and audit protocol.
- f. Internal auditor will not provide assistance regarding compliance for the farms internally audited by that auditor.
- g. Internal non-compliances will be classified as major or minor based on AJP list of major and minor non-compliances.
- h. Grower group will outline in writing and distribute to member growers the sanctions of internally and externally detected non-compliances. This outline of sanctions must include timelines for action and responses and will include situations under which member product will be separated from group product and not sold as certified.
- i. Grower group ICS will have a relationship with an AJP approved worker representative who attends the internal audits (and is provided with the final internal review conclusions).
- j. New grower group members must be inspected internally before any product from their farm can be sold as AJP certified.
- k. The grower group is responsible for the integrity of the internal audit and that it meets all AJP requirements related to the standards and to the monitoring system (ICS).

5.2. Conflict Resolution Procedure

- a. The grower group ICS will outline and use a Conflict Resolution Procedure consistent with AJP standards, which will include a process through which growers can appeal internally detected non-compliances.

5.3. Member Growers' and Management Staff Responsibilities and Understanding

- a. Member growers are aware of their responsibility for ensuring that grower group personnel and leadership are upholding AJP standards related to farmer responsibilities to buyers when negotiating on their behalf.

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- b. Control and communication mechanisms exist and are used by member growers to ensure the group is complying with AJP standards regarding farmer responsibilities to buyers.
- c. Member growers are aware of their responsibility for ensuring that grower group personnel and leadership are upholding AJP standards related to fair negotiations and contracting with member farmers (section 1.0). Control and communication mechanisms exist and are used by member growers to ensure grower group is complying with AJP standards regarding buyer responsibilities to farmers.
- d. Grower Group will have written roles for members, personnel, and leadership that clearly outline responsibility regarding management of the group and compliance with AJP standards, including group organized trainings or educational materials to improve member growers' understanding of AJP responsibilities.

5.4. Separation of Farm Products

- a. Grower group must have a mechanism for ensuring separation of AJP products from non-certified products through a traceability system.
- b. This separation must be able to be implemented quickly in the event that a serious non-compliance is detected with a member grower that would require separation of the farm's product.

5.5. Integrity of Grower Group Products

- a. Grower group shall maintain a tracking system that ensures individual farm products can be identified, traced, and separated.
- b. Grower group must have a system in place to ensure that external products or ingredients are not introduced into group products at the individual farm level.
- c. Grower Group will only purchase a minimal percentage of ingredients from outside the member growers for use in processed grower group products.
- d. Grower group will not purchase products from outside the group that group members can and prefer to supply to the group unless:
 - i. There is a shortage of farm product for selling agreements that no member farm can fill and
 - ii. The group purchases from independently certified AJP farms or grower groups.
- e. Grower group members will not sell their farm products independently as certified products unless they have independent AJP certification.

5.6. Community Relations

- a. *AJP certified grower groups are encouraged to cooperate with neighbors and to invest in their community for more sustainable and just community relations. Suggestions include (but are not limited to):*
 - i. Developing a policy of hiring and training local people*
 - ii. Purchasing from local and regional suppliers of products and services*
 - iii. Providing resources to promote fair labor practices and living wages throughout the community.*
 - iv. Supporting local schools, health and social services, cultural events and language classes and translation services.*