



Regenerative
Organic
Certified™

Framework for Regenerative Organic Certified™

Includes guidelines for:

- **Soil Health and Land Management**
- **Animal Welfare**
- **Farmer and Worker Fairness**

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I. Introduction

As agricultural practices continue to evolve, it is imperative that approaches to land management and associated processes are focused on contributing to the health of ecosystems, including human communities. Regenerative Organic Certified™ (ROC™) builds upon and furthers the near 100-year legacy of organic movement visionaries like J. I. Rodale, Lady Eve Balfour, Dr. Rudolf Steiner, Sir Albert Howard, and the knowledge of generations of diverse, holistic producers—including native and Indigenous Peoples—that they channeled for inspiration and direction.

The goal of ROC is to promote holistic agriculture practices in an all-encompassing certification that:

- Increases soil organic matter over time and sequesters carbon below and above ground, which could be a tool to mitigate climate change;
- Improves animal welfare; and
- Provides economic stability and fairness for farmers, ranchers, and workers.

ROC consists of three pillars: Soil Health and Land Management, Animal Welfare, and Farmer & Worker Fairness. ROC has three levels: Bronze, Silver, and Gold. Each requires a different number and scope of regenerative organic practices used. See "[Scope & Structure](#)" for a full description.

Regenerative practices are described in each module & key terms are described in the [glossary](#). These include important practices and definitions that are referred to and built upon in the guidelines for each module. For chemical and transitional producers, familiarity with these practices and definitions can serve as the first step in incorporating regenerative practices into their operation prior to officially applying for ROC.

This document includes an overview of the Regenerative Organic Certified program and the formal criteria required to earn ROC. This document is applicable to farming and livestock operations, transportation, slaughter, and certain processing facilities that produce food, fiber and botanicals. All supporting documents can be found at RegenOrganic.org/Resources.

Program Management



ROC is overseen by the nonprofit Regenerative Organic Alliance (ROA). The ROA is a group of experts in farming, ranching, soil health, animal welfare, and farmer & worker fairness. The ROA has been established to continuously review and update the ROC guidelines.

Organizations and companies that are represented on the board of the Regenerative Organic Alliance include:

Compassion in World Farming	Dr. Bronner	Fair World Project
Lighthouse Farming Network	Patagonia	Rodale Institute (Chair)
Textile Exchange	White Oak Pastures	Dark Horse Vineyards

Review subcommittees for ROC are comprised of the following stakeholders:

- Farmers, ranchers, and farmworkers
- Auditors
- Social and animal welfare non-governmental organizations
- Veterinarians with farm-animal expertise
- Agricultural economists
- Environmental non-governmental organizations
- Certification and standard experts and qualified trade organizations
- Retailers, food companies, and brands that support regenerative practices

The ROA works in partnership with NSF International, scheme manager for ROC. See "Oversight & Scheme Management" for a full description.

II. Leveraging & Advancing Existing Standards

Baseline Requirement: USDA Organic or International Equivalent

To achieve Regenerative Organic Certified, an entity must first hold USDA organic certification or an international equivalent formally recognized by the National Organic Program (NOP).¹ ROC adds criteria and builds off the NOP and equivalent standards. Operations will not be eligible for ROC at any level until they achieve USDA Organic certification. Engagement in transitional programs is encouraged but not required for ROC.

To earn ROC, all requirements listed in this document must be met; and all products sold, labeled, or represented as regenerative organic must also comply with USDA organic regulations at 7 CFR Part 205, National Organic Program. International operators applying for ROC must be certified to an authorized international standard. See “Approved Baseline Certifications” at RegenOrganic.org/Resources for more information.

This framework is a living document and thus will be continuously reviewed and revised by a committee of experts as new best practices emerge. At the same time, ROC will always be tied, at a minimum, to all requirements, policies, interpretations and determinations of NOP and authorized third-party certifiers operating on NOP’s behalf. Any ambiguity or issue that arises as to application of the ROC program shall always be resolved in favor of consistency with NOP requirements when the issue falls within the purview of NOP.

Other Applicable Certifications

Regenerative Organic Certified was created to leverage and bring together existing high-bar certifications in order to avoid duplicative audits or burdensome paperwork. ROC recognizes the strong work already conducted by existing standard bodies.

Producers can demonstrate compliance with ROC criteria by leveraging certifications they’ve already earned, such as Animal Welfare Approved or Demeter Biodynamic, among others. A full list of ROC criteria met by existing certifications can be found in the “Equivalency Analysis” at RegenOrganic.org/Resources. Producers will need third-party verification of any required ROC standards not met by their existing certification.

¹ As formally determined by NOP pursuant to a trade arrangement entered into with NOP. Criteria for international equivalent includes only those with which the USDA currently has a trade agreement.

III. Scope & Structure

Scope

ROC covers requirements for farming and ranching operations, transportation, slaughter, and certain processing facilities. Operations may be of any size. ROC seeks to create change across a wide variety of farms & ranches in order to scale best practices to the widest audience possible.

Structure

ROC is built on three pillars: Soil Health & Land Management, Animal Welfare, and Social Fairness, with required criteria for each. There are three levels of ROC: Bronze, Silver, and Gold. Bronze represents the beginning level, and Gold represents the highest achievable level in regenerative organic production. This tiered approach enables producers to adjust and adapt their practices over time and allows for continuous improvement. Annual recertification audits are required at all levels.

Levels of ROC

- **Bronze:** To claim ROC at the Bronze level, at least 25% of fiber-or-food-producing land within an operation must be certified at initial certification and must reach at least 50% by year five. The certified portion must represent at least 25% of the operation's revenue derived from food or fiber production. Claims about organic and regenerative organic can only be made about products specifically grown on land that is already certified organic. Any organic and regenerative organic labeling must also abide by USDA organic labeling regulations.
- **Silver:** To claim ROC at the Silver level, at least 50% of fiber-or-food-producing land within an operation must be certified at initial certification and must reach at least 75% by year five. The certified portion must represent at least 50% of the operation's revenue derived from food or fiber production. Claims about organic and regenerative organic can only be made about products produced from land that is already certified organic. Any organic and regenerative organic labeling must also abide by USDA organic labeling regulations.
- **Gold:** To claim ROC at the Gold level, 100% of fiber-or-food-producing land of an operation must be certified, representing 100% of revenue derived from food or fiber production. Any organic and regenerative organic labeling must also abide by USDA organic labeling regulations. [Processor criteria](#) include specific sections from each pillar that must be verified by on site audit for any products carrying Gold ROC claims.

Labeling guidelines for manufacturing and final products are described in detail in the “ROC Labeling and Supply Chain Guidelines.”

The Soil Health & Land Management, Animal Welfare, and Farmer & Worker Fairness modules contain criteria for each level of certification, which provide guidance that operations should meet depending on the level of certification sought. Criteria include practices that are:

- **Required practices (R):** Practices that operations must meet for an operation to be eligible for ROC at the desired level. When a non-conformance for a Required practice is issued by the certifier, the operation has 90 days to resolve the non-conformance.
- **Optional practices (O):** Practices that are encouraged for all, but not required, at a particular level. Optional Practices (O) shift to Required Practices (R) as a producer advances from Bronze to Silver to Gold levels.
- **Critical tolerances (CT):** Practices that require action on the part of producers and must be reported immediately and remediated within 30 days. If the Critical Tolerance (CT) is not resolved within 30 days, a producer cannot claim ROC.

To achieve the desired level of ROC, an operation must meet 100% of the required practices for that level. Participation at any level of ROC requires that the entity is properly certified as organic by a NOP-accredited certifier and complies with all NOP requirements.

IV. Demonstration of Compliance

All levels of ROC require producers to be in compliance with local, provincial/state and national laws for animal welfare, labor rights, and land management. In addition, USDA organic requirements (or their international equivalents) are a baseline for ROC; therefore, producers must comply with all geographically-appropriate organic certification requirements. No provision of this Framework or any element of the ROC program shall be read or applied in a manner that is inconsistent with NOP requirements or policies. The highest requirement, whether local law or ROC, applies for each of the sections in the standard.

To demonstrate compliance, ROC operations must maintain a current Regenerative Organic System Plan. The template is available at RegenOrganic.org/Resources.

Compliance is further demonstrated by successfully receiving certification from existing standards listed in the Equivalency Analysis, as well as by undergoing third-party audits for additional criteria required under ROC. In order to avoid redundant work and to conduct efficient audits, third-party auditors will only audit for additional requirements not found in existing certifications.

Cost Structure

The ROA exists to promote regenerative organic certification as the highest standard for agriculture around the world. We aim to empower eaters and farmers to create a better world through regenerative organic farming. The ROA has established competitively priced program fees for the ROC program in a manner that is accessible to farms of all size and scope. The ROA values our global community of regenerative organic producers and aims to establish a financially accessible, transparent fee structure. The ROC “Cost & Fee Structure” document available at RegenOrganic.org/Resources outlines the estimated certification costs for farmers, supply chain actors/ brands and certification bodies.

While costs will vary depending on the size and scope of the operation, geographic location, projected production value and product claims, the value proposition of the ROC trademark is high. All available resources will be utilized to support farmers on the journey to regenerative organic.

V. Soil Health & Land Management

The Soil Health & Land Management module of ROC seeks to facilitate the adoption of agricultural practices that build, rather than degrade, soils by increasing soil organic matter, biodiversity, and fertility.

Standards for Soil Health & Land Management

1. Base Requirements	Practice Description	Bronze	Silver	Gold
1.1 Existing Certifications	Operation has proof of existing USDA Organic certification or recognized equivalent.	R	R	R
1.2 Regenerative Organic System Plan (ROSP)	<p>Operation has a documented Regenerative Organic System Plan (ROSP), which includes implementation and requirements related to all relevant pillars. Detailed requirements are outlined in the ROSP template provided at RegenOrganic.org/Resources. Required items include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Tillage action plan – Soil lab test results & in-field soil testing results – Record of native flora and fauna on farm – Key performance indicators as required per pillar 	R	R	R
1.3 Water	Operations conserve and restore natural bodies of water, wetland, riparian areas, and associated habitats. Irrigation rights are legal.	R	R	R

1.4 Deforestation	From January 1, 2015 onward, operations have not cleared primary, untouched forest or old-growth secondary forests nor converted wetlands, peatlands, or protected grasslands into agricultural production.	R	R	R
1.5 Extractive Practices	Fracking, mining, and other extractive practices including initial exploration shall not be conducted on land within the operation. Exceptions exist in instances where the land owner does not own the mineral rights and therefore has no legal basis to prohibit a mineral owner to extract on their property; however, land owner should not aid or get compensated for extraction of any kind taking place on the property. Land owners shall require mineral owners to minimize contamination of the extraction site and surrounding area and to leave the extraction site in a condition that following a 36-month transition period the land may be used again for crop production after the exploration or extraction site is abandoned.	R	R	R
2. Regenerative Practices	Practice Description	Bronze	Silver	Gold
2.1 Vegetative Cover	Operations shall aim to cover land with living vegetative cover year-round. Otherwise, maintenance of either dead/rolled/lightly incorporated crop residues or mulch is required when field preparation or planting is not underway. See requirements per level at right. For perennial systems, either native vegetation or seeded mixes are maintained as ground cover between perennials.	Maintains year-round vegetative cover on 25-50% of all cultivated land	Maintains year-round vegetative cover on 50-75% of all cultivated land	Maintains year-round vegetative cover on 75-100% of all cultivated land, and utilizes at least one nitrogen-fixing cover crop (i.e.

	<p>Exemptions may be granted when operations are unable to meet the above guidelines due to unforeseen factors, such as extreme weather. Documentation is required.</p> <p><i>CT: No vegetative cover maintained.</i></p>			legumes) in each full crop rotation of each arable field.
2.2 Crop Rotations	<p>Operations shall demonstrate use of crop rotations or perennial systems. Annual crop rotations should include a green manure. See requirements per level at right.</p>	Minimum of three crops rotated through the same area	Minimum of four crops rotated through the same area	Minimum of seven crops in each rotation, including at least one nitrogen-fixing cover crop
2.3 Minimal Soil Disturbance	<p>The goal of ROC is to reduce soil disturbance as much as possible. To achieve this goal, all tillage events shall be documented with an action plan to reduce intensity of tillage over time.</p> <p>Soil disturbance shall only occur when necessary to accomplish one or more of these objectives: incorporate crop residues and/or green manures into soil to feed soil micro-organisms; control weeds; prepare seed bed/planting; break up compacted soil; or develop drainage. Shallow cultivation tools must be used whenever possible.</p> <p><i>Where no-till operations are not possible due to specific climate, soil, or crop condition, an operation may apply for an exemption at Gold level provided they can fully justify any incident of tillage.</i></p>	R	R	Operation shall adopt a no-till system where soil disturbance only occurs at time of planting
2.4 Rotational Grazing	<p>For commercial livestock operations: Operations practice intensive grazing in which animals, excluding bison and pigs, are used in high concentrations for brief periods of time. Pastures divided into paddocks, with animals</p>	R	R	R

	<p>moved regularly.</p> <p>Sensitive areas (e.g. habitat for declining & rare species, rare ecosystems, and natural wetlands & riparian areas) are not grazed in times of the year when it could have a negative impact on the ecosystem or on local wildlife.</p>			
2.5 Soiless Practices	<p>Aquaponics, hydroponics, and other soiless practices are not eligible for ROC. Exceptions are made for plants intended to be grown in water, such as water cress and certain ornamentals. Container growing where crops are never integrated into a field for the majority of a crop's life is not eligible for Regenerative Organic Certified.</p>	R	R	R
2.6 Control of Invasive Species	<p>Farmers identify, monitor, and manage the infestation of unwanted exotic or invasive plants and animals, including insects, that may spread to natural areas on and off the farm.</p>	R	R	R
2.7 Protection for Endangered Plants and Animals	<p>If not already prohibited by local or national laws, operation does not allow hunting, fishing, or gathering of rare or endangered animal species on the property, nor do they cause harm to the species' habitat.</p>	R	R	R
2.8 Regenerative Practices	<p>Operations engage in additional regenerative practices, beyond those required in USDA NOP, to improve overall ecosystem health and productivity of operations. See requirements per level at right.</p> <p>These practices are documented with photos with timestamp, preferably linked to GPS coordinates.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agroforestry - Anaerobic Digester - Forage & Biomass Planting 	Three of the practices listed are used in operation	Four of the practices listed are used in operation	Five or more of the practices listed are used in operation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Forest Stand Improvement and Forest Slash Treatment – Grassed Waterways – Herbaceous Wind Barriers & Field Borders – Integrated Crops & Animals – Moisture-Sensing Technologies for Irrigation – Mulching – Perennial Planting – Pollinator Habitats, Insectary Strips, or Wildlife Habitat – Reclamation of Mined Land or Landslide Treatment – Reduction of Off-Farm Inputs & Recycling of On-Farm Biomass – Riparian Restoration – Silvopasture Establishment – Tree / Shrub Establishment – Vegetative Barriers – Water Conservation and/or Wetland Restoration – Windbreak & Shelter Belt Establishment <p>Producers may use the ROSP to propose site-specific regenerative practices successfully implemented in their unique location and will be approved on a case by case basis.</p>			
3. Compost, Manure, and Fertilizers	Practice Description	Bronze	Silver	Gold
3.1 General	When used, the operation aims for self-sufficiency in compost and manures. If importing soil amendments to replace nutrients exported off-farm, they shall be from regionally available wastes and by-products. Effort must be made to ensure contaminants are not introduced on	R	R	R

	the farm through such recycled sources. The use of anaerobic liquid manure from CAFOs is not permitted.			
3.2 Crop Nutrient Demand	Imported fertilizers are discouraged unless crop nutrient demand dictates. A comprehensive nutrient management plan or equivalent must be provided when nutrient use exceeds recommended rate. In dryland areas during seasons with low rainfall, additional imported N & P are allowed, but must be documented.	R	R	R
4. Facilities	Practice Description	Bronze	Silver	Gold
4.1 Wastewater	Operation does not directly discharge untreated wastewater generated on farm into natural waterways or soil. Operation does not divert wastewater to bypass treatment. Industrial wastewater goes through primary and secondary treatment (onsite or offsite). Facilities producing more than 50 cubic meters of wastewater per day shall have evidence of compliance to the prevailing authority. <i>CT: Leaking wastewater pipes; wastewater is not prevented from overflowing outside the proper effluent streams in the case of rain.</i> <i>CT: Lack of description and schematic diagram of onsite wastewater treatment system.</i>	R	R	R
4.2 Waste	The goal of ROC is to minimize waste whenever possible. Operation does not illegally dump, bury, or burn waste. Operation documents that any hazardous waste is	R	R	R

	<p>identified, isolated, and properly disposed.</p> <p><i>CT: Non-disclosure of any and all onsite sources of air emissions.</i></p> <p><i>CT: No Restricted Substances List and/or lack of a program to ensure compliance with it.</i></p>			
5. Use of Prohibited Substances	Practice Description	Bronze	Silver	Gold
5.1 Synthetic Chemicals	If used, organically approved pesticides that are highly toxic to pollinators, as defined by Xerces Society's "Toxicity of Common Organic-Approved Pesticides to Bees" shall not be applied within 50-100 feet of a waterbody or applied when pollinators are in flight. They shall be applied at the lowest efficacious rate and all effort shall be taken to find alternative controls.	R	R	R
5.2 Quick-acting Fertilizer	Operation does not use quick-acting soluble fertilizers such as Chilean Nitrate.	R	R	R
5.3 Genetically Modified Inputs & Cloning	Operation does not use any genetically modified additives or processing aids such as fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, seeds, or crops derived from genetically modified sources, including emerging technologies that edit or regulate genes such as RNAi, CRISPR, and TALEN. Cloned animals are not eligible for ROC.	R	R	R
6. Measurement	Practice Description	Bronze	Silver	Gold
6.1 Soil Health	Producers conduct ROC Soil Health Lab Test in	R	R	R

<p>Lab Test</p> <p><i>See Soil Sampling Guidelines for detailed instructions</i></p>	<p>accordance with procedures laid out by an accredited organization, such as a university, lab, or private organization with an expertise in analyzing soil health. Refer to the ROC Soil Sampling Guidelines and appendices for specific guidance. Tests are to be conducted at initial certification application, and then every three years thereafter.</p> <p>The same lab should be used for all testing to ensure consistency.</p>			
<p>6.2 Soil Health In- Field Test</p> <p><i>See Soil Sampling Guidelines for detailed instructions</i></p>	<p>Producers conduct soil health in-field tests and follow ROC Soil Health In-Field Test instructions in the Soil Sampling Guidelines. Results will be collected by ROA at initial certification audit, and then every audit thereafter.</p>	R	R	R
<p>6.3 Computer Models</p>	<p>Operators utilize computer-based modeling tools (e.g. COMET- Farm Voluntary Carbon Reporting Tool, Cool Farm Tool, etc.) to determine annual GHG emissions and sequestrations. Operators document practices in the computer-based models, review annually with auditor, and submit documentation to certifying body.</p>	O	O	R

VI. Animal Welfare

The Animal Welfare module within ROC seeks to ensure humane practices in the raising and/or handling of animals that intend to be sold or marketed using ROC claims. **Dairy operations should refer to the [dairy-specific animal welfare criteria](#)**, which is also available at RegenOrganic.org/Resources. For operations that do not involve any commercial animals, this section is not applicable and will be considered met for the purposes of achieving ROC.

The below standards are intended to incorporate the [five freedoms](#) of animal welfare, along with any additional species-specific requirements. As stated in Section II, to receive ROC, all requirements listed in this section must be met, and all products sold, labeled, or represented as regenerative organic must also comply with USDA organic regulations at 7 CFR Part 205, National Organic Program. Additionally, any livestock or livestock products with organic and regenerative organic claims must comply with the USDA organic regulations, and operations must comply with all federal humane handling, transportation, and slaughter requirements, as outlined by the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service and the Humane Methods of Livestock Slaughter Act of 1978.

Standards for Animal Welfare

1. Base Requirements	Practice Description	Bronze	Silver	Gold
1.1 Existing Certifications	<p>All livestock products intended to be sold with a ROC claim must have proof of existing USDA Organic certification or recognized equivalent for livestock.</p> <p>Operation has proof of existing animal welfare certification recognized under the ROC, as applicable to the operation being certified.</p> <p>*Dairies are exempt from holding an existing animal welfare certification provided all applicable criteria within the dairy specific module are met and verified at ROC audit.</p>	R*	R	R
1.2 General	Operations have researched all applicable laws regarding animal welfare (general and species specific) and are in compliance with all local, provincial/state, and national laws.	R	R	R
1.3 Applicability	Animal welfare requirements apply to commercial livestock operations. See specific requirements per	Applicable to animals used for	Applicable to animals used	Applicable to all animals on an

	<p>level at right.</p> <p><i>CT: Egregious violations of the five freedoms of animal welfare and/or any abusive treatment of any animals onsite, commercial or non-commercial.</i></p>	dairy, meat, or fiber production	for dairy, meat, or fiber production	operation, including those used for dairy, meat, or fiber production and farm operations (e.g. dogs used to control predators, horses used for herding, etc.)
1.4 Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation	<p>Operation does not feed animals in a manner that meets the EPA's definition of a CAFO: "A lot or facility (other than an aquatic animal production facility) where animals have been, are, or will be stabled or confined and fed or maintained for a total of 45 days or more in any 12-month period, and crops, vegetation, forage growth, or post-harvest residues are not sustained in the normal growing season over any portion of the lot or facility. The EPA provides specific thresholds by animal sector for small, medium, and large CAFOs. For example, a large CAFO for beef cattle is defined as 1,000 or more "animal units" confined for over 45 days a year."</p> <p>Exemptions may be granted to operations with more than 1,000 animal units that demonstrate ample pasture access and utilization. Such cases will be evaluated on an individual basis.</p>	R	R	R
2. Nutrition and Water	Practice Description	Bronze	Silver	Gold
2.1 General	Feed and water must be distributed in such a way	R	R	R

	that livestock can eat and drink without undue competition. Animals have access to sufficient feed quantity to satisfy hunger & promote satiety. If applicable, feed is stored to maintain freshness and hygiene, avoiding mildew, mold, or contamination.			
2.2 Water	Animals have access to fresh and clean water for drinking. Water fowl should also have access to fresh or clean water for bathing. <i>CT: Limited fresh water access.</i>	R	R	R
2.3 Feed for Monogastrics	Monogastric feed comes from regenerative organic or certified organic sources. See requirements per level at right.	100% organic sources	>50% from regenerative organic sources; remainder organic	100% from regenerative organic sources
2.4 Feed for Ruminants	Ruminant feed comes from regenerative organic or certified organic grass/forage/baleage/hay. See requirements per level at right. Supplementation for nutritional purposes using organically approved minerals, vitamins, and/or molasses is allowed.	>50% grass-fed; remainder from organic sources	>75% grass-fed; remainder from organic sources	100% grass-fed (including finishing)
2.5 Forced Feeding	Operations do not force feed animals, unless it is for life-saving purposes.	R	R	R
2.6 Malnutrition	Farming practices promote proper nutrition, avoiding malnutrition.	R	R	R
3. Environment and Shelter	Practice Description	Bronze	Silver	Gold
3.1 General	Environment considers an animal's welfare needs. Environment is designed to protect animals from physical and thermal discomfort, fear, distress, and allows them to perform natural behaviors	R	R	R

	<p>conducive to good animal welfare.</p> <p>Selection of species and types of livestock are made with regard to suitability for site-specific conditions and resistance to prevalent diseases and pests. For meat chickens, breeds must be selected that demonstrate higher welfare outcomes and have the genetic growth potential of no more than .12 lbs (55g) per day.</p>			
3.2 Indoor Shelter	<p>Animals are provided with shelter adequate for their physical and behavioral needs. Shelter for animals and birds may be provided by natural features such as shade, trees, or by buildings. Housing may also be used as shelter. In extreme weather there must be a means to feed and water animals in a sheltered environment.</p>	R	R	R
3.3 Confinement	<p>Operations do not use any type of permanent confinement that restricts mobility, and livestock live, eat, and sleep outdoors the majority of the time in alignment with the principles of the Five Freedoms.</p> <p>There shall be continuous and open access to pasture.</p> <p>Temporary confinement may be used only when necessary and must be in alignment with the ROC-approved baseline Animal Welfare standards.</p>	R	R	R
3.4 Light	<p>Animals have exposure to natural light and are not exposed to artificial light for more than 16 hours per day. A minimum period of 8 hours of continuous darkness must be provided, unless located in geographies where there is less than 8 hours of darkness at night. Natural light must be sufficient indoors on sunny days, such that an</p>	R	R	R

	inspector can read and write when all lights are turned off. In the case of hens, artificial light intensity is lowered gradually to encourage hens to move to perches or settle for the night.			
4. Handling & Management	Practice Description	Bronze	Silver	Gold
4.1 General	Producers promote compassionate care and handling of animals. Daily inspections of animals occur.	R	R	R
4.2 Physical Modifications	<p>Operations do not abuse animals or treat animals with cruelty and do not use the practices listed below. Exceptions to these prohibited practices must be in alignment with the ROC-approved baseline Animal Welfare standards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beak Trimming / De-Beaking • Caponization • Cattle Wattling • Clipping, Grinding, or Filing of Teeth • Declawing/ Toe Clipping • Dehorning^ • Desnooding • Despurring • Disbudding^ • Dubbing • Ear Notching* • Forced Molting • Hot / Cold Branding • Mulesing • Pinioning • Prodding • Tail Docking of Cattle • Tail Docking of Sheep shorter than Distal End 	R	R	R

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> of Caudal Fold • Tusk Removal <p>^Must meet specific requirements detailed in Glossary of Key Terms, Appendix 1-A.</p> <p>*Permitted for hog operations</p>			
5. Health	Practice Description	Bronze	Silver	Gold
5.1 General	<p>Treatment for sick, injured, or diseased animals is undertaken at the first reasonable opportunity to alleviate any unnecessary pain or distress. Operation does not withhold medical treatment from a sick animal in order to preserve certification status.</p> <p>Treatment is also undertaken for non-ambulatory livestock, even if the treatment causes the livestock to lose its certified status or to be humanely euthanized.</p> <p><i>CT: Animals are not treated effectively or promptly for injuries or sickness, or euthanized if necessary, using humane euthanasia methods as described in Euthanasia Section.</i></p>	R	R	R
5.2 Vaccines, Antibiotics & Growth Hormones	<p>When recommended by a veterinarian or if homeopathic, herbal, and other non-antibiotic treatments are not available, antibiotics are used to treat sick or injured animals.</p> <p>Offspring cannot nurse on an animal that has been treated with antibiotics.</p> <p>Vaccines appropriate for the species and region are optimized for prevention of disease.</p>	R	R	R

	Growth hormones or non-therapeutic use of substances to induce heat are prohibited.			
6. Slaughter/ Killing	Practice Description	Bronze	Silver	Gold
6.1 General	All slaughter/killing systems need to be designed and managed to ensure animals are not caused unnecessary or intentional distress or discomfort before slaughter. If slaughter does not occur on farm, approved ROC third-party animal welfare audit records of the slaughter facility must be provided.	R	R	R
6.2 Pre-slaughter	Operations work to minimize the pre-slaughter handling of animals. This includes but is not limited to handling animals without abuse, ensuring animals have good traction on flooring and do not slip or fall during unloading and movement around the farm or plant, and have their view of the slaughter floor obscured as to avoid any unnecessary stress or discomfort. If slaughter does not occur on farm, approved ROC third-party animal welfare audit records of the slaughter facility must be provided.	R	R	R
6.3 Slaughter Methods	Slaughter is performed using stunning methods that result in immediate insensitivity, such as a shot to brain or penetrative bolt stunning followed by bleeding. Pre-shackle, multi-step controlled-atmosphere stunning may be used in poultry. If slaughter does not occur on farm, approved ROC third-party animal welfare audit records of the slaughter facility must be provided.	R	R	R
6.4 Euthanasia	Animals experiencing pain or suffering from which they are unlikely to recover must be promptly	R	R	R

	<p>euthanized on the farm in a manner that renders the animal immediately insensible to pain. Prohibited euthanasia practices include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Suffocation – Manual blow to head by blunt instrument or any manual blunt force trauma – Use of equipment that crushes the neck (incl. killing pliers or Burdizzo clamps) <p><i>CT: Euthanizing in a way that causes unnecessary pain or suffering.</i></p>			
7. Transportation	Practice Description	Bronze	Silver	Gold
7.1 General	<p>Animal transport systems are designed and managed to ensure animals are not subjected to unnecessary distress or discomfort. Operations and handlers have emergency plans in place that address possible animal welfare problems that may arise during transport. If the producer does not control the transportation of animals off-farm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved ROC third-party animal welfare audit records must be provided for the transport operator <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The producer must keep records of all off-farm transportation, including date of transport, number of animals transported and destination, type of vehicle and company used, and transport time. 	R	R	R
7.2 Transport Time	<p>Food and water are not withdrawn for more than 12 hours prior to slaughter.</p> <p>Transportation time from loading of first animal to</p>	R*	R	R

	<p>last animal unloading is less than 13 hours.* Exceptions apply for transportation of breeding stock when such livestock with desired genetics are not located within maximum transport time allowance.</p> <p>If the producer does not control the transportation of animals off-farm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved ROC third-party animal welfare audit records must be provided for the transport operator <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The producer must keep records of all off-farm transportation, including date of transport, number of animals transported and destination, type of vehicle and company used, and transport time. <p>*For Bronze operations, transportation times greater than 13 hours are permitted.</p>			
8. Training & Personnel	Practice Description	Bronze	Silver	Gold
8.1 Personnel	<p>Operations ensure that all employees working with animals are trained on basic measures of animal welfare and have the relevant and necessary skills to perform their duties. Producers are thoroughly trained, skilled, and competent in animal husbandry, animal transport, slaughter, and have a good working knowledge of their system and animals under their care.</p>	R	R	R

VII. Farmer & Worker Fairness

The scope of the Farmer & Worker Fairness module within ROC includes guidelines for farmers and workers at the farm level. These requirements apply to all workers on a ROC farm operation, regardless if only a portion of the operation is in scope for the Soil Health and Animal Welfare pillars. Supply Chain Actors and Processors exempt from certification, as outlined in the ROC Supply Chain Guidelines, must submit the ROC Social Fairness Affidavit to ROA with application for registration.

Monitoring and enforcement should benefit and prioritize workers. Violations should not be ongoing indefinitely, and progress and plans must be documented. Emphasis should be on capacity building and continuous improvement to better the social and economic position of farmers and workers.

Standards for Farmer and Worker Fairness

1. Law and Code Compliance	Practice Description	Bronze	Silver	Gold
1.1 Existing Certifications	Operation has proof of existing social fairness certification recognized under ROC, as applicable to the operation being certified. *For Bronze and Silver operations in the Global North, requirement for proof of existing certification is waived. All criteria within the ROC social pillar must be met by undergoing a complete social audit with an approved ROC certifier.	R*	R*	R
1.2 Business License	Operations have a valid business license and/or building permit where required by law to operate.	R	R	R
1.3 Labor Laws, Legal	Operations have researched all applicable laws related to labor conditions, working conditions, health and safety, and terms of employee and are in compliance with all local,	R	R	R

<p>and International Conventions Compliance</p>	<p>provincial/state and national laws. Operation is in compliance with all Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining laws, as outlined by the International Labor Organization.</p> <p>Workers understand and are trained on their rights. Employment contracts are negotiated and executed in good faith and the operator honors any commitments made in a contract.</p> <p>The operator recognizes the right of all employees to negotiate their terms of employment, whether individually, as a group or through democratically appointed representatives.</p> <p>Auditors are granted access to the entirety of requested audits. Operation shall not offer bribes to auditors.</p> <p><i>CT: Lack of proper, valid, up-to-date licenses and/or permits as required by law</i></p>			
<p>1.4 Supply Chain Requirements</p>	<p>A ROC-approved social certification must be attained at one or more major stages of manufacturing and processing. See supplemental processor criteria.</p>	<p>O</p>	<p>O</p>	<p>R</p>
<p>2. Child Labor</p>	<p>Practice Description</p>	<p>Bronze</p>	<p>Silver</p>	<p>Gold</p>
<p>2.1 Child Labor</p>	<p>With the exception of the operator's family members, no children below the lowest of 15, legal age, or age of compulsory schooling are employed. Children under 18 do not perform work that jeopardizes health, safety, education, and emotional or physical development.</p>	<p>R</p>	<p>R</p>	<p>R</p>
<p>2.2 Family Members</p>	<p>If an operator's children or children of any employee, farmer, or worker work onsite, the operator must ensure that a child's employment does not interfere with his or her schooling, safety or physical development. Work performed should be light work, under the supervision of a parent, and</p>	<p>R</p>	<p>R</p>	<p>R</p>

	never at night.			
2.3 Work Restrictions for Children and Young Workers	Children (including those residing on the farm and those of migrant workers) should not engage in hazardous work, such as heavy lifting, exposure to dangerous agriculture production activities, including exposure to chemicals/pesticides.	R	R	R
3. Forced Labor & Hiring	Practice Description	Bronze	Silver	Gold
3.1 Human Trafficking and Forced Labor	People are not forced to work or remain on premises against their will.	R	R	R
3.2 Hiring Practices	Hiring practices are not deceptive and do not result in forced labor. Operator must not facilitate human trafficking.	R	R	R
3.3 Contractors <i>This criteria not applicable to smallholders</i>	If recruited or contracted labor is used, the employer must pay any fees associated with recruitment and employees must have same rights and benefits as direct employees. The Operator must formally recognize the "Employer Pays" principle. All standards apply to all employees whether hired directly or through a contractor, including access to a grievance process for any complaints, the right to be free of forced labor, and no unfair deductions from paycheck. The use of recruiters and subcontractors is allowed only when employer can document need. See Guidance document for more details regarding use of labor contractors.	R	R	R
4. Harassment, Abuse, &	Practice Description	Bronze	Silver	Gold

Disciplinary Practices				
4.1 No Harassment or Abuse	No harassment or abuse including, but not limited to: physical, verbal or psychological abuse such as threats, foul language towards workers, or intimidation; demoralizing or overly harsh treatment or disciplinary action; monetary fines; or opposite sex pat-down. No cases of sexual harassment experienced before, during, or after end of employment relationship. Management must take action to discipline personnel who engage in any such instances of harassment or abuse.	R	R	R
4.2 Disciplinary Procedure	All operators must have a documented disciplinary procedure, with an escalation process before dismissal is considered. No worker should be subject to the procedure without due cause. Where contextually appropriate, workers are allowed to have a representative with them at disciplinary meetings.	R	R	R
5. Discrimination	Practice Description	Bronze	Silver	Gold
5.1 Discrimination	Operations do not discriminate in any aspect of the employment relationship. This can include but is not limited to recruitment, hiring, compensation, benefits, work assignments, access to training, advancement, discipline, termination, or retirement.	R	R	R
5.2 Equal Pay	Operators must have a documented commitment to the principle of equal pay for equal work for all workers. Section 5.2 criteria may or may not apply to immediate family members as defined in Key Terms, depending on local legislation.	R	R	R
6. Freedom of Association &	Practice Description	Bronze	Silver	Gold

Collective Bargaining				
<p>6.1 Protection Against Retaliation</p> <p><i>This criteria not applicable to smallholders</i></p>	<p>Operation does not interfere with and is seen to welcome free association and collective bargaining. Operators do not interfere with worker efforts to assemble, strike, or hold elections in an independent manner. This includes interference or prevention of strikes; employer proposed or initiated worker elections; worker elections conducted or facilitated by management; mandatory worker participation in elections; prevention of worker organizations from presenting to workers; prevention of trade union representatives from regular and reasonably free access to workers during workers' free time.</p> <p>Operation does not threaten or intimidate workers directly or indirectly with termination, pay cuts, loss of benefits, or plant closure, and does not coerce workers with promises to keep them from freely participating in union or other activities.</p>	R	R	R
<p>6.2 Employer Instituted Unions</p> <p><i>This criteria not applicable to smallholders</i></p>	<p>Employers do not institute unions or alternative associations used by employers to hinder union organization.</p> <p>Employers do not utilize protection contracts.</p>	R	R	R
<p>6.3 Precarious Employment</p> <p><i>This criteria not applicable to smallholders</i></p>	<p>Operation does not utilize atypical employment contracts in order to avoid workers' full or partial enjoyment of social benefits and statutory entitlements, or as a way of limiting workers' ability to freely associate and collectively bargain. Section 6.3 criteria may or may not apply to immediate family members as defined in Key Terms, depending on local legislation.</p>	R	R	R

7. Employment Relationship	Practice Description	Bronze	Silver	Gold
7.1 Worker Voice	All operations have processes to listen and address worker complaints in a transparent way. In large operations workers are trained in worker rights and a grievance procedure is provided in a culturally appropriate way (i.e. language-accessible as well as using interactive materials and not only posted). An external workers' association or workers' right group and/or an internal independently- elected workers committee is present for and is involved in all or part the training. An independently-elected workers committee must also be involved in grievance investigation and resolution.	R	R	R
7.2 Worker Independence & Empowerment <i>This criteria not applicable to smallholders</i>	If workers would like to form an association, they are free to do so. If desired, workers hold independent, democratic elections to form worker associations for contract negotiations involving pay and conditions on farm/ranch and to create committees to address relevant ongoing challenges and opportunities, for example premium fund administration and health & safety.	R	R	R
7.3 Employment Contracts & Terms <i>This criteria not applicable to</i>	Employment contracts are negotiated and executed in good faith and the operator honors any commitments made in a contract. The operator recognizes the right of all employees to negotiate their terms of employment, whether individually, as a group or through democratically appointed representatives. The operator takes sole responsibility for fees associated with employment of	R	R	R

<i>smallholders</i>	workers. The use of agency supplied labor is permitted but the increased risks around this must be recognized by the operator and reasonable steps must be taken to seek assurance, including collaboration within the area/sector.			
7.4 Interns and Apprentices <i>This criteria not applicable to smallholders</i>	Operators may use internships and apprenticeships in the spirit in which these have been established i.e. to educate, to develop and to create opportunity but avoiding any possibility of the arrangement being exploitative. All interns and apprentices must have clear and comprehensive contracts agreement, their rights explained to them clearly in writing and a fair stipend paid to cover living expenses.	R	R	R
8. Wages & Benefits	Practice Description	Bronze	Silver	Gold
8.1 Wages	Operations pay wages and benefits in accordance with the law with any deductions also being in accordance with the law and formally agreed in advance with the worker concerned. Operators must not pay wages to anyone other than the employed individual. <i>CT: Illegal or excessive legal deductions (including charges/deposits for tools, equipment, uniforms, etc.).</i> <i>CT: Pay below minimum wage.</i>	R	R	R

<p>8.2 Commitment to a Living Wage</p>	<p>All operations must demonstrate a commitment to pay a living wage and an intent to progress towards paying a living wage as defined in the Appendix*.</p> <p>If an operator cannot pay a living wage, the operation must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Assess wage gaps against the target living wage estimate; and 2) Communicate transparently with workers about why a living wage cannot be paid. <p>If piecework is paid, the combination of worker’s wages and benefits shall not be below a living wage unless the other elements of this standard are met. Salaries and benefits for workers are set according to relevant national laws, or at regional average wages, or at official minimum wages for similar occupations whichever is the highest. Wages are specified for all employee functions and employment terms, such as piecework.</p> <p><i>Medium and large-scale operations only:</i></p> <p>If present, operations pay wages according to a negotiated collective bargaining agreement (CBA), whichever is higher. If higher than the regional average or national minimum wage. By year three of certification, operations must demonstrate that wages paid to all workers are equal to or above a living wage. This can be inclusive of social benefits, in-kind benefits and bonuses.</p> <p>Section 8.2 criteria may or may not apply to immediate family members as defined in Key Terms, depending on local legislation.</p> <p><i>*See the Appendix for definitions for small-, medium-, and large-scale operations and additional guidance on</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">R</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">R</p>	<p>Operations must demonstrate that a living wage is paid to workers without exception.</p>
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	<i>calculating living wage</i>			
8.3 Manipulated or Manipulative Records <i>This criteria not applicable to smallholders</i>	Any type of manipulation of records or other evidence to deceive the auditor and impact audit results is prohibited. Section 8.3 criteria may or may not apply to immediate family members as defined in Key Terms, depending on local legislation.	R	R	R
8.4 Housing	If housing is provided as a voluntary benefit, it does not represent a financial burden. Where workers are provided with housing, housing should meet local rental requirements, with rent values at or below market value, and the conditions and infrastructure of the housing ensure a reasonable level of comfort, including sanitation, safety, ventilation, reasonable protection from heat and cold, privacy, and security. This may include but is not limited to a clean personal bed and space for personal belongings, protection from extreme temperatures, good ventilation and air quality, clean water for cooking, drinking, and bathing, access to functional toilets, and access to recreational areas. Section 8.4 criteria may or may not apply to immediate family members as defined in Key Terms, depending on local legislation.	R	R	R
8.5 Timely Payment of Wages	Operators must have systems in place to ensure timely payment of wages to employees no less than every two weeks unless agreed in writing with the employee. Payments must be in accordance with the law and fully itemized pay slips must be provided and records kept. Section 8.5 criteria may or may not apply to immediate family members as defined in Key Terms, depending on local legislation.	R	R	R

9. Hours of Work	Practice Description	Bronze	Silver	Gold
9.1 Hours of Work	<p>Operators shall not require workers to work more than the regular and overtime hours allowed by the law of the country where the workers are employed. The regular work week shall not exceed 48 hours or the maximum allowed by the law of the country of manufacture, whichever is less.</p> <p>Operators shall allow workers regular resting breaks during the work day and allow at least 24 consecutive hours of rest in every seven-day period. Employers shall not request overtime hours on a regular basis or require that workers work overtime. If total regular and overtime hours exceed 60 hours per week, this does not occur for more than 3 months per year.</p> <p>For salaried positions, hours of work must be included in any employment contract.</p>	R	R	R
10. Health & Safety	Practice Description	Bronze	Silver	Gold
10.1 Health, Safety, and Potential Hazards	<p>Operation minimizes number of immediate threats to workers lives. Operations provide the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Personal protective equipment at the employers' expense that is functional and properly maintained, along with training for how to use and store protective equipment. – Protection from excess heat and/or access to shade, particularly in hot climates, and an allowance to take rests/breaks to access shade 	R	R	R

	<p>and/or consume water.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Access to clean drinking water. – Access to toilet and sanitation facilities. – Emergency preparedness training and access to first aid equipment with instructions. – Access to healthcare, at least for cases of workplace accidents and injuries. – Training for proper handling or storage of flammable materials/chemicals. <p>Operators must ensure that health and safety concerns of all employees are listened to and acted upon as appropriate. Operators with 20 or more employees or more must formally establish a Health and Safety Committee with a remit to review Health and Safety performance and any issues arising. Appointments to the Committee must be open and democratic.</p> <p><i>CT: Substandard, unsafe, or unsanitary conditions that pose danger to employees or the environment</i></p>			
<p>10.2 Exits <i>This criteria not applicable to smallholders</i></p>	<p>Buildings have adequate exits to ensure safe evacuation for all workers, and meet all requirements of local law. All exits remain unlocked.</p>	R	R	R
<p>10.3 Buildings <i>This criteria not applicable to smallholders</i></p>	<p>Policies in place to minimize environmental impacts with respect to energy, air emissions, water, waste, hazardous materials, and other significant environmental risks. All necessary ventilation, plumbing, electrical, noise and lighting services shall be installed and maintained to conform to applicable laws and to prevent or minimize hazardous conditions to workers in the facility.</p>	R	R	R
<p>10.4 Privacy</p>	<p>Workers living in employer-provided housing have a</p>	R	R	R

	right to privacy. The employer/owner has a right to inspect and enter the housing for the purposes of routine maintenance and/or repairs, but must, except for an emergency, notify residents. Such work must be done with a minimum of disturbance to any personal belongings. In order to meet additional workers' privacy needs, management agrees with the workers on the privacy needs of the individual worker through a documented discussion.			
10.5 Reduction of Accidents	Records must be maintained of all health and safety related incidents and operators must demonstrate a commitment to the reduction and elimination of such incidents over time.	R	R	R
11. Other	Practice Description	Bronze	Silver	Gold
11.1 Grower Groups	Small-scale farmers must be free to organize in some way. In the Global South, to mitigate the risk of exploitation, small-scale producers who are not organized into formal democratic structures should still hold annual meetings and take on some of the responsibilities of a traditional farmer organization (i.e. electing representatives to negotiate with buyers).	R	R	R

12. Buyers & Supply Chain	Practice Description	Bronze	Silver	Gold
12.1 Buyers <i>This criteria not applicable to farm or factory workers</i>	All contracts between producers and buyers are fair and equitable. This includes fairly negotiated and equitable contracts with producers, fair conflict resolution, openness to long-term commitments, and buyers' right to require up-to-date farmer certification of all applicable products.	R	R	R

	<p>Buyers make timely payments and provide a sourcing plan to producers with estimates of future purchases. Buyers also respect and work with existing producer groups, rather than to circumvent established groups to contract directly with an individual producer or producer subgroup.</p> <p>Buyers must enter long-term commitments when desired by farmers or be transparent with farmers and the certification body if they do not enter long-term commitments with farmers.</p> <p>Buyers do not break commitments that adversely affect producers. Producers do not break commitments that adversely affect buyers.</p>			
<p>12.2 Bargaining</p> <p><i>This criteria not applicable to farm or factory workers</i></p>	<p>All farmers have the right to freedom of association and to organize and engage in collective bargaining, free from retaliation of any kind by the buyer or his/her agents.</p> <p>If farmers so choose, contracts between buyers and farmers are negotiated using a collective bargaining process.</p> <p>If a farmer chooses to select a representative, the buyer recognizes and negotiates with representatives chosen by the farmer or democratically chosen by the farmer's association in the case of collective bargaining.</p>	R	R	R
<p>12.3 Fair Pricing</p> <p><i>This criteria not applicable to farm or factory workers</i></p>	<p>Pricing between buyers and producers is mutually agreed by all through dialogue and participation by both to provide fair pay to producers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Where Fair Trade pricing structures exist, these 	R	R	R

	<p>are used as a minimum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Where Fair Trade pricing structures do not exist, pricing should be based on the socially acceptable remuneration (in the local context) considered by producers themselves to be fair. <p>Fair Pricing and Fair Payments guidelines are not applicable to producers acting as buyers when buying organic or non-organic commodity grains on an open market.</p>			
<p>12.4 Fair Payments <i>This criteria not applicable to farm or factory workers</i></p>	<p>Payments received by farmers should always meet the cost of production which includes paying living wages, as described in ROC requirements. Documented real costs of productions calculated by producers or producer groups or average costs calculated regionally should be prioritized. When real costs are not known, local market prices or established fair trade minimum prices can be used if these can be determined to cover cost of production; if these prices do not cover cost of production, 10% should be added.</p> <p>Fair Pricing and Fair Payments guidelines are not applicable to producers acting as buyers when buying organic or non-organic commodity grains on an open market.</p>	R	R	R
<p>12.5 Transparent Negotiation <i>This criteria not applicable to farm or factory workers</i></p>	<p>Negotiations between producers and buyers include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Transparent communication of pricing and contracting terms – Openness to exploring and negotiating all terms of contracts and clarifying expectations clearly – Providing market information on demand, supply, pricing, and transfer of value in the chain 	R	R	R

<p>12.6 Capacity Building <i>This criteria not applicable to farm or factory workers</i></p>	<p>The operation works towards an increase in the capacities of its members and the organization. Mechanisms for training are developed to facilitate the process of building capacities in the productive, technical, social, organizational, commercial and public impact areas.</p> <p>For example, buyers can work directly with small producers to develop specific activities to help these producers improve their management skills, production capabilities and access to local / regional / international / Fair Trade and mainstream markets as appropriate.</p>	<p>R</p>	<p>R</p>	<p>R</p>
<p>12.7 Production Obligations</p>	<p>Production contracts obligate the producer to deliver only what is harvested from the acres covered by the contract. Under no circumstances shall farmers be required to purchase crop from outside the farm to fulfill delivery requirements of a production contract. Suffering the loss of crop due to natural-occurring flood, drought, wind, hail or other causes beyond the producer's control must never place additional burden on the farmer to source replacement crop.</p>	<p>R</p>	<p>R</p>	<p>R</p>

VIII. Appendix

A-1 Glossary of Key Terms

Soil Health and Land Management

- **Agroforestry:** The practice of incorporating cultivation and conservation of trees as part of an agricultural operation. Agroforestry enhances soil protection, carbon sequestration, soil moisture retention rates, & biodiversity, while increasing income due to the simultaneous production of trees and crops.
- **Biodiversity:** Biodiversity, or biological diversity, is the diversity of life existing at three levels: genetic, species, and ecosystem. Biodiversity includes variety in all forms of life, from bacteria and fungi to grasses, ferns, trees, insects, and mammals. It encompasses the diversity found at all levels of organization, from genetic differences between individuals and populations (groups of related individuals) to the types of natural communities (groups of interacting species) found in a particular area. Biodiversity also includes the full range of natural processes upon which life depends, such as nutrient cycling, carbon and nitrogen fixation, predation, symbiosis and natural succession. ROC requirements in the Soil pillar work towards increasing biodiversity above and below the ground.
- **Carbon Sequestration:** The process by which atmospheric carbon dioxide is taken up by trees, grasses, and other plants through photosynthesis and stored as carbon in biomass (trunks, branches, foliage, and roots) and soils. For agricultural operations, increased carbon sequestration may be achieved through, for example, reduced tillage practices, complex crop rotations which include coverages and green manure crops, agroforestry, reforestation, or the use of biomass-containing amendments.
- **Compost:** Compost, when properly managed, results in a high-quality soil amendment. Adding compost may increase the water holding capacity of the soil, helping farmers to produce a good crop even in years of low precipitation. Compost improves soil structure and stability, recycles nutrients, stabilizes volatile nitrogen, converts wastes into resources and suppresses soil-borne diseases. The composting process destroys weed seeds and pathogenic microorganisms, while beneficial microorganisms grow and multiply in great numbers. Synthetic fertilizers can provide soluble nutrients for plant growth, but do not build the soil's long-term biological reserves as well as compost does, and therefore are not permitted under ROC.
- **Crop Rotation:** Crop rotation is a systematic approach of growing different annual and herbaceous perennial crops in succession in the same field. The goals of crop rotation are to help manage organic soil fertility and also to help avoid or reduce problems with

diseases, pests and weeds. The more complex and long the rotation, the greater the benefits. Seven year rotations that include at least three years of herbaceous perennials are ideal for building soil health. Crop rotations as such are not applicable to woody perennial cropping systems such as orchards and vineyards.

- **Green Manure Crops:** Cover crops grown specifically for soil building. These typically include shallow tilling to incorporate the crop while it is still green. Roller crimping or irrigating after laying down the crop is an alternative way to help the green manure crop break down, especially in perennial systems.
- **Invasive Species:** Invasive plants and animals that are non-native (or alien) to the ecosystem under consideration and whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health. Invasive species can be plants, animals, and other organisms (e.g. microbes). Human actions are the primary means of invasive species introductions.
- **Pasture:** Pasture is a land use type having vegetation cover comprised primarily of native or introduced forage species that is used for livestock grazing.
- **Perennial Crops:** Crops which are alive year-round and are harvested multiple times before dying. Apples and alfalfa are examples of perennials (apples being a woody perennial and alfalfa an herbaceous perennial) that are already commercially grown and harvested. Perennial plants develop much greater root mass than annual crops and protect the soil year-round, leaving fields less vulnerable to wind, water, and soil erosion.
- **Riparian Areas:** Plant communities contiguous to and affected by surface and subsurface hydrologic features of perennial or intermittent moving and standing water bodies (e.g. rivers, streams, lakes, or drainage ways). Riparian areas have one or both of the following characteristics: 1) distinctly different vegetative species than adjacent areas, and 2) species similar to adjacent areas but exhibiting more vigorous or robust growth forms. Riparian areas are usually transitional between wetland and upland.
- **Rotational Grazing:** Rotational grazing is a livestock production system where livestock graze in one portion (a paddock) of a pasture that has been divided into several paddocks. Livestock are systematically moved from paddock to paddock based on the stage of growth of the forages and on the objectives of the grazing system. While one paddock is being grazed, the rest of the pasture rests. This rest and recovery time maintains forage plants and builds soil organic matter.
- **Silvopasture:** A form of agroforestry, the practice of combining forestry and grazing of animals in a mutually beneficial way. A properly managed silvopasture operation enhances soil protection and increases long-term incomes due to the simultaneous production of trees and grazing animals.
- **Soil Health:** Soil health, also referred to as soil quality, is defined as the continued

capacity of soil to function as a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals, and humans. Soil isn't an inert growing medium, but rather is teeming with billions of bacteria, fungi, and other microbes that are the foundation of an elegant symbiotic ecosystem. Soil is an ecosystem that can be managed to provide nutrients for plant growth, absorb and hold rainwater for use during dryer periods, filter and buffer potential pollutants from leaving our fields, serve as a firm foundation for agricultural activities, and provide habitat for soil microbes to flourish and diversify to keep the ecosystem running smoothly. Improving soil health is one of the key targets of ROC.

- **Tillage:** Preparation of soil by mechanical agitation of various types, such as digging, stirring, and overturning. Biological principles and mechanical termination of cover crops may reduce or eliminate the need for tilling. Tillage operations can be divided into the following categories:
 - Primary tillage: Operations include the use of the moldboard plow, chisel plow, or disk plow. It is often the most intensive form of tillage. For example, moldboard plowing inverts the soil over the entire field. Primary tillage marks the end of one cropping season and the beginning of the next and creates a dramatic visible change on the landscape.
 - Secondary tillage: Operations used to prepare the seedbed. This may include the use of tandem or off-set disks, field cultivator, harrows, packers and coulters.
 - Tertiary tillage: Operations that disturb the soil during seeding, management, or harvesting the crop
- **Vegetative Cover:** A vegetative cover is the maintenance of plants in place to reduce soil erosion and prevent desiccation of soil microbial communities, resulting from soil left exposed. Vegetative cover will suppress weeds, recycle nutrients back to the soil, increase soil organic matter, sequester carbon in the soil, increase soil moisture and reduce erosion. Maintaining a living vegetative cover year round is ideal, but not possible for most annual production systems.

Animal Welfare

- **Body Condition Score:** A system of measuring how thin or fat an animal is by reference to a standardized scale
- **Carrying Capacity:** The average number of animals that can be rotationally grazed on a given area of pasture for a year without harming it. It is a measure of a pasture's ability to produce enough forage to meet the requirements of grazing animals.
- **Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO):** Concentrated Animal Feeding

Operations (CAFOs), as defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), are lots or facilities (other than an aquatic animal production facility) where animals have been, are, or will be stabled or confined and fed or maintained for a total of 45 days or more in any 12-month period. Crops, vegetation, forage growth, or post-harvest residues are not sustained in the normal growing season over any portion of the lot or facility. The EPA provides specific thresholds by animal sector for small, medium, and large CAFOs. For example, a large CAFO for beef cattle is defined as 1,000 or more “animal units” confined for over 45 days a year.

- **Commercial Livestock Operation:** Animals are raised with the primary purpose of generating a profit. Non-commercial animals are those that generally have functions outside of or alongside profit, such as draught power, transport, manure production, or for educational purposes. The Five Freedoms described below must be demonstrated for all animals. Contact the ROA for additional guidance on determining if your livestock operation is considered commercial under the ROC.
- **Dehorning:** The practice of removing or routinely trimming/tipping horns. To earn ROC, dehorning and routine trimming/tipping of horns are prohibited. The use of polled breeds is recommended. Trimming of the horns is only permitted for medical purposes when the health of the cow is negatively affected by their horn length (e.g., horn tips are rubbing the eyes) or when the length could negatively impact the welfare of other animals, but this procedure must be performed by an experienced individual using a method of low-stress handling and restraint along with adequate analgesic and anesthetic pain control. Additionally, trimming must avoid the live innervated tissue within the horns.
- **Disbudding:** The removal or destruction of horn-producing cells before an animal's horns become attached to its skull. To earn ROC, this practice is prohibited in calves over three weeks of age. Hot iron cauterization allowed up to three weeks of age, which must be preceded and followed by administration of appropriate anesthetic and analgesia to provide short- and long-term pain relief. The procedure must be performed by an experienced individual using low stress handling and restraint techniques (e.g., sedation, disbudding crate). Any other methods of disbudding prohibited (e.g., caustic paste, scooping). The use of polled breeds is recommended over disbudding practices. If ROC producers disbud, they must demonstrate they are incorporating polled genetics via semen purchase for artificial insemination, herd bull selection, or replacement cow purchase. Producers who are disbudding must use polled genetics for breeding at least 20% of their cow herd year over year or until their calves no longer require disbudding. If the producer is unable to find suitable polled genetics, a record detailing efforts made to source the genetics and why such efforts were unsuccessful must be made available to the inspector for review at each inspection.
- **Five Freedoms:** The Animal Welfare module leverages the five freedoms for animal

welfare, which include:

1. Freedom from hunger or thirst by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigor
 2. Freedom from discomfort by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area
 3. Freedom from pain, injury, and disease by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment
 4. Freedom to express normal behaviors by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind
 5. Freedom from fear and distress by ensuring conditions and treatment that avoid mental suffering
- **Handling:** The handling of animals covers the general treatment of animals during the various tasks performed and requirements of an operation. To minimize stress, pain, and suffering to an animal, ROC prohibits certain practices, such as prodding (jabbing of animal with instrument), wattling (cutting chunks out of an animal's hide to hang under the animal's neck), and dehorning (removal of horns).
 - **Mobile Harvesting Unit:** A mobile harvest unit, or mobile slaughterhouse, enables livestock and poultry farmers to slaughter their animals humanely on-site. This decreases the exposure of animals to stressful and inhumane treatment at large scale slaughter facilities.
 - **Monogastrics:** Monogastric animals have a simple single-chambered stomach and include dogs, pigs, horses, and rabbits. Their ability to extract energy from cellulose digestion is less efficient than in ruminants, and therefore are permitted to feed on grains.
 - **Non-Ambulatory Animals:** Animals that cannot rise from a recumbent position or that cannot walk, including, but not limited to, those with broken appendages, severed tendons or ligaments, nerve paralysis, fractured vertebral column, or metabolic conditions
 - **Ruminants:** Ruminant species include cud-chewing animals such as cows, goats, bison, and sheep. Ruminants are designed to eat fibrous grasses, plants, and shrubs. A high-grain diet may cause physical problems for ruminants. Additionally, when ruminants are switched from pasture to grain, they can become afflicted with numerous disorders, including a common but painful condition called "subacute acidosis."

Farmer and Worker Fairness

- **Atypical Employment:** The use of labor-only contracting arrangements, consecutive short-term contracts and/or false apprenticeship or other schemes by the organization to

avoid meeting its obligations to personnel under applicable laws and regulations pertaining to labor and social security.

- **Capacity Building:** The process of developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes, and resources to improve the social and economic position of farmers and workers.
- **Democratic Organizations (International):** The ability for small-scale farmers to be democratically organized in order to be able to compete globally.
- **Equal Opportunity:** The policy of treating job applicants or employees equally without regard to the person's race, color, gender, pregnancy, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, age, religion, political opinion, national extraction, social origin, or other personal characteristics.
- **Fair Payments:** Payment sufficient to cover cost of production including living wages for any workers and equivalent income to farmers, plus reinvestment in farm.
- **Family Members:** Those relatives who are related in direct line to the producer and live in the same household as the producer. It may include parents, spouses, brothers/sisters and children, but does not include aunts/uncles, cousins or other relatives.
- **Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining:** The method whereby representatives of workers (unions) and producers (farmers/ranchers) negotiate the conditions of employment, often resulting in a written contract setting forth the wages, hours, and other conditions to be observed for a stipulated period. Collective bargaining should be conducted in good faith.
- **Living Wage:** The remuneration received for a standard work week by a worker in a particular place sufficient to afford a decent standard of living for the worker and her or his family. Elements of a decent standard of living include food, water, housing, education, health care, transport, clothing, and other essential needs including provision for unexpected events.
- **Routine Workplace Audits:** Routine third-party audits should assess that producers minimize exposure to disease, ensure access to safe inputs, provide clean facilities, document identification procedures, record use of treatment products, and properly train workers on the operation's protocols.
- **Smallholder:** Small farming operations where land and labor productivity are comparatively low due to limited resources. Smallholder farmers often rely on farming as a primary means of livelihood and are at greater risk of vulnerability in the supply chain. Smallholders rely primarily on family labor for farm operations. Smallholder size may vary by farm type and commodity; however, some certifications set thresholds so confirm with your certification program, if applicable. Most smallholders are organized by Internal Control System (ICS) for certification purposes. Contact the ROA for additional guidance

on determining if your operation is considered a smallholder under the ROC.

- **Trafficked Labor:** Any work performed by a person who has been recruited, transported, harbored or obtained by means of the use of threat, force, coercion or deception for the purpose of exploitation.

A-2. Definitions for Prohibited Animal Handling & Management Practices

- **Beak Trimming / De-Beaking:** The removal of all or a portion of the beak of a bird
- **Caponization:** Castration of chickens, turkeys, pheasants, and other avian species
- **Cattle Wattling:** The surgical separation of two layers of the skin from the connective tissue for along a 2 to 4-inch path on the dewlap, neck, or shoulders used for ownership identification
- **Clipping, Grinding, or Filing of Teeth:** Shaving or removing an animal's teeth
- **De-Clawing / Toe Clipping:** The removal of an animal's claws by amputating all or a part of an animal's nail and distal joint
- **Dehorning:** The practice of removing or routinely trimming/tipping horns
- **De-Snooding:** The removal of the turkey snood (a fleshy protuberance on the forehead of male turkeys)
- **De-Spurring:** Removing spurs from animals
- **Disbudding:** The removal or destruction of horn-producing cells before an animal's horns become attached to its skull
- **Dubbing:** The removal of poultry combs and wattles
- **Forced Molting:** The induced shedding old feathers, hair, or skin, or an old shell, to make way for a new growth by unnatural methods or by withdrawal of feed
- **Hot / Cold Branding:** Creating identification markers on animals by pressing an extremely hot or cold branding iron onto their flesh
- **Mulesing:** The removal of skin from the buttocks of sheep, approximately 2 to 4 inches wide and running away from the anus to the hock
- **Pinioning:** Surgically removing a bird's pinion joint
- **Prodding:** Striking, poking or electrocuting animals with an implement to influence and control their movement

- **Tail Docking:** The cutting or shortening of an animal's tail
- **Tusk Removal:** The amputation of an animal's tusks

A-2. Soil Health Lab & In-Field Tests

ROC requires two methods of soil health testing: a lab test and an in-field test. When used together, they provide a holistic and cost-effective method of understanding soil health and the impact of agricultural practices.

The Soil Health Lab Test should be performed by an accredited lab or organization, such as a university, C-MASC lab, or private organization with an expertise in analyzing soil health. Tests are to be conducted at initial certification inquiry, and then every three years thereafter.

Refer to the ROC Soil Sampling Guidelines for more information on the required soil testing.

A-3. Living Wage Calculation and Definitions

Living Wage Definition

For the purposes of the ROC, a living wage is defined as:

A combination of wages and benefits that can provide for food, water, housing, education, health care, transport, clothing, and other essential needs, plus a 10% allowance for unexpected events and/or savings.

Living Wage Calculation

Living wage must be calculated using one of the following methods or tools:

Agricultural Justice Project Living Wage Toolkit

- MIT Calculator + 10%, based on one working adult
- Global Living Wages benchmarks per region
- Global Living Wage Coalition calculation manual
- Fair Labor Association benchmarks
- Anker Methodology by the Global Living Wage Coalition
- Calculation in accordance with SAI Guidance Document for Social Accountability 8000 (SA8000, 2004) definition for "basic needs wage":
 - A "basic needs wage" enables workers to support half the average-sized family above the poverty line, based on local prices near the workplace. Basic needs include essential expenses such as food, clean water, clothes, shelter, transport, education, a discretionary income, as well as legally mandated social benefits (which may include health care, medical insurance, unemployment insurance, retirement plan, and so on).

A-4. Operation Scale Definitions

For the purposes of the ROC requirement *8.2 Commitment to a Living Wage* and determining applicability of specific social criteria, the following definitions shall be used to determine scale of operations:

- **Small-scale farms**
 - ≤5 permanent workers and no more than 25 total workers on-site at the management unit at any time (FT-USA, FFL)
- **Small-scale farm organizations**
 - More than 2/3 of member farms meet the criteria for small-scale
 - A maximum of 1/3 of member farms may have up to 2 times the parameters defined
- **Medium-scale farms**
 - 6-25 permanent workers and no more than 100 total workers on-site at the management unit at any time
- **Medium-scale farm organizations**
 - More than 2/3 of member farms meet the criteria for medium-scale
 - A maximum of 1/3 of member farms may have up to 2 times the parameters defined
- **Large-scale farms/farm organizations**
 - All other situations

A-5. Auditor Requirements for All Modules of ROC

Auditor remuneration is not incentive based, nor based on the outcome of inspections. All approved auditors must receive initial training as well as continuous education and periodic evaluation.

Visual inspections should be approached with collaboration and mutual respect towards suppliers at all levels, with a focus on education and sustainable remediation. Farm, ranch, or facility visits are preferred during the production cycle, with special attention paid to periods of increased risk to animal welfare, such as castration or other mutilations, birthing, shearing, loading, and similar. The scope of the on-site audit should include, but is not limited to, a walk-through of the facility and review of the following items:

- Visual inspection of the treatment of the workers and animals (if applicable to the entity);
- Visual inspection of the workers' and animals' environment (if applicable to the entity);
- Review of product labeling practices and procedures;

- Review of segregation and separation practices and procedures;
- Review of traceable supply chain process implementation;
- Worker interviews to ensure proper implementation of traceability policies, procedures, documentation, training, and animal welfare legal compliance;
- Issues identified during the document review;
- Complaint policies;
- All other requirements as required by ROC.

Documentation required to demonstrate compliance must be made available for review during the audit or pre-audit process at all levels of the supply chain. Additionally, auditors must be allowed to conduct private management and worker interviews in the local language at all levels of the supply chain to assess proper implementation of traceability policies, procedures, and documentation, training, and animal welfare compliance. The maximum period between on-site assessments should not be more than 18 months.

References and Resources:

- **ISO 19011: Guidelines for auditing management systems**
Section 7.2 “Determining auditor competence to fulfill the needs of the audit programme” <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/#iso:std:iso:19011:ed-2:v1:en>
- **GSCP (Global Social Compliance Programme)**
Table A - Core auditor competence and prerequisite reference requirements (for social and environmental compliance assessment), pg. 13
http://www.theconsumergoodsforum.com/images/the_forum_images/strategic-focus/gscp/gscp-work/reference_tools/pdf/GSCP_Auditing_Competence.pdf
- **APSCA (Association of Professional Social Compliance Auditors)**
Competency Framework for Social Compliance Auditors
http://www.theapsca.org/uploads/7/3/4/0/73406857/apsca_competency_framework_v5_.pdf

A-6. Supporting Documents

These documents are available to view and download at RegenOrganic.org/Resources.

Document	Description
Approved Baseline Certifications*	List of approved pillar-specific standards/certifications that meet the ROC baseline eligibility requirements, and the international organic standards recognized as NOP equivalent

Certifier Requirements*	Requirements for certifying bodies based on ISO 17065
Communication & Marketing Guidelines (In Progress)	Guidance and requirements for communicating participation in ROC and farm or product certification status
Cost & Fee Structure	Outlines the estimated certification costs for farmers, supply chain actors/ brands and certification bodies
Dairy Animal Welfare Criteria	Animal welfare criteria for dairy-specific operations
Equivalency Analysis*	Recognized standards and certifications that meet some requirements of the ROC standard. The equivalency analysis helps you understand how to leverage your existing certifications and identify gaps to meet the additional ROC requirements.
Grievance Submittals Process (In Progress)*	Process for submitting concerns, complaints, appeals, or reports of misuse of the ROC seal
Labeling Guidelines	Guidelines and requirements for product certification labeling
List of Approved Certification Bodies (In Progress)	Names and contact information for certification bodies approved to audit to ROC
Oversight & Scheme Management	Description of the verification, documentation, and oversight of ROC claims
Program Application Form (In Progress)	Complete this form when you are ready to apply for ROC
Processor Criteria	Specific sections from each pillar that must be verified by on site audit for any products carrying Gold ROC claims
Regenerative Organic System Plan (ROSP)	Template for the ROSP to be submitted with application
Sampling Methodology and Group Certification	Requirements for group certification and audit sampling approach
Social Fairness Affidavit for Supply Chain Actors & Processors	This affidavit serves for SCAs and/or processing operations applying for ROC registration. Bronze and Silver ROC claims require the submission of this Social Fairness Affidavit to the ROA for review.
Soil Sampling Guidelines	Details on the soil sampling requirements of the Soil Health pillar and guidance for finding a lab and conducting tests

Soil Health In-Field Testing Worksheet	A template for recording observations from the in-field soil health test
Supply Chain Requirements	Guidelines for maintaining and documenting appropriate chain of custody throughout the product supply chain

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