

Chapter 9

Private standards (PS)

9.1. Private standards	292
9.2. Private standards in the area of food safety	295
9.3. Private standards in the field of sustainable development	301
9.4. Conclusions about private standards	305



9.1. Private standards

9.1.1. The growing number of private standards

The due diligence clause associated with European food safety legislation, together with consumers' growing concerns about what's in their plate, has had repercussions in the agri-food industry. To shield itself against all risks, the private sector has developed **self-regulation systems** or **private standards** (abbreviated here as **PS**), which are based on the food industry's codes of good practice.

The process began in the United Kingdom with codes of Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) and a memorandum of good hygiene practices, which later became the food standard of the British Retail Consortium (**BRC**). These standards in turn inspired a number of similar initiatives by the private sector in other European countries (Jaffe, 2005). Retailers in the fresh produce trade have always asked suppliers to respect their requirements in terms of volumes, supply continuity and price. They are now asking these same suppliers to comply with a series of PS that **cover their production, processing and distribution methods**.

The increasing demands of consumers and civil society (as well as work by quality control NGOs) have spurred the retailing and distribution industry to **pay attention not only to food safety and quality, but also to the source of products**. They must take greater notice of questions regarding labour practices, environment, safety, and social responsibility. Until recently these issues tended to be the reserve of state and international agencies or else NGOs. Under consumer pressure, however, the major distribution chains appear to be getting more involved through specific certification initiatives.

9.1.2. The various types of private standards

□ Private Standards for products, processes and management systems

Private standards generally focus on one of **three categories**:

- ▶ products;
- ▶ processes;
- ▶ management systems.

The first focuses on characteristics related to a product's quality and safety. The second category, process standards, refers to the conditions under which products and services are to be produced, packaged or processed.

Management system standards assist organisations in managing their operations. They are often used to help create a framework that then allows the organisation to consistently meet the requirements set out in product and process standards.¹

¹ <http://www.standardsinfo.net/info/aboutstd.html>

The PS described in this chapter on food safety and respect for social and/or environmental criteria are process and management system standards.

□ **Subjects areas and origin of these standards**

The extended PS family can also be **sub-divided** on the basis of broad **subject areas** (food safety, social responsibility, environment). This classification, however, generally is not relevant since a private standard usually covers several subject areas. This is especially the case for some PS on food safety, which contain various control points relating to **respect for workers' rights** and the **environment** (GLOBALG.A.P, SQF).

In general, **the private sector has been more involved in drafting food safety private standards** while civil society has traditionally played a larger role in establishing PS on the social and environmental aspects of supply chains. (Examples are: Fair Trade, organic production, Sustainable Agriculture Network, Social Accountability International) (Liu, 2009).

At times, however, private industry, civil society and the public sector form coalitions in order to draft **new standards** or **codes of conduct** in certain areas. (International Standards Organisation (ISO), Ethical Trading Initiative, etc.).

When it comes to PS on **food** safety, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) distinguishes **three broad categories of standards** based on the stakeholders that prepare them:

- 1) **Individual PS** of retail and distribution firms, drawn up by these firms and applicable for a range of operators all along the supply chain (M&S Field-to-fork, Carrefour's Filière qualité, Tesco's Nurture, etc.).
- 2) **Collective and national PS**, drawn up by professional associations and/or NGOs (BRC - even if the BRC private standard is now applied at a global level, Assured Food Standards, Freedom Food, etc.).
- 3) **Collective and international PS**, generally applied by supply chains that operate in several regions of the world (GLOBALG.A.P., IFS, SQF, etc.) (Henson et Humphrey, 2009). Collective and international PS can also be developed by professional associations and/or NGOs (or even by officially recognised bodies such as the International Standards Organisation - ISO).

□ **Business-to-Business or Business-to-Consumer**

PS can also be divided into standards that are **Business-to-Business ('B2B')** or else **Business-to-Consumer ('B2C')**.

Individual standardisation initiatives are generally intended for consumer communication (B2C). On the other hand, collective food safety standards usually aim to control and reduce risks throughout the supply chain. Consequently they are **not communicated to consumers** (B2B).

Standards that cover social and environmental aspects are primarily B2C (except for standards on ethical production or trade, such as SA 8000, BSCI, etc.). B2C standards **often communicate on** the product's features **in the form of a label or mark on the finished product** with the clear aim of distinguishing it from similar products.

Implicit in the B2B approach, unlike B2C, is the fact that the market cannot finance the application of B2B standards with a higher price tag, since the consumer is not informed whether or not the product complies with any such standards.

□ **Best endeavour obligations vs mandatory results**

A final way to classify PS can be based on the requirements they focus on – either means (infrastructures, training, systems, inputs, etc.) or results (maximum limits of pesticide residues, intrinsic quality: colour, grade, form).

Most of the PS described in this chapter on food safety or respect for social and/or environmental criteria are standards that lay down best endeavour obligations rather than results.²

The best endeavour obligations laid out in these standards concern the means and actions that a company must implement for the production phase, but also for the processing and marketing phases (AFD, 2010).

² The distinction between best endeavour obligations and results is not always obvious. For this reason literature on the subject can give varying interpretations of these two concepts, and as a result classify the PS in different categories.

9.2. Private standards in the area of food safety

9.2.1. PS and food safety

Many PS on food safety have been developed for application to food production and processing. They include: **BRC**, **IFS**, the Netherlands' **HACCP**, **FSSC 22000**, **Synergy 22000**, **SQF 2000** (all based on the HACCP principles defined by the Codex), **SQF 1000** and last but certainly not least **GLOBALG.A.P.**

This section will only discuss the above PS, even though other standards obviously exist, in particular individual PS developed by retailing and distribution firms (M&S Field-to-fork, Carrefour Filière qualité, Tesco's Nurture, etc.).

The **Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI)** is a not-for-profit foundation created in 2000 and managed by the Consumer Goods Forum. The foundation's key objective is to benchmark (compare and approve) a set of food safety schemes on the basis of its reference document,³ the **GFSI Guidance Document** which was drawn up in 2007 by a group of eight retailers.⁴

The private standards described below are some of those that have been benchmarked by the GFSI reference document.

The final goal of the scheme is to **limit the growing number of audits** that suppliers must go through by adopting the stance of "one certification for all". In practice, an ACP exporter, already BRC-certified who wishes to work with suppliers certified under SQF 2000 or the IFS should theoretically be spared the process of re-certification under these standards.

The **process** to become certified under a private standards scheme generally includes the following steps:

1. Choosing the standard best adapted to one's activity
2. Ordering/downloading the most recent version of the standard
3. Evaluating one's present situation compared to the standard's requirements
4. Introducing the changes needed to comply with the requirements (infrastructure, procedures, documentation, etc.)
5. Selecting a certification body (proposal, decision and signature of contract)
6. Determining the date, timing and scope of the audit
7. Optional: organising a pre-audit
8. Realising the on-site audit at the determined audit date by an auditor competent for the respective product category.

³ This document is available for downloading from the GFSI website: <http://www.mygfsi.com/>.

⁴ Carrefour, Tesco, ICA, Metro, Migros, Ahold, Wal-Mart and Delhaize.

The costs of certification under a PS depend on the size of the company and the systems already in place. For example, a company may have to invest in improving its (production) site or call on an external expert to document its procedures in order to prepare the audit.

9.2.2. BRC Food Technical Standard

The British Retail Consortium (BRC) is an association representing a broad range of retailers in Great Britain.



In 1998 the BRC, responding to industry needs, developed the BRC Food Technical Standard⁵ to be used to evaluate **food manufacturers**. It is designed to help retailers and brand owners comply with new European regulations on food safety.

Despite its British origin, this private standard is presently applied in over 100 countries throughout the world. The BRC Food Technical Standard is a so called B2B (business to business) standard, meaning that compliance is not demonstrated with a label affixed to the end product.

Conformity with this PS must be **assessed by a third party that is accredited** as an official certification body and one that follows BRC audit rules. BRC thus does not perform audits, but remains owner of the PS and manages the certification process.⁶

9.2.3. The Netherlands' HACCP

The first version of the Netherlands' HACCP was launched in 1996 by a national committee of Dutch HACCP experts. HACCP⁷ (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point) is an approach to hazard analysis that is recognized worldwide. By regulation, HACCP is generally mandatory in all food manufacturing firms.



The *Codex Alimentarius* recognises HACCP as the reference method for identifying hazards and controlling risks to food safety. The criteria of the Dutch system are based on the seven principles of the HACCP approach as described in the *Codex Alimentarius* Alinorm.

This private standard also covers food processing and is a business to business standard (B2B). The most recent version of this standard⁸ contains all the key elements of the **international standard ISO 22000**.

⁵ The standard is not publicly available but can be purchased from the BRC website for £ 90 (<http://www.brcglobalstandards.com/bookshop/>).

⁶ An on-line directory of these accredited certification bodies is available at: <http://www.brcdirectory.com/>.

⁷ See chapter 5 of this manual.

⁸ The standard can be downloaded free of charge from the following address: <http://www.foodsafetymanagement.info/net-book.php>. A complete list of certification bodies can also be found at this address.

9.2.4. Food Safety System Certification 22000

The Food Safety System Certification 22000 is a private B2B standard for food safety management systems which is based on the international standard for food safety management systems (FSMS), ISO 22000:2005⁹ and on the publicly available specification PAS 220.¹⁰



This PS concerns the food **manufacturing (processing) phase**.

The British Standards Institution's (BSI) specification PAS 220 is a document designed to support the implementation of ISO 22000. ISO 22000 explicitly requires the implementation of prerequisite programmes (PRP, see chapters 2 and 5)¹¹ and gives a list of topics to consider, but it does not specify what the PRPs should comprise. PAS 220 thus steps in to specify these PRPs for food and food ingredient manufacturing processes.

The idea is for ISO 22000 to be used as an FSMS **generic standard** by all sectors and then to have sector specific documents covering the requirements of each sector.

Manufacturers already certified under ISO 22000 will only need an additional review against BSI PAS 220 to comply with this scheme.

⁹ ISO 22000:2005 Food Safety Management Systems – Requirements for any organization in the food chain.

¹⁰ The international standard ISO 22000 and the specification PAS 220 can be ordered from ISO and/or British Standards Institution. They can be used together with the additional requirements found in the certification scheme FSSC 22000 (Food Safety Standard Certification), which can be downloaded free of charge from the site <http://www.fssc22000.com>. A checklist of PAS 220 requirements is available in the FSSC 22000 scheme documents. These requirements need to be checked and reported in every audit. A similar audit checklist with the ISO 22000 requirements is in preparation and will be published upon completion on the FSSC 22000 Website.

¹¹ Prerequisite programme (PRP): basic conditions and activities that are necessary to maintain a hygienic environment throughout the food chain suitable for the production, handling and provision of safe end products and safe food for human consumption (ISO 22000).

ISO 22000:2005¹² **specifies requirements for a food safety management system (FSMS)** where an organisation **in the food chain** needs to demonstrate its ability to control food safety hazards in order to ensure that food is safe at the time of human consumption.

It is applicable to all organisations, regardless of size, which are involved in any aspect of the food chain and want to implement systems that consistently provide safe products.

Synergy 22000¹³ certification is also based on ISO 22000 combined with either of the two documents below:

- Technical Specification ISO TS 22002-1 Prerequisite programmes on food safety – Part 1: Food manufacturing
- PRP 22000 (Synergy) for any organisation in a food chain.

Unlike the private standard FSSC 22000, the combination of the ISO standard with the private standard PRP 22000 is applicable to the entire food chain as well as to related activities (from primary production, storage, transport and processing up to distribution). The combination of ISO 22000 & ISO TS 22002-1 is applicable only to the food processing or manufacturing step of the food chain.

9.2.5. GLOBALG.A.P.

□ Background



EUREPG.A.P. was set up in 1997 by retailers belonging to the Euro-Retailer Produce Working Group (EUREP). The driving forces behind this initiative were British retailers together with supermarkets in continental Europe. It was later decided to change EUREPG.A.P.'s name to GLOBALG.A.P. in order to reflect the aim to make the G.A.P. the dominant international standard and to prevent confusion with the growing range of public sector and civil society stakeholders.

GLOBALG.A.P. is thus a private sector body¹⁴ that sets standards used to certify agricultural products throughout the world. The aim is to draw up one standard for **Good Agricultural Practices** with different applications per product, adaptable to agricultural practices worldwide.

GLOBALG.A.P. is a **pre-farm-gate standard**,¹⁵ which means that the certificate covers the process of the certified product from the planting of seedlings, including all farming activities up until the product leaves the farm. GLOBALG.A.P., like the other food safety standards, is a business-to-business standard and is therefore **not directly visible to consumers**.

¹² The international standard ISO 22000:2005 can be ordered from the ISO Website: <http://www.iso.org> (price: CHF 124).

¹³ The set of documents is available from the Synergy Website: <http://www.synergy-gss.com/>.

¹⁴ The list of GLOBALG.A.P members is available at the following address: <http://www.globalgap.org/cms/>

¹⁵ These documents are available on GLOBALG.A.P.'s Website: <http://www.globalgap.org/>.

GLOBALG.A.P. certification is carried out by over 100 independent and accredited certification bodies in more than 100 countries.¹⁶

□ **Benchmarking and national interpretation guidelines**

As many other on-farm assurance systems were in place before GLOBALG.A.P was set up, a solution had to be found to encourage the development of regional management systems in order to spare farmers multiple audits.

Several national or regional farm assurance schemes have now successfully completed their benchmarking process and are recognised as an equivalent to GLOBALG.A.P.

GLOBALG.A.P. has also begun to pay greater attention to local producers' needs by creating **national technical working groups** (NTWG). The role of these groups is to develop a set of **national interpretation guidelines** for the standard so that it can be better adapted to the local context.

□ **GLOBALG.A.P. and smallholders**

For structural reasons small-scale farmers often find it much harder to comply with the standard's requirements. GLOBALG.A.P. thus applies three approaches to facilitate market access for smallholders:

- Smallholders can form a group and obtain certification together (Option 2).
- In May 2007, GLOBALG.A.P. launched the Smallholders Ambassador and Africa Observer project, with financing from the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ - *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit*) and the DFID (UK Department for International Development). The aim is to allow the feedback of smallholders to reach the Sector Committees.
- GLOBALG.A.P. has developed a smallholder manual in collaboration with the GTZ and the Resource Protection Association (GfRS - *Gesellschaft für Ressourcenschutz*).

□ **GLOBALG.A.P. Risk Assessment on Social Practice (GRASP)**

GLOBALG.A.P. has also supplemented the food safety standard with an **ethics module**. The **GRASP module**¹⁷ - **risk assessment on social practices**, is a voluntary standard for the supply chain partners.

The audit to assess conformity with the 11 control points **can be performed at the same time as the 'food safety' audit**.

The auditor must nevertheless have followed **specific training** to assess the GRASP module. Furthermore, the GRASP module can only be applied in countries that have developed interpretation guidelines for the 11 control points.¹⁸ Lastly, the GRASP module only applies to companies that are already GLOBALG.A.P. certified.

¹⁶ The list of accredited certification bodies can be found on the GLOBALG.A.P. Website: <http://www.globalgap.org/>.

¹⁷ This document is also available on the GLOBALG.A.P. Website: <http://www.globalgap.org/>.

¹⁸ Austria, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Kenya, Morocco, Mexico, Vietnam, South Africa, and Spain. Several other countries are developing national interpretation guidelines (Argentina, Israel, Italy, Peru and the USA).

9.2.6. SQF and IFS

The **Safe Quality Food Institute (SQFI)** is administered by the Food Marketing Institute (FMI), an American interprofessional association that represents 1 500 retailers and wholesalers. The SQFI¹⁹ proposes certification programmes that cover the phases of primary production (SQF 1000) and manufacturing/distribution (SQF 2000), as well as certification based on a product's intrinsic quality.

Following the example of GLOBALG.A.P., the SQFI has launched an **ethical sourcing module** to supplement the SQF 1000 and 2000 certifications. Although it is not mandatory to apply this module, once a company has agreed to implement it, it has to respect the full set of requirements.



Members of the German Retailers Federation (HDE – *Hauptverband des Deutschen Einzelhandels*) – and their French counterparts in the Federation of Trading and Retailing Companies (FCD – *Fédération des Entreprises du Commerce et de la Distribution*) – have developed a standard on food safety and quality for retailer (and wholesaler) branded food products, known as the **International Food Standard (IFS)**.

It is intended to **assess suppliers' food safety and quality systems** based on a **uniform approach**.

IFS Food – a **B2B private standard** – applies to all **post-farm gate stages of food processing**. In 2005-2006 the Italian retailers' federation became interested in the IFS and participated in drafting version 5 of the IFS Food standard.²⁰

¹⁹ The standards can be downloaded free of charge at the following address: <http://www.sqfi.com/>. The SQFI has also published a series of documents to facilitate the process to comply with the standard(s).

²⁰ The IFS can be ordered from the organisation's website (available in approx. 21 different languages): <http://www.ifs-certification.com/>.

9.3. Private standards in the field of sustainable development

In addition to food safety, other private standards and schemes covering **social and/or environmental themes** have been developed to meet European consumers' growing concerns about sustainable development.

Today, ACP fruit and vegetable producers/exporters are confronted with a **multitude of terms and concepts** that are connected with and/or define such initiatives: *fair trade, ethical production, social responsibility, sustainable development, carbon footprint, life cycle analysis* and so on

European authorities have generally not regulated these aspects, unlike food safety, so it has been up to the private sector and civil society to lay down the rules. The retailing and distribution industry has adopted various initiatives in the form of private standards, 'codes of conduct' and 'multi-party platforms' grouped under their social responsibility policies, with the aim of addressing European consumers' concerns about sustainable development.

❑ Sustainable development

A commonly accepted definition of sustainable development is '*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*'.²¹ Another way of describing sustainable development is to present it as development that results from **balanced interaction among three pillars: the environment, the economy and the social sphere** (known as the '**3P**' principle: *People-Planet-Profit*).

The concept of 'sustainable development' finds expression in companies through social responsibility (SR) policies.²²

❑ Social responsibility²³

The term '**social responsibility**' came into common use in the early 1970s, although the concept has existed since the 19th century in different organisations and governments. Social responsibility concerns all types of organisations, **not just commercial enterprises**, and has the ultimate objective of contributing to 'sustainable development'. This explains the determination of the different stakeholders who participated in drafting the new **ISO 26000 standard** (on social responsibility) to use the term 'social responsibility' instead of 'corporate social responsibility' (CSR).

²¹ See Brundtland report: 'Our Common Future, the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development', Oxford University Press, 1987.

²² See PIP Manual No 11: 'Ethical Production'.

²³ As defined in the new ISO 26000 standard.

The new **ISO 26000:2010**²⁴ standard, '*Guidance on social responsibility*', defines the social responsibility of an organisation as responsibility for the impact of its decisions and activities on society and the environment through transparent and ethical behaviour that:

- contributes to sustainable development, including health and the welfare of society
- takes into account the expectations of stakeholders
- is in compliance with applicable law and consistent with international norms of behaviour;²⁵ and
- is integrated throughout the organisation and practised in its relationships.

❑ Private standards on ethical production (or trade)

Ethical production (or ethical trade) covers production conditions²⁶ as well as the functioning of companies. In a distributor/producer relationship, it aims to guarantee and demonstrate to customers that the goods they purchase have been produced in conditions that comply with international labour standards set by the ILO²⁷ and with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Convention on Children's Rights.

Ethical production can also include requirements on the environmental conditions of production even though most so-called 'ethical' initiatives focus more on working conditions.

Ethical production²⁸ consequently does not **directly concern production per se, but the operating mode and moral values respected** by companies, for instance: workers' rights, child labour and fair pay. Ethical certification therefore concerns the production process rather than the product, which is the reason for the term 'ethical production'. These PS are thus qualified as procedural, rather than product, standards.

Standards and initiatives in this area include:

- ▶ Social Accountability 8000 (SA 8000);
- ▶ Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI);
- ▶ Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI);
- ▶ SEDEX (Supplier Ethical Data Exchange);
- ▶ Global Social Compliance Programme (GSCP).

²⁴ The international standard ISO 26000:2010 can be ordered from the ISO Website (price: CHF 192) <http://www.iso.org/>.

²⁵ This concept is defined in ISO 26000 as 'expectations of socially responsible organizational behaviour derived from customary international law, generally accepted principles of international law, or intergovernmental agreements that are universally or nearly universally recognized'. The standard also points out that these international norms of behaviour can evolve over time.

²⁶ See PIP Manual 11: 'Ethical Production'.

²⁷ The International Labour Organisation (ILO) can be seen as the only international body whose directives are to be considered binding on member States. Some consider that responsibility for establishing international labour standards is granted by the international community to the International Labour Organisation, created for that purpose. In fact, the ILO's tripartite structure, which involves representatives of employers and employees, as well as governments, along with its technical expertise in all areas related to working life, gives the ILO the status of a legitimate and authoritative source for international labour standards. PIP M annual 11: Ethical production.

²⁸ See PIP Manual 11: 'Ethical Production'.

These ethical initiatives²⁹ (the list is not exhaustive) often cover the same control points and all share the aim of improving working conditions across companies' different supply chains.

However, their individual specifications are such that approaches differ on certain points, which can lead to a duplication of efforts in order to achieve what is nevertheless a common goal.

□ Private standards on fair trade

What is fair trade?

*'Fair trade is a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect, that seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalized producers and workers – especially in the South. Fair trade organizations, backed by consumers, are engaged actively in supporting producers, awareness raising and in campaigning for changes in the rules and practice of conventional international trade.'*³⁰

The fair trade initiative was established in the 1940s and 1950s, in the United States and in Europe, respectively by religious organisations (Protestant church) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Politically, the fair trade concept was introduced at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 1968.

The slogan '**Trade not Aid**' was devised to denounce inequalities in trading relations between North and South. Fair trade in agricultural products began with tea and coffee in the 1970s, followed by dried fruits, cocoa, sugar, fruit juice, bananas, rice, spices and nuts. With commodities prices dropping on international markets, the idea was to ensure decent earnings to small producers in the developing countries through the payment of a fair price.

A **number of bodies** now provide fair trade certification: Fairtrade Labelling Organisation (FLO), Equitable Solidaire Responsable (ESR, Ecocert), Fair for Life (Institut für Marktökologie, IMO), etc.³¹.

²⁹ Documents drawn up by these various schemes can be downloaded from their Websites:
<http://www.sa-intl.org/>
<http://www.ethicaltrade.org/>
<http://www.bsci-intl.org/>
<http://www.sedex.org/>
<http://www.gscpnet.com/>

³⁰ In October 2001, the FINE informal network (made up of the leading fair trade organisations) developed a single definition of fair trade accepted by all players in the movement.

³¹ Documents drawn up by these various initiatives can be downloaded from their Websites:
<http://www.fairtrade.net/>
<http://www.ecocert.com/equitable-solidaire-responsable-esr>
<http://www.fairforlife.net/>

□ Private standards on environmentally friendly production

In addition to social, economic (fair trade) and food safety aspects, some private standards and initiatives focus more on environmental aspects. More efficient use of raw materials, better waste management, protection of water resources, soil conservation, safeguarding of ecosystems and forests, and limitation of greenhouse gases are the challenges that companies will gradually have to meet in a proactive manner at the beginning of the 21st century.

Organic farming³² is based on a number of principles and practices that aim to minimize agriculture's impact on the environment by working the land as naturally as possible. In Europe, numerous private organic standards can be found in the Member States. Most of these standards have their own organic logo. However, they must all at least comply with the EU's harmonised legislation on organic farming. The **Soil Association**³³ in the United Kingdom and **AB mark**³⁴ in France are just two examples. Both demonstrate compliance using a label for consumers.

Apart from organic agriculture, other B2C standards use a label for European consumers certifying the use of an environmentally acceptable process. The **LEAF Marque**³⁵ standard, for instance, aims to assure consumers that the product results from eco-responsible practices, while the **Rainforest Alliance**³⁶ aims to preserve biological diversity on earth and to ensure decent living conditions for producers and neighbouring communities by changing agricultural and trading practices and acting on consumers' behaviour.

Lastly we should mention the **ISO 14000**³⁷ family of standards on '**Environmental Management**'. This term refers to what an organisation does to minimize the harmful impact of its activities on the environment and to improve its environmental performance on an ongoing basis.

³² http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic/organic-farming/what-organic_en

³³ Documents on the Soil Association can be found on the association's Website: <http://www.soilassociation.org/>

³⁴ Further information on the AB mark (in French, with a few documents in English) can be found on the following Website: <http://www.agencebio.org/>
<http://www.agencebio.org/upload/pagesEdito/fichiers/agencebioanglaisfevrier2010.pdf>

³⁵ Documents on the LEAF mark scheme are available on its Website: <http://www.leafuk.org/>

³⁶ Documents on the Rainforest Alliance are available on the organisation's Website: <http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/>

³⁷ Standards in the ISO 14000 family can be ordered from the ISO Website: <http://www.iso.org/>

9.4. Conclusions about private standards

The aim of this chapter was to summarise and briefly describe various private standards in the area of food safety, ethical labour practices and respect for the environment that have been developed thanks to individual or collective, national or international initiatives. It is not an easy task, however, to classify or group private standards due to the diversity of these initiatives and their structure.

It is generally understood that the private sector and civil society often react more quickly to emerging social issues than the public sector (Henson & Humphrey, 2009). **This dynamism, however, can create adverse affects for companies wishing to export to the European market. The lack of harmonisation among private standards and the multitude of certifications** are just two of many factors that can be significant hurdles for exporting companies.

When different organisations along the food supply chain develop and adopt private standards there are repercussions for the ACP fruit and vegetable sector, particularly in terms of **market access**. And this is especially true for small and medium-sized enterprises.

To sum up, ACP producers who wish to export must now comply not only with new EU regulations, but also with the requirements of importers and distributors. Such requirements usually take the form of private standards and are often more complex and more stringent than regulations. While remaining voluntary – because they are not required by law – standards are becoming indispensable for doing business on the European market and as such are de facto mandatory. Consequently, **in some cases producers lacking certification under a private standard can be excluded from certain key sectors of the European market.**

Certification requires considerable human, technical and financial resources. In the case of private food safety standards, certification is not market-financed since compliance is not communicated to the consumer by means of a special label on the product.³⁸ The multitude of such standards on the European market also obliges an ACP producer operating on different markets with different customers to juggle with a **number of certifications**.

Producers find themselves confronted with an **overabundance of standards**, each of which implies recurring compliance and certification expenses. Generally speaking, it has been seen that the capacity to meet standards varies in terms of countries and stakeholders depending on their size and resources.

³⁸ Consumers cannot be charged a higher sales price if there is no label on the end product.

On the other hand, for ACP producers, **private standards can also present considerable advantages**. GLOBALG.A.P., for instance, has interpreted regulatory obligations in a document to ensure their practical implementation. **Compliance with standards can increase productivity and competitiveness by reducing the cost of inputs** (pesticides, fertilisers) and by helping agricultural operators to adopt Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), improve hygiene and use modern management methods.

Private standard certification in some cases may also open up **more attractive markets** (such as the niche markets of fair trade, organic food), **extend the customer base** and thus **increase demand** for fruit and vegetable exports. Such certification may also entail social advantages such as food safety, or workers' health and hygiene (Okello, 2005).

New types of initiatives are also being developed to meet the social, economic and environmental challenges of our planet. **Sustainability is a concept no longer reserved to western societies**. ACP enterprises must also implement it by limiting counter-productive effects and maximizing positive effects for their communities.

The challenge facing ACP companies that export fruit and vegetables to the European continent is to transform these new demands into opportunities to develop and become more competitive.