

Agricultural Producer (Farmer) – Principles of responsible crop cultivation

Purpose	Specify the Donau Soja principles of responsible crop cultivation.
Definition	Agricultural producer (farmer): agricultural holding growing and harvesting arable crops
Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 European origin of soya beans and soya products 1 2 GM-free status of arable crops and derived products..... 1 3 Responsible farm management and community relations 2 4 Use of best practices in soil and nutrient management 3 5 Use of best practices in crop protection..... 3 6 Use of best practices in water management 4 7 Use of best practices in waste management..... 5 8 Responsible land use and biodiversity protection 6 9 Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions..... 7 10 Compliance with human and labour rights and safe working conditions 7
Status	Version 02: released by the Board on 29 November 2023

1 European origin of soya beans and soya products

1.1 The farmer shall be geographically located within the Donau Soja region.

The countries and regions of origin of Donau Soja arable crops are defined in both political and geographical terms. The enumeration of the countries in which Donau Soja can be produced is based on the list of countries in the Danube river basin as delineated by the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (www.icpdr.org/main/danube-basin/countries-danube-riverbasin). The Donau Soja region consists of the following European countries:

Austria (AUT), Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIH), Bulgaria (BGR), Croatia (HRV), Czech Republic (CZE), Germany (DEU, Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg only), Hungary (HUN), Italia (ITA, Trentino Alto Adige, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Veneto, Emilia-Romagna, Lombardia, Piemont and Vallée d’Aoste only), Moldova (MDA), Poland (POL, Dolnoslaskie, Opolskie, Slaskie, Swietokrzyskie, Podkarpackie and Malopolske only), Romania (ROU), Serbia (SRB), Slovakia (SVK), Slovenia (SVN), Switzerland (CHE), Ukraine (UKR, Uschgorod, Tschernowzy, Winniza, Odessa, Lwow, Ternopol, Chmelniczki and Iwano-Frankovsm only).

2 GM-free status of arable crops and derived products

2.1 The farmer shall only grow GM-free arable crop varieties either listed in the EU common catalogue of plant varieties or in the respective national catalogue of plant varieties. Only these varieties shall have been used the last three years.

- 2.2 The farmer shall not have grown any other GM crop (e.g. GM maize) for one year.
- 2.3 If the farmer is located in a risk level 3 production area:

The farmer shall use certified seeds only and shall document this with invoices covering the purchase of the certified seeds.
- 2.4 The farmer shall document all quantities of arable crop, both grown and harvested, by keeping their own records.
- 2.5 The farmer shall not use genetically modified organisms or products produced from or by GMOs. As to agricultural inputs that are marketed as originating either from GMOs or from GM-free production (such as plant protection products, fertilisers and soil conditioners), only products labelled as GM-free shall be used. This confirmation is waived for products where, according to our current knowledge, no practical methods are known which would suggest that these products are GMOs, contain GMOs or were produced from GMOs or using GMOs. This, for example, currently applies to pure minerals, mineral fertilisers, chemical or synthetic active substances of plant protection products and certain micro-organisms.

3 Responsible farm management and community relations

- 3.1 The farmer shall conduct business with integrity, respecting applicable laws, including but not limited to tax, anti-corruption, trade and customs regulations and avoiding all forms of bribery, conflicts of business interest and fraudulent practices.
- 3.2 The farmer shall have basic economic documentation appropriate to the farm size, including, but not limited to, records of costs, yields, income and profitability.
- 3.3 The farmer shall be aware of and follow the recommendations contained in the Donau Soja Best Practice Manual.
- 3.4 The farmer shall assess the environmental and social impacts of current or planned activities on their land. The farmer shall also assess the impact of their activities as it pertains to the wider community.
- 3.5 The farmer shall implement appropriate measures to allow for the coexistence of different production systems.
- 3.6 *In areas with traditional land users:* Where rights have been relinquished by traditional land users, there shall be documented evidence present showing that the affected communities are compensated subject to their free, prior, informed and documented consent (FPIC). In the case of disputed use rights, a comprehensive, participatory and documented community rights assessment shall be carried out and the recommendations from this assessment shall be followed.
- 3.7 As for communication with local communities, communication channels shall be in place (written sign or website with the following information: email address, mobile phone number, P.O. box address) that adequately enable communication between the farmer and the community. The communication channels shall have been made known to the local communities.

- 3.8 The farmer shall deal with complaints and grievances from workers, neighbours, local communities and traditional land users in an appropriate way and shall maintain documented evidence. In case a relevant competent authority requires the farmer to react to a complaint in a certain way, the farmer will do so in a timely manner.
- 3.9 The complaint mechanism (e.g. appointed independent ombudsman; written complaint form, being accessible via email, telephone or postal mail) is transparent, has been made known and is available to all workers, local communities and traditional land users.

4 Use of best practices in soil and nutrient management

- 4.1 The farmer shall comply with relevant local and national legislation related to soil management.
- 4.2 The farmer shall ensure that crops are grown on suitable soils.
- 4.3 The farmer shall take appropriate measures to protect and improve the soil and to avoid erosion and soil compaction. These shall include, but not be limited to a ban on burning stubble, crop rotation and the use of cover crops, the cultivation of legumes and balanced fertilization.
- 4.4 The farmer shall take appropriate measures to establish a minimum level of soil cover in the most sensitive periods. These shall include, but not be limited to, sowing a winter crop after the harvest, sowing cover crops, leaving crop residues on the soil surface, mulching and non-turning tillage measures.
- 4.5 The farmer shall include legumes in their crop rotation or develop and implement a crop rotation plan.
- 4.6 The farmer shall apply organic and mineral fertilisers from trustworthy and legal sources.
- 4.7 The farmer shall keep records of fertiliser application.

5 Use of best practices in crop protection

- 5.1 The farmer shall comply with all relevant local, national and EU level plant protection legislation.
- 5.2 Negative environmental and health impacts of phytosanitary products shall be reduced by implementing systematic, recognised Integrated Crop Management techniques.
- 5.3 An Integrated Crop Management plan shall be developed and implemented, including adequate and continuous monitoring of crop health, use of non-chemical and chemical control methods and measures to improve crop resilience.
- 5.4 The farmer shall have acquired knowledge on the implementation of Integrated Pest Management systems through training, education or advice. Integrated Pest Management principles and corresponding techniques are implemented to avoid harm to human health, wildlife and/or plant biodiversity; as well as to soil, water and air quality.

- 5.5 The farmer shall only apply agrochemicals authorised for use in the EU.
- 5.6 The use of agrochemicals listed in the Stockholm Convention and Annex III to the Rotterdam Convention¹ shall be prohibited.
- 5.7 The use of agrochemicals the active ingredients of which are categorised as Class 1a or 1b in the World Health Organization (WHO) Recommended Classification of Pesticides by Hazard² shall be prohibited (e.g. tefluthrin, zeta-cypermethrin or zinc phosphide).
- 5.8 The use of desiccants prior to harvest (e.g. glyphosate or diquat) shall be prohibited.
- 5.9 There shall be no application of pesticides within 30 meters (or more if required by national law) of any populated area or water body, and all necessary precautions shall be taken to prevent people from entering recently sprayed areas.
- 5.10 Aerial application of pesticides (aerial spraying) shall be prohibited.
- 5.11 The staff dealing with plant protection products shall be competent and shall envisage the use of non-chemical alternatives to pesticides.
- 5.12 The farmer shall ensure that any use of biological control agents complies with national legislation.
- 5.13 When using a plant protection product, the farmer shall follow:
 - the manufacturer's instruction for use (to avoid under- or overdosing);
 - the label recommendations;
 - the appropriate pre-harvest and re-entry intervals.
- 5.14 The farmer shall ensure that there is regular maintenance of machinery, equipment and materials in order to ensure safe functioning of these devices.
- 5.15 The application of agrochemicals shall be duly documented.
- 5.16 The farmer shall manage and dispose of waste, including hazardous materials as well as agrochemicals and their containers, in such a manner as to avoid any risks to humans and the environment.

6 Use of best practices in water management

- 6.1 Existing water rights, both formal and customary, shall be respected, and water use shall be in compliance with applicable regulations and local legislation.
- 6.2 *In case of irrigation:* The farmer shall hold a valid water extraction license and ensure that any use of water, other than rainwater, has been approved by the relevant

¹ Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants: <https://www.pops.int/Portals/0/download.aspx?d=UNEP-POPS-COP-CONVTEXT-2017.English.pdf>

Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade: <https://www.pic.int/Portals/5/download.aspx?d=UNEP-FAO-RC-CONVTEXT-2017.English.pdf>

² The WHO Recommended Classification of Pesticides by Hazard: <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/332193/9789240005662-eng.pdf?ua=1>

authorities. The farmer shall also ensure that their practices (e. g. water extraction) do not impact sensitive wetlands or swamps in the vicinity of their operation.

- 6.3 The farmer shall ensure that the water used for irrigation is in compliance with applicable regulations, including food safety legislation.
- 6.4 There shall be monitoring, appropriate to scale, of water quality and water use on the farm. The farmer shall implement actions to reduce water use wherever possible.
- 6.5 The farmer shall implement Good Agricultural Practices to minimise diffuse and localised impacts on surface and ground water quality from chemical residues, fertilisers, erosion or other sources. This shall include but not be limited to the following:
 - The farmer shall take appropriate measures to avoid pollution from waste water.
 - The farmer shall employ practices to prevent the runoff of any chemical, mineral or organic substance (including crop protection products, fertilisers and manure).
 - The quality of water bodies on or close to the farm and farm land shall be protected by establishing riparian buffer strips along water courses.
 - Any direct evidence of localised contamination of ground or surface water shall be reported to, and monitored in collaboration with and as required, by local authorities.
- 6.6 The farmer shall use sewage sludge in line with best practices and comply with applicable regulations and local legislation:
 - The farmer shall follow applicable regulations regarding the analysis and treatment of raw sewage sludge before use.
 - The farmer shall apply Good Agricultural Practices when applying treated sewage sludge to soils.
 - Sludge shall not be applied directly to the crop after flowering.
 - The discharge of sewage must not contaminate water, soils or crops.

7 Use of best practices in waste management

- 7.1 The farmer shall comply with all relevant legislation for the safe and proper handling, storage, transportation and disposal of waste material, especially hazardous substances.
- 7.2 The burning on any part of the property of crop residues or waste, or as part of vegetation clearance, shall not be allowed, unless it is required by national legislation as a sanitary measure.
- 7.3 The farmer shall handle biodegradable waste and agricultural by-products appropriately to avoid pollution and prevent pathogenic contamination.
- 7.4 The premises shall have adequate provisions for waste disposal.

- 7.5 Waste materials shall be stored in a proper and legal manner.
- Waste shall be stored in a segregated manner (e.g. hazardous waste is stored separately from non-hazardous waste, waste is not stored together with non-waste).
 - Waste storage areas shall be located an appropriate distance from housing, water bodies and conservation areas.
- 7.6 The farmer shall establish procedures and make equipment available to deal with accidents with and spills of crop protection products, fertilisers and fuels.
- 7.7 The farmer shall implement measures to reduce, reuse and recycle waste where possible.

8 Responsible land use and biodiversity protection

- 8.1 Deforestation and conversion of natural ecosystems including, but not limited to, forests, wetlands, peatlands, grasslands, riparian areas or steep slopes for the cultivation of Donau Soja soya beans and other arable crops shall be prohibited.
- The farmer shall only use cropland that was dedicated to agricultural use no later than 1 January 2008, hence excluding any further expansion of agricultural land for the cultivation of Donau Soja soya beans and other arable crops.
- 8.2 The farmer shall take appropriate measures to protect carbon-rich ecosystems such as wetlands and peatlands; this shall include but not be limited to a ban on drainage and a ban on the burning of peatland.
- 8.3 The farmer shall not grow Donau Soja soya beans and other arable crops in the following protected areas unless the use of such areas for agricultural purposes is explicitly allowed in the respective management plan while respecting the protection goals within the protected area:
- areas designated by law or by the relevant authority for nature protection purposes;
 - areas for the protection of rare, threatened or endangered ecosystems or species (recognised by international agreements or the European Commission or included in lists drawn up by intergovernmental organisations or the International Union for Conservation of Nature [IUCN]).
- 8.4 In case of any alteration of protected areas, these areas shall be restored to their former state, or legally approved compensating actions shall be taken.
- 8.5 The farmer shall identify natural and semi-natural habitats, water courses and production areas on their farm and implement measures to avoid damage or deterioration of habitats and to enhance biodiversity. Measures shall include but not be limited to the following:
- The farmer shall maintain or, if necessary, establish land devoted to non-productive features or areas, including, but not limited to, set-aside land, buffer zones or special landscape features.

- The farmer shall take appropriate measures to minimise land fragmentation and shall maintain existing ecological corridors.
 - The farmer shall retain landscape features, including, but not limited to, hedgerows, ditches or woods. The farmer shall not cut hedges and trees during the bird breeding and nesting season.
 - The farmer shall maintain or restore areas of natural vegetation around bodies of water (riparian vegetation and floodplains) and on areas sensitive to erosion (steep slopes and hills).
 - The application of plant protection products or fertilisers in riparian buffer strips or in natural and semi-natural habitats shall be prohibited.
- 8.6 The farmer shall protect rare, threatened or endangered species on the farm including, but not limited to, a ban on gathering or hunting threatened or endangered species as well as illegal hunting or fishing.
- 8.7 The farmer shall take appropriate measures to prevent the spreading of invasive alien species by preventing their introduction, by removing them as quickly as possible once detected and by notifying local authorities when their spreading cannot be stopped locally.

9 Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions

- 9.1 The farmer shall have knowledge of how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase the sequestration of greenhouse gases on the farm.
- 9.2 The farmer shall monitor relevant data contributing to greenhouse gas emissions (e.g. yields, seeds, fertiliser, pesticide and fuel use).
- 9.3 The farmer shall identify and implement measures to minimise greenhouse gas emissions on the farm, including, but not limited to, reducing the use of fossil fuels (e.g. by increasing the share of renewable energies, implementing precision agriculture techniques, controlled traffic farming [CTF] or lighter machinery).
- 9.4 The farmer shall identify and implement measures to increase carbon sequestration on the farm (e.g. by planting cover crops or applying intercropping practices).

10 Compliance with human and labour rights and safe working conditions

- 10.1 The farmer shall comply with fundamental conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO Conventions). This shall include but not be limited to:
- All workers shall have the right to form or join organisations that defend their interests, and shall have the right to negotiate for fair wages and working conditions.
 - The effective functioning of worker associations/organizations of workers shall not be impeded. Representatives shall not be subject to discrimination and shall have access to their members in the workplace on request.

- No forced, compulsory, bonded, trafficked or otherwise involuntary labour shall be used in any stage of production. Workers shall not be subject to corporal punishment, mental or physical oppression or coercion, verbal or physical abuse, sexual harassment or any kind of intimidation. No workers of any type shall be required to lodge their identity papers with anyone, unless required by law.
 - Child labour shall be forbidden. Children under 15 years (or at a higher age as established in national law) shall not perform any productive work. Young workers (15–18 years) must not undertake hazardous work that jeopardizes their health and welfare, including by interfering with their education.
 - Equal work must be equally paid. All workers shall have equal access to training and benefits, and shall have equal opportunities for promotion and for filling any available position.
 - There shall be no engagement in, support for, or tolerance of any form of discrimination.
- 10.2 The working conditions of all workers shall be in line with human rights as well as with local, national and EU-wide regulatory requirements and relevant collective bargaining agreements.
- 10.3 All workers shall have a written contract in a language they can understand. In those countries where there are no requirements for formal labour agreements between workers and employers, alternative documented evidence of a labour relationship shall be present.
- 10.4 Farmers shall implement policies and procedures to address workers grievances.
- 10.5 Gross wages, benefits and social security, holiday entitlement, parental leave, periods of notice, etc. shall comply with the relevant legislation and industry-specific agreements.
- 10.6 The work week shall be set according to local and national laws, shall be consistent with local industry standards, and shall not routinely exceed the maximum of 48 hours per week.
- 10.7 Overtime in excess of 12 hours per week shall only be allowable if it happens in extraordinary, limited periods where there are time constraints or risks of economic loss and where conditions regarding overtime in excess of 12 hours per week have been agreed between workers and management.
- 10.8 Overtime shall always be voluntary and shall be paid in accordance with local and national laws or sector agreements.
- 10.9 Working hours and overtime shall be monitored.
- 10.10 Deductions from wages for disciplinary purposes shall not be made unless legally permitted. Wages paid shall be recorded by the employer.
- 10.11 Producers and their employees shall demonstrate an awareness and understanding of health and safety matters.
- A written health, safety and hygiene policy shall be in place on the farm.

- Relevant health and safety risks shall be identified, procedures shall be developed by employers to address these risks, and these procedures shall be monitored.
 - Workers shall receive adequate health and safety training.
 - Dangerous and/or complex work shall be carried out by qualified workers.
 - Restrictions related to hazardous activities shall be in place on the farm.
- 10.12 Accident and emergency procedures shall be in place and instructions must be clearly understood by all workers. Procedures and measures shall include but not be limited to:
- the availability of equipment to prevent and handle accidents (e.g. protective clothing, first aid kits, safety procedures);
 - the availability of qualified personnel with first aid skills.
- 10.13 All accidents shall be recorded and shall be reported to the local authority as required.
- 10.14 All workers shall have access to clean and safe drinking water, adequate sanitary facilities and protective equipment.
- 10.15 All workers living on the farm shall have access to adequate, safe and clean facilities.
- 10.16 All children living on the farm shall have access to quality primary school education.