IOAS Official Notice 2022-01
Clarification on IOAS Surveillance Approaches
April 28, 2022

To: All IOAS Accredited and Applicant Certification Bodies
Scope: All Schemes

IOAS assessment and surveillance of CBs is based on document review, on-site and remote visits to CB premises and those of any satellite offices and subcontractors, as well as witness and review audits of CB clients. Desk review of data provided by CBs is also sometimes employed. All of these techniques may be employed for routine assessment and surveillance as well as for investigations in response to concerns, leads and complaints.

The contract that CBs sign with IOAS (see clause C17) grants IOAS access to all such sites and requires CBs to, in turn, secure such access through their legal agreements with their clients. Clause C18 requires CBs to assist IOAS in the investigation of leads and complaints which may require data review or on-site or remote visits either to CB premises or certified clients. To date, most such activities by IOAS have been performed with advance notice being given either to the CB and/or the operator.

With this official notice we wish to clarify that such activity may also be performed with either short notice or without any notice being given to the CB or a certified client. ‘Partial notice’ may also be given to the CB which means that the CB may be informed that IOAS plans to perform some site visits, but details of which sites may not be provided in advance.

This is an especially necessary tool for timely and effective investigation of complaints and concerns but also as a tool for market surveillance to maintain confidence in the work of accredited CBs. Short notice or unannounced assessments may include unannounced review audits to operators. All activities are conducted by IOAS assessors and contracted personnel who will carry with them clear identification as well as documentation in support of their task. They may be accompanied by personnel from scheme owners, regulators or IOAS supervisory bodies who will also carry clear identification.

Accreditation activities that are conducted under short notice or that are unannounced are not charged to the CB unless CB failings are identified in line with the current IOAS Complaints Policy PL0511b. Activities that are ‘partially announced’ are normally charged to the CB but this would be clarified at the time of giving notice.

We therefore request that all CBs:

1. Ensure that all your personnel and all your clients under IOAS accredited schemes are aware that they may expect an unannounced visit (physical and/or virtual) by IOAS assessors at any given time during their working hours.
2. Support IOAS and its assessors by reminding clients and responding to any queries about their contractual obligations to grant the accreditation body, scheme owners, and supervisory bodies full access to premises, personnel and information, including documents and any records related to their certified production or certified trade.

We appreciate your cooperation.

Best regards,

[Signature]

David Crucefix PhD
Executive Director

References:
IOAS document PL0502: Contract for provision of IOAS accreditation and/or recommendation for approval.
IOAS document PL0511b: Complaints against Accredited Certification Bodies
IAF Informative Document (IAF ID4: 2020) Market surveillance visits to certified organizations

Note: Above IOAS policies are available at www.ioas.org in the Client Area. The IAF document is available at https://iaf.nu/en/iaf-documents/?cat_id=10

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