Leading Harvest Traceability Standard Guidance for Standard Users and Certification Bodies

Introduction

The **Leading Harvest Traceability Standard** helps organizations track certified goods as they move through complex supply chains. This companion guidance document is designed to make the requirements easier to understand and apply in practice.

For each section of the standard, this guide provides:

- A plain-language explanation of the requirement
- Examples of the types of evidence that demonstrate conformance
- Practical tips for implementation
- Best practices from across the industry

This guide is not a replacement for the Traceability Standard itself. Instead, it is meant to be a hands-on resource for Traceability Standard Users, auditors, and supply chain partners who need clear direction on what compliance looks like in real terms.

I. Critical Control Points

What this requirement means

A **Critical Control Point (CCP)** is a step in your supply chain where mistakes could cause traceability problems — such as losing track of which goods are certified or mixing certified with non-certified goods. By identifying and monitoring CCPs, you reduce the risk of errors and strengthen confidence in your traceability system.

Common CCPs include:

- Receiving deliveries from suppliers
- Processing or transformation steps (e.g., milling, blending, packaging)
- Labeling or relabeling products
- Storage and distribution points
- Repackaging or subcontracting activities

What you need to do

1. **Identify CCPs:** Map out your supply chain and mark all the steps where certified goods could lose their identity or be confused with non-certified goods.
2. **Evaluate risks:** For each CCP, ask: *What could go wrong here? How likely is it? What would the impact be?*
3. **Set critical limits:** Define measurable limits that help you know when the process is “under control.” For example, a critical limit might be “certified goods are always stored in a designated, labeled area.”
4. **Monitor CCPs:** Decide how you will check that CCPs are under control, how often, and who is responsible.
5. **Plan corrective actions:** Write down what you will do if a CCP goes out of control — including how to fix the issue quickly, prevent it from happening again, and document what was done.

Examples of evidence

- A supply chain map or flow chart showing identified CCPs
- Risk assessment forms that evaluate traceability risks at each CCP
- Written procedures for monitoring CCPs (e.g., daily warehouse checks, intake inspections)
- Records of monitoring activities (e.g., checklists, inspection logs, photographs)
- Corrective action reports showing how problems were fixed and prevented from recurring

Practical tips

- **Start simple:** Even a spreadsheet or whiteboard can work for identifying CCPs before moving to more complex systems.
- **Use visuals:** Diagrams and photos of storage or processing areas help staff understand and remember CCPs.
- **Assign clear responsibility:** Name the individual (by role, not just job title) who monitors each CCP.

Best practices

- Review your CCP list at least once a year or whenever your supply chain changes.
- Train staff at CCPs to recognize and report issues immediately.
- Where possible, build automated checks into your systems (e.g., barcode scanning at receiving).

II. Volume Tracking and Accounting

What this requirement means

Volume tracking ensures that the **quantity of certified goods moving through your system can be verified at every stage**. Without accurate numbers, it's impossible to prove that claims about certified goods are legitimate and that no double-counting has occurred.
You must measure and record how much certified product you receive, process, store, and ship—along with any relevant product characteristics (like moisture or sugar content) that affect the integrity of the goods.

What you need to do

1. **Measure quantities:** Decide on the most appropriate measurement unit for your goods (e.g., kilograms, tons, liters, or number of items). Record measurements whenever goods are harvested, packaged, transported, processed, or distributed.
2. **Capture key details:** For every measurement, document the type of goods, batch or lot number, date and time, location, and any traceability code.
3. **Track product attributes:** If product characteristics matter (for example, moisture content in grain), capture these values to help distinguish certified goods.
4. **Prevent double counting:** Keep documentation showing that the certified volume you claim matches the volume available from the originating Leading Harvest–certified farm and that no other Traceability Standard User is claiming the same goods.

Examples of evidence

- Scale tickets, weigh-bridge receipts, or shipping manifests showing product weights or volumes.
- Batch records or production logs detailing input and output quantities.
- Inventory reports that reconcile beginning stock, incoming deliveries, outgoing shipments, and ending stock.
- Certificates or supplier declarations showing the certified status of incoming goods.
- Internal calculations demonstrating that certified output does not exceed certified input.

Practical tips

- **Use consistent units:** Choose one primary measurement unit for each product and stick with it across all records.
- **Automate when possible:** Barcode scanners or digital inventory systems reduce manual errors.
- **Regular reconciliations:** Compare physical inventory with recorded volumes monthly (or more often) to catch discrepancies early.

Best practices

- Build “reasonableness checks” into your process—for example, if moisture loss during drying is expected, document the acceptable range.
- Share reconciled volume data with key suppliers to strengthen traceability integrity.
- Keep at least two years of records (or more if required by law or customers) to allow for full tracebacks.

III. Documentation and Records

What this requirement means

Clear documentation and well-maintained records are the backbone of your traceability system. They show how certified goods move through your operations and prove that your procedures are being followed. Records also make audits smoother and reduce the risk of losing information over time.

What you need to do

1. **Describe your system:** Write out a detailed description of how goods flow through your business—from supplier to customer—including storage, handling, and processing steps.
2. **Develop procedures:** Create step-by-step instructions for all traceability activities and assign responsibility to specific roles.
3. **Secure and store data:** Make sure records are safe from loss, unauthorized access, or alteration, while still being accessible to those who need them.

Examples of evidence

- A flow chart or written description of material and product movement.
- Written traceability procedures, with names or roles of responsible personnel.
- Records management policy describing how long records are kept and how they are backed up.
- Access control logs or IT security policies for digital records.

Practical tips

- **Keep it simple:** Procedures should be easy for staff to follow.
- **Use digital tools wisely:** Even basic cloud storage (with proper security) can provide safe and accessible record-keeping.
- **Train staff on record-keeping:** Employees should understand both *what* to record and *why* it matters.

Best practices

- Regularly test your ability to retrieve records—ask staff to pull up a record from six months ago to check accessibility.
- Store critical documents in at least two secure locations (e.g., cloud + local backup).
- Update your system whenever your supply chain changes.

IV. Management Review and Continual Improvement

What this requirement means

A traceability system is never “finished.” Regular management reviews help you check what’s working, fix what isn’t, and make improvements. This ensures your system adapts to changes in your business and supply chain.

What you need to do

1. **Plan reviews:** Set a schedule for reviewing your traceability system (at least once per year).
2. **Assess findings:** Look at audit results, staff feedback, and records of CCP monitoring or traceback exercises.
3. **Decide improvements:** Based on findings, update procedures, tools, or training.
4. **Communicate changes:** Make sure relevant staff know about any updates.

Examples of evidence

- Meeting minutes or reports from management review sessions.
- Action plans documenting improvements made after reviews.
- Communication logs or training records showing updates shared with staff.

Practical tips

- Include staff from different departments (e.g., operations, quality, logistics) in reviews for a broader perspective.
- Use a simple checklist or template to guide review meetings.

Best practices

- Link reviews to business planning so traceability improvements align with wider company goals.
- Track completion of improvement actions to show progress over time.

V. Monitoring (traceback procedure)

What this requirement means

A traceback procedure allows you to follow a product back through the supply chain to confirm its origin. This is how you prove that goods labeled as Leading Harvest certified truly came from certified sources.

What you need to do

1. **Design your system:** Decide how you will trace products (e.g., QR codes, software systems, or manual registers).
2. **Keep key records:** Maintain supplier names, locations, dates, batch numbers, and other relevant details.
3. **Test the system:** Conduct traceback exercises to make sure the system works.
4. **Address problems:** Do root cause analysis if tracebacks fail and take corrective action.
5. **Update annually:** Improve your procedure based on what you learn.

Examples of evidence

- Written traceback procedure describing methods and responsibilities.
- Records of tracebacks conducted (test exercises and real cases).
- Reports of corrective actions taken after traceback issues.
- Updated versions of the traceback procedure showing annual revisions.

Practical tips

- **Practice makes perfect:** Run mock traceback exercises regularly, even if customers don't request them.
- **Keep it time-bound:** A good rule of thumb is being able to complete a traceback within 48 hours.

Best practices

- Involve suppliers in traceback exercises to test end-to-end traceability.
- Use technology (like batch-scanning apps) to speed up tracebacks and reduce errors.

VI. Traceability Models

Traceability Standard Users must choose **one of two models**: **Segregation** or **Mass Balance**.

Segregation

What this requirement means

Certified goods are kept completely separate from non-certified goods at all times. This is the most straightforward way to protect integrity but requires strong physical controls.

What you need to do

- Document your segregation procedure.
- Clearly separate certified goods (storage, transport, processing).
- Use labeling or color-coding to identify certified goods.
- Keep detailed records for each batch or shipment.
- Monitor and correct any issues.
- Ensure suppliers follow segregation rules.
- Conduct risk-based checks on suppliers.

Examples of evidence

- Warehouse maps showing designated storage areas.
- Photos of labeled storage bins or containers.
- Supplier audits confirming segregation procedures.
- Batch records linking certified goods from receipt to shipment.

Practical tips

- Use visual cues (tape lines on floors, color-coded bins).
- Train warehouse staff on segregation rules.

Best practices

- Random spot checks to ensure goods are properly segregated.
- Require suppliers to submit their segregation SOPs.

Mass Balance

What this requirement means

Certified and non-certified goods may be physically mixed, but the proportion of certified goods is tracked through an accounting system. The volume of certified goods sold cannot exceed the certified input volume.

What you need to do

- Document the boundaries of your system (inputs, outputs, and processes).
- Record all certified inputs and outputs, including characteristics and conversion factors.
- Calculate mass balance regularly to confirm certified output ≤ certified input.
- Ensure suppliers also follow mass balance procedures.
- Review supplier systems to check accuracy.

Examples of evidence

- Input/output logs showing certified and non-certified volumes.
- Mass balance calculations with conversion factors.
- Supplier audit reports reviewing mass balance systems.
- Invoices or certificates tied to certified inputs.

Practical tips

- **Use spreadsheets or software:** Set up formulas for automatic calculations.
- **Reconcile frequently:** Monthly checks reduce the risk of accumulating errors.

Best practices

- Independent verification of conversion factors.
- Sharing mass balance reports with customers for transparency.

VII. Training and Competence

What this requirement means

Your traceability system is only as strong as the people running it. Staff must have the right knowledge and skills for their roles, with training matched to responsibilities.

What you need to do

1. **Identify competencies:** Decide what knowledge/skills each role in the traceability system needs.
2. **Define qualifications:** Document these in job descriptions or role profiles.
3. **Train staff:** Provide training so employees can carry out their responsibilities effectively.

Examples of evidence

- Job descriptions showing traceability responsibilities and required skills.
- Training records (sign-in sheets, certificates, online course completions).
- Competency assessments or quizzes confirming knowledge.

Practical tips

- **Tailor training:** Warehouse staff need practical segregation training, while managers need training on system oversight.
- **Keep records simple:** A spreadsheet tracking who has been trained on what is often enough.

Best practices

- Refresh training annually or when procedures change.
- Involve staff in developing training to increase buy-in.
- Use real examples from your operation during training sessions.