



## **Product Certification**

### **The nature of the service provided by IFIA member companies**

Product certification consists of a representation by a certification body, based upon a defined demonstration, that certain specified requirements relating to a product or process (hereinafter, “product”) have been met. This demonstration may include testing, inspection, auditing of systems or records, examination of specifications or drawings or the like. It may or may not include some form of ongoing surveillance. It may or may not include the issuance or licensing of a certification mark, certificate, letter or report attesting to the demonstration of conformity to the specified requirements.

If the form of product certification contracted for includes surveillance, such surveillance may be provided to occur at specified or unspecified occasions at the point of production, along the market supply chain, in the marketplace or at the place of use.

Product certification is generally conducted pursuant to what is referred to as a “scheme” or “programme.” Product certification schemes generally have a scheme content, scheme owner, and certification bodies, such as IFIA Members, authorized to conduct the assessment and/or issue the certification or other form of attestation. As independent third party certification bodies, IFIA Members are retained for their impartiality in making such assessments, unrelated to either the seller or other person providing the product to be assessed or the buyer or other person with a user interest in the product.

It is important for contract parties and the public-at-large to understand the limitations of all forms of certification and the limited role undertaken by certification bodies, including IFIA Members, operating within the constraints of internationally recognized standards:

- Product certification bodies, including IFIA Members, are not involved in, nor are they permitted to be involved in, the design, manufacture, installation, distribution or maintenance of the products that they assess. Their contractual relation is with such design, manufacture, installation, distribution or maintenance organizations and it is such organizations which place the particular units of product into commerce, sell the product and reap the rewards of such commerce. The determinations made by the IFIA Member relate only to the design

assessed, model tested, the samples inspected or the process observed on a particular occasion; they do not necessarily indicate how the product may function after extended use, how long the product will last, or the ongoing validity of any certification or statement of attestation;

- Even in the case of those forms of assessment where there is a provision for some form of surveillance, such surveillance does not constitute, nor is it held out to be, a quality control process or system. Overall quality of individual units, and the individual units' conformity to the specified requirements, remain the responsibility of the manufacturer and others responsible for placing the individual units in commerce;
- The certification service provided by IFIA Members only offers a degree of assurance to the party responsible for the product that its product design, as submitted, meets the specified requirements and, if process review or factory inspection is included as part of a surveillance system, that the process of manufacturing is capable of manufacturing in accordance with the specified requirements. Product certification is not a representation or assurance that all units are, or will be, in conformity, unless the contract parties have contracted for 100% unit inspection.

It should also be recognized that product certification schemes generally do not entail a process for the imposition of higher standards subsequently required for products already certified and in commerce. While certification bodies will investigate claims of product non-compliance, product recalls from the marketplace are solely the responsibility of the manufacturer, distributor, etc.

IFIA Members offer product certification services only within the foregoing limits, unless expressly otherwise provided in the contract for service.

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