



Sod Quality Assurance Standards

INTRODUCTION

This voluntary sod quality assurance program provides a system to preserve the enhanced qualities of mixtures of grass varieties chosen for sod types intended for specific end uses. Sod types enrolled in the program are required to undergo an evaluation process that considers varietal attributes and available University research to determine seed mixture components appropriate for the sod type. The program provides third party assurance, through all phases of production, that sod meets defined specifications and has been produced according to rigorous production standards. The program also provides documented proof of conformance to Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) specifications for specified sod types. The program is the result of a collaborative effort of the Minnesota Sod Producers Association, the University of Minnesota, MnDOT and the Minnesota Crop Improvement Association (MCIA).

NOTICE: Sod sellers must provide a certificate bearing the MCIA quality assured seal at the time of product delivery to ensure that the sod being purchased conforms to program requirements. Sod delivered without a proper certificate does not conform to program requirements.

1. RESPONSIBILITIES

1.1. Sod producer shall:

- 1.1.1. Be a member in good standing of the Minnesota Sod Producers Association.
- 1.1.2. Be a member in good standing of the Minnesota Crop Improvement Association.
- 1.1.3. Meet federal and state requirements relating to sales of agricultural products.
- 1.1.4. Attend specified training sessions as required to participate in this program.
- 1.1.5. Submit information required for participation in the program.
- 1.1.6. Conform to all program requirements.
- 1.1.7. Ensure that all required inspections are completed prior to harvest.
- 1.1.8. Use quality conformance markings properly to identify only sod that has been determined to have met program requirements.
- 1.1.9. Permit access to production sites(s) and records for inspection.

1.2. MCIA shall:

- 1.2.1. Evaluate each application submitted to:
 - 1.2.1.1. Ensure program participation requirements have been met.
 - 1.2.1.2. Ensure all required information has been provided.
 - 1.2.1.3. Identify obviously non-conforming applications prior to inspection.
- 1.2.2. Provide an updated field application confirmation each year prior to harvest.
- 1.2.3. Perform field inspection:
 - 1.2.3.1. Prior to planting field.
 - 1.2.3.2. Annually prior to harvest.
- 1.2.4. Report field inspection results.
- 1.2.5. Determine field's conformity to standards.
- 1.2.6. Issue and monitor use of marks of conformity.
- 1.2.7. Perform surveillance audits and inspections.
- 1.2.8. Monitor program to validate the effectiveness of the system in achieving the program objectives.

2. APPLICATION FOR FIELD INSPECTION

- 2.1. Producer shall apply to Minnesota Crop Improvement Association on the form supplied by MCIA.
- 2.2. Producer shall submit application including all required documentation prior to seeding.
- 2.3. Applications shall include:
 - 2.3.1. Map describing field location
 - 2.3.2. Proof of identity of seed used/quantity planted
 - 2.3.3. Field number—unique to each field
 - 2.3.4. Planted area
 - 2.3.5. Records of required field preparation activities for specific sod type
 - 2.3.6. Soil type (mineral vs. peat base) of production field
 - 2.3.7. Signature on Application indicating grower's intention to:
 - 2.3.7.1. Adhere to program requirements.
 - 2.3.7.2. Permit access to MCIA for performing required inspections and examining required records.
- 2.4. Late applications may result in the field inspection not being made. A late application fee will be assessed.

3. FIELD STANDARDS

- 3.1. Land requirements—sod producer shall prepare field by destroying all weedy growth and vegetation from previous crop.
- 3.2. Seed requirements
 - 3.2.1. Seed mixtures for the production of sod enrolled in this program shall be supplied by approved sod seed vendors.
 - 3.2.2. Sod producer shall purchase seed from an approved seed vendor.
 - 3.2.3. Seed mixture composition for each sod type shall be defined.
 - 3.2.4. Seed mixture component quality specifications shall be defined and shall be suitable for the sod type to be produced.
 - 3.2.5. Seed mixtures suitable for sod production shall be marked by the seed vendor utilizing appropriate labels as determined for this program.
- 3.3. Planter shall be cleaned thoroughly prior to seeding enrolled field.
- 3.4. Field shall be seeded at the rate designated for the sod type.
- 3.5. Sod production field shall:
 - 3.5.1. Be separated from adjacent sod fields by a minimum of 4 feet.
 - 3.5.2. Comply with Minnesota Noxious Weed Law requirements including freedom from prohibited noxious weeds.
 - 3.5.3. Not contain undesirable species in excess of amounts allowed for the sod type being produced.
 - 3.5.4. Contain the mixture of grass species defined for the sod type.

4. FIELD INSPECTION

- 4.1. Fields shall be inspected by MCIA.
- 4.2. Field shall be inspected prior to seeding to verify that the field is free of living vegetation.
- 4.3. Fields shall be inspected annually prior to harvest to:
 - 4.3.1. Confirm that field standards have been met.
 - 4.3.2. Confirm planted area.
 - 4.3.3. Verify mix composition.
 - 4.3.4. Verify freedom from weeds/undesirable species.
 - 4.3.5. Confirm adequate separation from adjacent production.
- 4.4. Inspector shall issue a report for each field indicating:
 - 4.4.1. Conformance to program requirements.
 - 4.4.2. Requirements for corrective actions required to achieve conformance.

5. RECORD REQUIREMENTS

- 5.1. Producer shall retain records for one year following final sale from an enrolled field.
- 5.2. Required records:
 - 5.2.1. Map describing field location.
 - 5.2.2. Documentation of field preparation activities.
 - 5.2.3. Invoice and tags from seed planted.
 - 5.2.4. Planting records including documentation of planter cleanout.
 - 5.2.5. Harvest records including dates, amounts and any destroyed product.
 - 5.2.6. Sales records (square feet sold).
 - 5.2.7. Current inventory of eligible sod.
 - 5.2.8. Quality Assurance program records—(applications, inspection reports, field approval report, etc.)

6. MARK OF CONFORMITY

- 6.1. MCIA shall issue proof of conformity to applications with eligible sod.
- 6.2. Proof of conformity shall accompany all sales and transfers of eligible sod and shall be provided to all buyers at the time of delivery.
- 6.3. Sod shipped without proof of conformity shall not have met program requirements and will be deemed to be non-conformant.

7. SANCTIONS FOR MISCONDUCT

- 7.1. It is the responsibility of each program participant to abide by the rules, adhere to the standards and report irregularities or violations.
- 7.2. Intentional violation of program requirements and/or misuse of marks of conformity may result in suspension from program participation.
- 7.3. Decisions to suspend participation in the program due to misconduct shall be made by the MCIA Board of Directors.
- 7.4. Appeals or petitions for reinstatement shall be directed to the MCIA Board of Directors.

8. FEES

- 8.1. Information on the fees required for participation in the program is available on request from MCIA.
- 8.2. A research and promotion fee may be assessed on sales of designated sod types.