

Certification scheme Meadow Milk complies with EmpCo Directive

TO	Licensees Meadow Milk
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Summary

European EmpCo Directive (EU 2024/825), aimed at improving sustainability information for consumers, formulates new requirements for labels with a sustainability claim. In the Netherlands, these requirements have been implemented in the Directive on Better Sustainability Information for Consumers, which will be enforced by the Netherlands Authority for Consumers and Markets (ACM). The Certification Scheme for Meadow Milk (Weidemelk) of the Grazing Foundation Stichting Weidegang complies with all requirements of the EmpCo Directive.

Background

Various organisations that use the Meadow Milk logo or base their grazing claim on the Meadow Milk (Weidemelk) scheme of the Grazing Foundation (Stichting Weidegang) have asked whether the certification scheme complies with the new requirements included in EmpCo Directive (EU 2024/825).

EmpCo Directive (EU 2024/825)

The EmpCo Directive (EU 2024/825), amending Directives 2005/29/EC and 2011/83/EU as regards empowering consumers for the green transition through better protection against unfair practices and through better information, lays down new requirements for sustainability claims. The Directive states that labels with a sustainability claim must be based on legislation or a certification scheme; otherwise, they are considered an unfair commercial practice. Certification scheme means a third-party verification scheme that certifies that a product, process or business complies with certain requirements, that allows for the use of a corresponding sustainability label, and the terms of which, including its requirements, are publicly available and meet the following criteria:

1. the scheme is open under transparent, fair, and non-discriminatory terms to all traders willing and able to comply with the scheme's requirements.
2. the scheme's requirements are developed by the scheme owner in consultation with relevant experts and stakeholders.
3. the scheme sets out procedures for dealing with non-compliance with the scheme's requirements and provides for the withdrawal or suspension of the use of the sustainability label by the trader in case of non-compliance with the scheme's requirements.
4. the monitoring of a trader's compliance with the scheme's requirements is subject to an objective procedure and is carried out by a third party whose competence and independence from both the scheme owner and the trader are based on international, Union or national standards and procedures.

Assessment of the Meadow Milk Certification Scheme

The Meadow Milk scheme of the Grazing Foundation meets all requirements of EmpCo Directive (EU) 2024/825.

Certification scheme publicly available

- All conditions of the Meadow Milk scheme, including the General Terms and Conditions for Grazing and Meadow Dairy Products (GT&C), are publicly available at <https://www.weidemelk.nl/nl/voorwaarden.html>.

- The legal documents have been published in English. Manuals regarding the certification procedure are available in Dutch, English, French and German.

The scheme is open under transparent, fair, and non-discriminatory terms to all traders willing and able to comply with the scheme's requirements.

- Participation in the Meadow Milk Certification is open to all dairy companies in the Netherlands and abroad. Based on the certification scheme, 298 certificates have been issued. The participating dairy companies are located in the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and Luxembourg.
- The annual audits and inspections are carried out based on the requirements set out in the GT&C.
- Certificates are issued by independent Certifying Bodies in accordance with the criteria of the GT&C.
- Certifying Bodies are recognised by the Grazing Foundation in order to qualify for certifying dairy companies. The Foundation enters into an agreement with the Certifying Body: the Agreement between Grazing Foundation [Stichting Weidegang] and Certifying Body regarding certification and checking work for use of the Meadow Milk Logo by Meadow Dairy Companies.
- The fact that Certifying Bodies can qualify in this manner increases the accessibility of the certification scheme, as these audits and inspections at companies can more easily be carried out jointly in combination with audits and inspections for other certification schemes. In total, five Certifying Bodies are affiliated, from the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and France.
- The Certification Bodies are audited annually on behalf of the Foundation to safeguard the quality of the execution of the work. The Foundation has an integrity programme for this purpose.
- The Executive Board of the Grazing Foundation establishes the GT&C and is authorised to amend them. The Executive Board includes representatives from the dairy sector, the dairy farming sector and animal welfare organisations. The Executive Board is chaired by an independent chairperson.

The requirements of the scheme (GT&C) are developed in consultation with experts and stakeholders.

- An annual meeting is organised for participants in the certification scheme to provide input on the certification scheme.
- Wageningen UR and TNO have been involved as knowledge institutions in the development of the scheme.

Procedures for addressing non-compliance with the requirements.

- Article 7 of the GT&C sets out the procedure for:
 - a) a written warning, setting out rectification measures, will be issued;
 - b) heightened supervision will be carried out, with rectification measures being imposed, followed by an unannounced Rectification Audit;
 - c) the Grazing Certificate will be suspended for a maximum of three months, with rectification measures being imposed, followed by an unannounced Rectification Audit; or
 - d) the Grazing Certificate (or part of it) will be revoked.

Monitoring of compliance is independently assessed based on an objective procedure based on international, Union or national standards and procedures.

- Monitoring of compliance with the certification scheme is carried out by designated independent Certifying Bodies in accordance with the criteria of the GT&C.
- One of the admission requirements for a Certifying Body is that it must be accredited under ISO 17065.
- The Grazing Foundation audits the activities of the Certifying Bodies annually in accordance with a procedure laid down in an integrity programme. An independent expert carries out this audit on behalf of

the Grazing Foundation. The integrity programme also includes a procedure for addressing non-compliance with the requirements.