



SRI SATHYA SAI UNIVERSITY FOR HUMAN EXCELLENCE

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Voluntary Certification Scheme for Farmers Cultivating Organic Finger Millet (Ragi) Certification Process

0. Introduction

Sri Sathya Sai University for Human Excellence (SSSUHE) was established in 2019 as a State Private University in Karnataka by Sadguru Sri Madhusudan Sai, a global humanitarian and spiritual leader. The principle guiding SSSUHE is ‘ātmano mokṣārtham jagat hitāya ca – redemption of one’s own self and the welfare of the society’; The University’s motto, ‘yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam – perfection in action is yoga’, reflects its commitment to achieving excellence in all areas.

The vision of SSSUHE is to provide FREE of cost, quality higher education of global standards based on ancient Indian ethos and to develop individuals with competent hands, brilliant minds, and compassionate hearts for universal welfare. Not just quality education is offered absolutely FREE of cost, but so are lodging, boarding and all other essentials of daily living. The main beneficiary of the University are the youth from rural areas. Currently, more than 70% of the students are below the poverty line, and about 32% are first-generation literates.

SSSUHE stands out as a unique institution that blends spiritual and worldly knowledge based on the ancient Indian Gurukulam System of Values-based Education. Its curriculum, extending beyond traditional education, encompasses Vedic Studies, Performing Arts, Medical and Paramedical Education, Agriculture, Mental Health, Sports and Yoga, Physical Education and Vocational Skills.

In short span of five years of its establishment, the University has achieved several milestones. University established India’s first free private rural medical college, the Sri Madhusudan Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (SMSIMSR), which was inaugurated by the Hon’ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in March 2023. Smt



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Droupadi Murmu, the Hon'ble President of India, graced the second convocation of SSSUHE in July 2023. The University was recognised as the Greatest Brand 2023 at the 20th Edition of the Asia-Africa Business & Social Forum in Dubai hosted by AsiaOne. SSSUHE won GOLD at economic times education excellence awards 2024 held on 6th June in New Delhi. Notably, SSSUHE has signed MoUs with leading national and international institutions such as Emory University (USA), AIIMS (Delhi) and BHU (Varanasi) etc. for academic advancement and research activities.

The University is an integral part of Sri Madhusudan Sai Global Humanitarian Mission, which encompasses service activities in the fields of nutrition, education, healthcare and spirituality with the message of 'One World, One Family'. Since 2011, Sri Madhusudan Sai has founded several institutions of excellence across 60 plus countries. According to Sri Madhusudan Sai "The most important member of society is the child. For a child is the seed of the tree of the future. Providing the basic necessities of nutrition, education, and healthcare to every child is not merely the responsibility of the parents to whom the child is born, but the collective responsibility of the entire society. Uplifting those who need help uplifts the entire country and the world, for we are all a connected whole – 'vasudhaiva kutumbakam – One World, One Family'."

1. Scope

This document describes the process of evaluation and certification from handling of applications to issuance of certificate and maintenance of certification to be followed by SSSUHE.

The certification covers two options as below :

- A. Individual farmer who can demonstrate competence as per the prescribed standard.
- B. Farmer family which can demonstrate competence as per the prescribed standard collectively.



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2. References

Minimum Standard of Competence Issue 0 (draft)

3. Definitions

- a) Farmer is any individual who engages in cultivation of land for production of organic finger millet (ragi).
- b) Farmer family means individuals within a family of farmer who engage in various activities of finger millet (ragi) cultivation and have competencies relating to the activities which they perform

4. Description of the certification process

4.1 Application

- i. The farmer, in case of individual or head of the family, in case of farmer family or anyone authorized on behalf of farmer family shall apply to SSSUHE in the prescribed application form at **Annex I**.
- ii. In case of farmer family, each member of family shall apply separately in the prescribed application form mentioned above.
- iii. The application shall be accompanied by the documents as indicated in the application form.
- iv. The farmer shall also submit evidence of skill in the form of GPS tagged photos, video or document preferably relating to but not limited to the following activities:
 - Seed sourcing
 - Sowing
 - Procurement of inputs



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4.2 Application review

- On receipt of duly filled application along with all the required annexures as evidence from the Ragi farmers, the applications shall be checked by the SSSUHE to ensure the applicants meet the stipulated scheme criteria.
- If the application is not complete, missing information shall be sought within **3 working days** of receipt of application from the applicant by the SSSUHE.
- The applicants shall be requested to submit the missing information within **15 working days** to the SSSUHE.
- Duly checked and completed application shall be acknowledged by the SSSUHE to the applicant.

4.3 Appointment of Evaluation Team (ET)

- The ET comprising of one qualified certification expert as the Team Leader (TL), one agriculture expert as Technical Expert (TE) and one senior ragi farmer (not from the same district where evaluation is to be conducted) as per requirement, taking into consideration the aspect of Conflict of Interest (COI) and after confirming their availability shall be appointed by SSSUHE.
- Competence criteria for certification expert, technical expert and senior ragi farmer is given in **Annex II**.
- The ET shall need to sign the Code of Conduct agreement for impartiality, integrity, independence, confidentiality and conflict of interest before taking up the assessment.



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4.4 Preparation for Evaluation

- i. For evaluating the competence of the candidates for certification, the evaluation shall be based on the Scheme criteria and Minimum Standard of Competence (MSC) developed by the expert group following prescribed method for evaluating the knowledge, skill and ability (KSA).
- ii. The ET TL shall prepare the evaluation plan in consultation with the other ET member and the SSSUHE.
- iii. The SSSUHE shall inform the candidates minimum **15 working days in advance** about the date, time, venue and plan of evaluation.
- iv. The SSSUHE shall ensure that the resources and facilities are made available to the ET for the assessment.

4.5 Evaluation

- i. The evaluation shall be carried out by the ET individually/jointly as per plan based on the information and evidence submitted with the application form. The ET may accept any additional evidence from the farmer or farmer family. Checklists shall be used where applicable. The evaluation shall be done in accordance with Scheme criteria and defined MSC. The observations based on the objective evidence shall be collected during the evaluation.
- ii. In case of individual farmers, the evaluation maybe carried out in an identified location where individual farmers can be orally examined. The evaluation may be conducted by visiting the farmer family, if convenient.
- iii. In case of farmer family, the ET shall visit the residence of the farmer family to conduct the oral evaluation.



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- iv. The oral evaluation shall comprise of 30 minutes of question answer session followed by the farmer (or farmer family) showing evidence to the ET, based on which, the ET may ask further questions. The total duration of evaluation shall normally of one hour.
- v. Each attribute under “knowledge” and “skill” shall be rated on a scale of 1-5. It shall be necessary to score at least 50% in both “knowledge” and “skill” and 70% overall to get certified.

4.6 Evaluation Report

The TL shall prepare the evaluation report incorporating the observations of the TE and the senior ragi farmer on the prescribed format and forward to the SSSUHE within **maximum of 8 calendar days after completing the assessment.**

4.7 Review & Decision

On receipt of the evaluation report from the ET, the SSSUHE shall place the report before the R & D Panel for certification decision (**within 5 calendar days from the receipt of the ET report**). The R & D Panel may seek any clarification / further information, if need be, from the ET TL (**response from ET TL to be received within 8 calendar days**) and may require ET to modify its report.

4.8 Issue of Certificate

- i). Issue of certificate – certificate validity 5 years
- ii). Certificate format details – **Annex III**
- iii). Designated signatory –



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4.9 Maintenance of certificate

- i. In order to maintain the certificate, the farmer shall submit the evidence of practising the farming in the form of GPS tagged photos, videos and documents in the third year of the validity to SSSUHE. SSSUHE may seek the above from the certified farmers at the beginning of the third year.
- ii. In case, a farmer is unable to provide evidence as above, SSSUHE may conduct a limited oral evaluation to assure that competence is maintained.

4.10 Recertification

The recertification process shall follow the same steps as initial certification. SSSUHE will inform the certified farmers for renewal six months in advance so that the process is completed timely.

5.0 Suspension / Withdrawal

- i. **Suspension** - The certificate may be suspended in the following situations:
 - a) If the farmer fails to provide evidence or appear in the oral evaluation, as applicable, for maintaining the certificate. The suspension shall continue until the requirement is fulfilled.
 - b) In case of any violations of terms and conditions of certificate.
 - c) In case of any complaint found to be valid.
 - d) In case there is any evidence of the farmer misusing the certificate other than the situation mentioned at ii).
 - e) If the farmer brings the certification scheme / SSSUHE into disrepute in any manner.



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- ii. **Withdrawal** - The certificate may be withdrawn in the following situations:
- If the suspension exceeds six months.
 - In case of death of certified farmer.
 - In case the farmer is unable to maintain the competence.
 - In case there is any evidence of the farmer misusing the certificate to mislead that the produce is organic.
 - In case of suspension or withdrawal, a notice of 15 days shall be given to the farmer with an opportunity to respond. He may also be given an opportunity for a personal hearing.
 - At any given time, the farmer may voluntarily suspend or withdraw the certification with information to SSSUHE.

6.0 Appeals

- The appeals-handling process is a critical element of the certification system to support transparency and confidence in the decisions taken by the SSSUHE. The appeals handling process shall be publicly accessible and any aggrieved candidate can appeal.
- SSSUHE shall retain full responsibility for all decisions taken at every level of the appeals-handling process and shall not delegate this responsibility externally.
- The appeal decision-making shall be made by the Vice Chancellor (VC), SSSUHE who is not involved in the original examination, evaluation or certification decision that is under appeal. VC may constitute an appeals panel comprising of agricultural and personnel certification experts not involved in evaluation and decision making.
- Throughout the appeals process, SSSUHE shall keep the appellant informed by providing timely progress updates. This includes acknowledgment of receipt of the appeal, information on the status of the review, and notification of any delays or additional steps required.



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- v. Once a decision is reached, SSSUHE shall clearly communicate the outcome, including the rationale for the decision where appropriate.
- vi. The entire appeal handling and decision making shall be completed **within 30 calendar days**.

7.0 Complaints

- i. The complaints-handling process is an essential control mechanism within the personnel certification system. SSSUHE shall establish, implement, and maintain a documented process for receiving, evaluating, and making decisions on complaints received from any stakeholder with public accessibility.
- ii. The complaint procedure shall be designed to treat all parties — complainants, applicants, certified persons, and other affected stakeholders — fairly and equitably.
- iii. Complaints shall be evaluated objectively, without bias or conflicts of interest, and by personnel who are independent of the subject matter where required.
- iv. Where a complaint about a certified person is substantiated, SSSUHE shall refer the complaint to the certified person concerned at an appropriate time and confidentiality shall be maintained.
- v. Timeliness is critical for maintaining confidence in the certification process and preventing undue harm to any party involved. The entire complaint handling and decision making shall be completed **within 30 calendar days**.

8.0 Records

Records of the application, subsequent correspondence, evaluation approvals, evaluation plans, evaluation reports and decisions, appeals and complaints shall be maintained as hard or soft copy. All records shall be maintained at least for 5 years duration.