



# Guide

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## **Preamble**

The PRO WEIDELAND label characterises milk and meat products that come from dairy cows kept on pasture. PRO WEIDELAND Deutsche Weidecharta GmbH manages the label and is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Grünlandzentrum Niedersachsen/Bremen e.V. The aim is to counteract the decline in the grazing of dairy cows and thus promote the many positive effects of grazing on animal welfare, biodiversity, climate and water protection.

The "Charta Weideland Norddeutschland" is the starting point for the PRO WEIDELAND label. The aim of this agreement was to maintain the declining pasture farming as a relevant component of production systems in the dairy industry. The Weidecharta was drawn up by around 20 organisations and adopted in Aurich, Germany on 28 October 2015. Since then, numerous signatories have been added, so that today a large community of different organisations from the fields of science, politics, administration, agriculture, business as well as animal and environmental protection stand behind the label as a reflection of society. All institutions that currently belong to the community of stakeholders are listed at [www.proweideland.eu/unterstuetzer](http://www.proweideland.eu/unterstuetzer).

A PRO WEIDELAND board of trustees has been established based on this Weidecharta community, which has agreed the principles for the production and marketing of pasture products under the PRO WEIDELAND label and regularly consults on the further development of the label. The board of trustees consists of representatives from agriculture, business, animal welfare and environmental protection. In addition to signing the Weidecharta, participation in the board of trustees also requires signing the rules of procedure of the board of trustees. Representatives from science, politics and administration assist the board of trustees in an advisory capacity. The scientific sector has the task of conducting research and making recommendations. Politics and administration are responsible for creating the framework conditions. Through its community, the board of trustees represents a group that will continue to exist in the long term and grow through the addition of new members. Signatories to the Weidecharta can be admitted to the board of trustees on application.

### **1. Scope of application**

This programme guide is intended to illustrate the PRO WEIDELAND label system and forms the basis for certification. It is aimed at dairy farms, dairies, meat processors and certification bodies. The PRO WEIDELAND programme relates exclusively to dairy cows.

### **2. Definition of the PRO WEIDELAND criteria**

The production and processing criteria of the PRO WEIDELAND label are defined by the PRO WEIDELAND board of trustees. Each member of the board of trustees is authorised to apply for the development or amendment of label criteria. The vote to amend criteria is based on a 50:50 distribution of members. The 50:50 distribution is based on equal differentiation between the stakeholder groups. The members of the board of trustees belong to either the "Agriculture and Industry" stakeholder group or the "Consumer, animal and environmental protection" stakeholder group. While each member has one vote in voting, the votes cast are weighted so that each stakeholder group represents a total of 50% of the weighted votes, regardless of the number of members of the individual stakeholder group.

Thus,

- a. 50 % of the votes are incumbent on the stakeholder group "Agriculture and Industry" and further
- b. 50 % are incumbent on the stakeholder group "Consumer, animal and environmental protection".

A majority of two-thirds of the votes cast is required to pass a resolution. The production and processing criteria defined by the board of trustees are described in the following document: *"Rahmenbedingungen und Kriterien für die Erzeugung und Vermarktung von Weideprodukten unter PRO WEIDELAND"*.

The relevant criteria include:

Area	Criteria at PRO WEIDELAND
Area 1: Criteria for grazing and grazing period	The dairy cows must graze on at least 120 days for 6 hours each day or on 120 days with a total of 720 hours.
Area 2: Criteria for forage supply from pasture	There must be at least 2000 m <sup>2</sup> of grassland available per dairy cow per year. Of this, at least 1000 m <sup>2</sup> must be available as pasture per lactating dairy cow per year. In addition, there must be a sufficient supply of grass for active grazing.
Area 3: Criteria for the aspects of animal welfare, animal protection, animal health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tethering is generally not permitted (even temporarily).</li> <li>• The dairy cows (including dry cows) are provided with a scrubbing facility in the form of a scrub-scratch brush.</li> <li>• When calves under 6 weeks old are dehorned by the farmer (if practised on the farm), the administration of an effective painkiller for pain relief is mandatory.</li> </ul>
Area 4: Criteria for aspects relating to the protection of natural resources	The 2000 m <sup>2</sup> of grassland per dairy cow is defined as permanent grassland that has a positive impact on the environment, or alternatively as temporary grassland with additional biodiversity-enhancing measures (e.g. flower strips or agri-environmental measures).
Area 5: Requirements for GMO-free feed	Pasture milk must be produced on the basis of GMO-free feed. The standard of the Verband Lebensmittel ohne Gentechnik e.V. (VLOG) for milk and dairy products is 100 % compatible.
Area 6: Collection and processing of pasture milk products	100 % product flow separation - i.e. the processed milk that is further processed into pasture milk products must consist of 100 % pasture milk.
Area 7: Participation in animal health monitoring (currently under development)	Participation in the recording of slaughter findings data and antibiotic monitoring with recording in a central database is mandatory.
Area 8: Participation in a quality management programme	Farms must participate in a generally recognised quality management programme or be able to demonstrate equivalent quality management systems. Recognised systems are the QM Standard (DE), Keten Kwaliteit Melk (KKM) (NL), FoqusPlanet (NL) and Quality of the Milk Chain (QMK) (BE).

### 3. Participation in the PRO WEIDELAND pasture milk programme

Milk producers interested in PRO WEIDELAND can enquire at their dairy about participating in a group certification for PRO WEIDELAND. It is necessary for the dairy in question to be certified by PRO WEIDELAND, i.e. the dairy has concluded a licence agreement with the PRO WEIDELAND GmbH and is therefore authorised to market pasture milk products under the "PRO WEIDELAND" brand.

The dairy undertakes to always keep PRO WEIDELAND pasture milk separate from milk that has not been produced in compliance with the PRO WEIDELAND production criteria, provided that the milk is sold as PRO WEIDELAND-labelled milk (100 % product flow separation from its collection from the milk producers to its processing and final packaging).

The *"Styleguide – Richtlinien zur Nutzung des PRO WEIDELAND-Logos"* contains all specifications for the use of the PRO WEIDELAND logo on the packaging of certified pasture milk products. The packaging

layouts of the products ready for sale must be submitted to the PRO WEIDELAND GmbH for inspection and approval before being placed on the market.

An overview of the currently participating dairies can be found at [www.proweideland.eu/faq](http://www.proweideland.eu/faq).

### **3.1 Controls at dairy level**

#### **3.1.1 Initial inspection and annual auditing of the dairy**

The dairy is obliged to commission an external certification body recognised by PRO WEIDELAND to check, among other things, compliance with product flow separation at the processing level. Prior to the start of production, a successful initial audit must be carried out by a certification body at the dairy. After the initial audit, the dairy must be audited annually by a certification body. The audit can be carried out in combination with the VLOG audit.

The PRO WEIDELAND GmbH must be informed immediately if an audit is not passed. At the end of each calendar year, the certification bodies must send the results of all dairy audits to the PRO WEIDELAND GmbH by e-mail to [info@proweideland.de](mailto:info@proweideland.de). A retention period of three years must be observed by the certification bodies for the documents.

The "*Dairy Audit*", which is part of the PRO WEIDELAND programme, contains the test questions according to which the audit is carried out. The auditors use this checklist to verify compliance with the requirements.

#### **3.1.2 Sanctions for non-compliance with the PRO WEIDELAND criteria**

The sanctions for non-compliance with the requirements of the PRO WEIDELAND programme are regulated for the dairies in the licence agreement and range from corrective measures to extraordinary termination of the licence agreement and the associated immediate production and marketing stop of PRO WEIDELAND products.

### **3.2 Controls at dairy farm level**

#### **3.2.1 Initial inspection of the dairy farms**

The dairy conducts an initial audit to check whether the dairy farm can fulfil the requirements of the production criteria of the PRO WEIDELAND standard. This is a complete on-site audit of the entire operating unit. The initial audit is carried out by an appropriately trained employee of the dairy. The initial acceptance training is carried out by a PRO WEIDELAND employee. A certificate issued by PRO WEIDELAND confirms the dairy employee's successful participation in the training. The dairy can also commission an external certification body recognised by PRO WEIDELAND to carry out the initial audit. The milk can only be collected, processed, and marketed as PRO WEIDELAND-labelled goods once the dairy farm has successfully completed the initial audit. A "*grazing calendar*" must be made available to the dairy farm to document the grazing days and hours and the grazed parcels. A sample of a grazing calendar is available on request at the PRO WEIDELAND GmbH.

The result protocols of the initial audits must be sent to the PRO WEIDELAND GmbH by e-mail to [info@proweideland.de](mailto:info@proweideland.de). The master data of all registered farms (VVVO number and date of initial audit) must also be sent to the PRO WEIDELAND GmbH immediately in tabular form.

The "*Initial farm audit*" document contains the inspection questions according to which the inspection is carried out. Explanations of the audit questions can be found in the "*Initial farm audit manual*".

### 3.2.2 Auditing of the dairy farms

#### 3.2.2.1 Auditing of dairy farms by an external certification body

The audit of the participating milk producers by a certification body recognised by PRO WEIDELAND and commissioned by the dairy is carried out regularly every three years. Compliance with the production criteria is checked on site. The audits are announced in advance. The certification body must notify the milk producer within two weeks. The audit can take place together with the audit of other standard setters (such as QM-Milch or VLOG).

The auditors check compliance with the criteria using a "*farm audit*" checklist in which the individual audit questions are listed. In addition to implementation instructions and explanations of the individual audit questions, this document also sets out the sanctions for dairy farmers who fail to comply with the PRO WEIDELAND criteria. These range from corrective measures to immediate exclusion of the farm from the PRO WEIDELAND programme.

The result reports and farm sheets of all audits carried out are sent by the certification bodies to the PRO WEIDELAND GmbH by e-mail to [info@proweideland.de](mailto:info@proweideland.de) by the end of each calendar year. PRO WEIDELAND then carries out a random "control of the control". In addition, at the end of each year, the external certification bodies shall prepare a tabular overview of all inspections carried out (VVVO number, date, and evaluation of the audit) that have taken place in this calendar year and send it to the PRO WEIDELAND GmbH by e-mail to [info@proweideland.de](mailto:info@proweideland.de). The certification bodies must comply with a retention period of five years for the documents.

#### Audit interval

The three-year programme term begins for the first time when the initial audit is passed. The regular follow-up audits (farm audits) are carried out by a certification body within three years and must be carried out in such a way that follow-up certification can be obtained in good time. This can be adapted to the inspection rhythm of QM-Milch and VLOG. If a farm audit takes place earlier than necessary, the follow-up audits are also scheduled correspondingly earlier.

Example: The first admission of farm XY took place on 01/04/2020, so that the following farm audit is due by 01/04/2023. If the certification body carries out the farm audit on 1 September 2022 – and therefore earlier than necessary – the subsequent farm audit must be carried out by 1 September 2025.

In exceptional cases, audit dates can be set up to three months (grace period) after the end of the programme period if the audit date is thereby adjusted to the grazing season. However, the audit must take place by the end of the grace period at the latest. Upon justified application by the milk producer, a later audit may be approved by the certification body due to special operational circumstances (e.g. illness) after consultation with the PRO WEIDELAND GmbH. Nevertheless, the subsequent programme period is calculated from the expiry date of the previous certification.

Example: The programme term of farm XY expired on 01/04/2023, but the farm audit did not take place until 01/05/2023. The subsequent programme term therefore runs until 01/04/2026.

#### Audit result

- The audit is deemed to have been passed if all knock-out criteria are met and no deviations are identified.
- The audit is passed (with reservations) if no requirement is assessed as "K.O." and fewer than five deviations are identified. The milk producer is requested to rectify the non-conformities within a specified period. Corresponding corrective measures, including appropriate deadlines,

must be defined by the auditor in accordance with the specifications described in the "*farm audit*". If the dairy farmer does not provide the certification body with evidence of fulfilment within the deadline, the audit is deemed to have been failed and the dairy and PRO WEIDELAND GmbH must be informed immediately within 2 days. If more than five non-conformities are found, an unannounced follow-up inspection must be carried out on the farm within four weeks.

- The audit is not passed if a knock-out criterion is not fulfilled. In this case, the dairy and PRO WEIDELAND GmbH must be informed immediately within 2 days. The dairy must then arrange for the immediate exclusion of the dairy farm from the pasture milk commodity flow. In order to regain participation in the programme, another successful initial audit and prior consultation with PRO WEIDELAND is required.

### Special audits

If it cannot be ruled out during a farm audit during the grazing season that the cows are kept tethered in winter (e.g. because tethering facilities are present in parts of the farm), an unannounced special audit must be arranged by the certification body during the winter season. The certification body is also obliged to immediately carry out special audits at the request of the PRO WEIDELAND GmbH. After evaluating the results of the special audit, the certification body shall decide on a possible exclusion from the programme.

#### **3.2.2.2 Document control by the dairy**

Furthermore, the dairy farm must send its grazing calendar to the dairy by the end of each calendar year. The dairy checks the grazing calendars for compliance with the minimum grazing period and initiates appropriate measures in the event of anomalies in the documentation.

#### **3.3 Declarations of participation and consent from dairy farms**

Where possible, dairies should obtain written confirmation from their participating milk producers of their continued participation in PRO WEIDELAND and the associated compliance with the criteria in an annual declaration of participation. The declaration of participation should be completed by 31 March before the next grazing season.

In addition, a declaration of consent must be signed in which the transfer of the farms' master data to PRO WEIDELAND and its storage there is ensured.

#### **3.4 Participation as a direct marketer in the PRO WEIDELAND pasture milk programme**

In addition, dairy farms that market their milk directly via their own dairy can also be certified according to the PRO WEIDELAND standard and market their products with the seal. This requires the milk producer to conclude a licence agreement with the PRO WEIDELAND GmbH. A certificate issued by PRO WEIDELAND confirms the milk producer's participation in the programme. The initial audit, which checks whether the dairy farm can meet the requirements of the production criteria of the PRO WEIDELAND standard, must be carried out by an auditor from a certification body recognised by PRO WEIDELAND. In addition, the dairy farm must conclude a contractual agreement with a certification body recognised by PRO WEIDELAND to carry out the farm audits and must be audited at least once every three years. Compliance with the production criteria is checked on site. Furthermore, the dairy farm must send its grazing calendar to the PRO WEIDELAND GmbH by the end of each calendar year.

#### **4. Participation in the PRO WEIDELAND pasture-based meat programme**

Milk producers who are connected to the PRO WEIDELAND pasture milk commodity flow via their dairy as part of a group certification can also have their slaughter cows marketed as PRO WEIDELAND meat and receive a price premium for this. The prerequisite for this is that they have a PRO WEIDELAND certificate of participation (see points 4.2 and 4.3) and deliver their slaughter cows to a meat processor that is certified by PRO WEIDELAND. For this purpose, the meat processor must have concluded a licence agreement with the PRO WEIDELAND GmbH and thus be authorised to market pasture-raised meat products with the PRO WEIDELAND label. The meat processor undertakes to ensure the separation of PRO WEIDELAND pasture-raised meat and conventional meat from the slaughter of the animals to their packaging. In addition, the meat processor undertakes to store the collected slaughter findings data in the QS findings database.

The "*Styleguide – Richtlinien zur Nutzung des PRO WEIDELAND-Logos*" contains all guidelines for the use of the PRO WEIDELAND logo on the packaging of certified pasture-raised meat products. The packaging layouts of the products ready for sale must be submitted to the PRO WEIDELAND GmbH for inspection and approval before they are placed on the market.

An overview of the participating meat processors can be found at [www.proweideland.eu/faq](http://www.proweideland.eu/faq).

#### **4.1 Controls at the level of meat processors**

##### **4.1.1 Initial audit and annual auditing of the meat processor**

The meat processor is obliged to commission an external certification body recognised by PRO WEIDELAND to check, among other things, compliance with the separation of the flow of goods at the processing level. Prior to the start of production, a successful initial audit by a certification body must have taken place in the meat processing company. After the initial audit, the meat processor must be audited annually by a certification body.

The PRO WEIDELAND GmbH must be informed immediately in the event of a failed audit. At the end of each calendar year, the certification bodies must send the result reports of all meat processor audits carried out to the PRO WEIDELAND GmbH by e-mail to [info@proweideland.de](mailto:info@proweideland.de). A retention period of three years must be observed by the certification bodies for the documents.

The "*Meat processing audit*", which is part of the PRO WEIDELAND programme, contains the test questions according to which the audit is carried out. The auditors use this checklist to verify compliance with the requirements.

##### **4.1.2 Sanctions for non-compliance with the PRO WEIDELAND criteria**

The sanctions for non-compliance with the requirements of the PRO WEIDELAND programme are regulated for the meat processors in the licence agreement and range from corrective measures to extraordinary termination of the licence agreement and the associated immediate production stop of PRO WEIDELAND products.

#### **4.2 Awarding certificates of participation to milk producers**

Those dairies that wish to enable their PRO WEIDELAND farms to additionally participate in the pasture-raised meat programme must issue a PRO WEIDELAND certificate of participation to their participating milk producers and make it available for download. The current date and the start date of fulfilment of the PRO WEIDELAND criteria must be noted on the certificate. The certificate of participation serves as proof of participation in the PRO WEIDELAND programme and must be downloaded and printed out by the milk producer (max. 7 working days before delivery of the slaughter



cow to the slaughterhouse) and given to the livestock dealer or producer association for presentation to the meat processor. If the farm audit has not been passed on a dairy farm, the dairy must arrange for the certificate to be withdrawn immediately, i.e. the download function must be disabled. Milk producers who participate in the pasture milk programme as direct marketers can obtain a current certificate of participation on request from the PRO WEIDELAND GmbH (via [info@proweideland.de](mailto:info@proweideland.de)).

#### **4.3 Duty of the milk producer to provide proof**

In order for the meat to be marketed as PRO WEIDELAND pasture-raised meat, the dairy cows must have participated in the PRO WEIDELAND pasture-raised milk commodity flow for at least the last three months prior to slaughter and must have been licensed accordingly. This is deemed to be the case if the dairy farmer presents the meat processor with a current (max. 7 working days old) printout of the PRO WEIDELAND certificate of participation that shows participation in the PRO WEIDELAND programme for a period of at least three months. The current certificate of participation must be enclosed by the livestock dealer or producer organisation with the delivery note when the livestock is delivered to the abattoir.

### **5. Control system**

As described above, the neutral monitoring of processors (dairies and meat processors) and dairy farms participating in the PRO WEIDELAND programme is carried out by independent certification bodies approved by PRO WEIDELAND. They carry out on-site inspections in the processing companies and on the dairy farms in accordance with the checklists. The certification bodies determine whether the requirements of the PRO WEIDELAND programme are being met, evaluate the results, and decide on the continuation of certification. The certification bodies ensure that the performance and results of the audits are documented in detail and in full. Furthermore, the certification body undertakes to send information requested by the PRO WEIDELAND GmbH in good time and to grant access to documents relating to the activities of the PRO WEIDELAND audits.

PRO WEIDELAND carries out an annual evaluation of the audit processes in order to continuously optimise them. PRO WEIDELAND is authorised to accompany the audits. The certification bodies ensure that PRO WEIDELAND has access to the implementation and methodology.

#### **5.1 Requirements for certification bodies**

Certification bodies are those that are accredited in accordance with DIN EN ISO/IEC 17065. They are independent companies and act independently within the scope of the tasks assigned to them. The certification bodies have qualified auditors who fulfil the requirements listed under point 5.2.

The currently recognised certification bodies can be found at [www.proweideland.eu/label](http://www.proweideland.eu/label).

##### **5.1.1 Authorisation and recognition procedure**

Before the certification bodies may commence the PRO WEIDELAND audit(s), successful participation in a training course organised by the PRO WEIDELAND GmbH is required and the contract with the PRO WEIDELAND GmbH must be signed. The certification bodies are then approved for the PRO WEIDELAND audit(s) by the PRO WEIDELAND GmbH. Recognition is possible for the farm, dairy or meat processing audit only as well as for several of these audits. A certificate serves as proof of accreditation by PRO WEIDELAND. Accreditation (preparation and organisation of the training course(s) and issuing of the certificate) is subject to a fee.

## 5.2 Requirements for the auditors

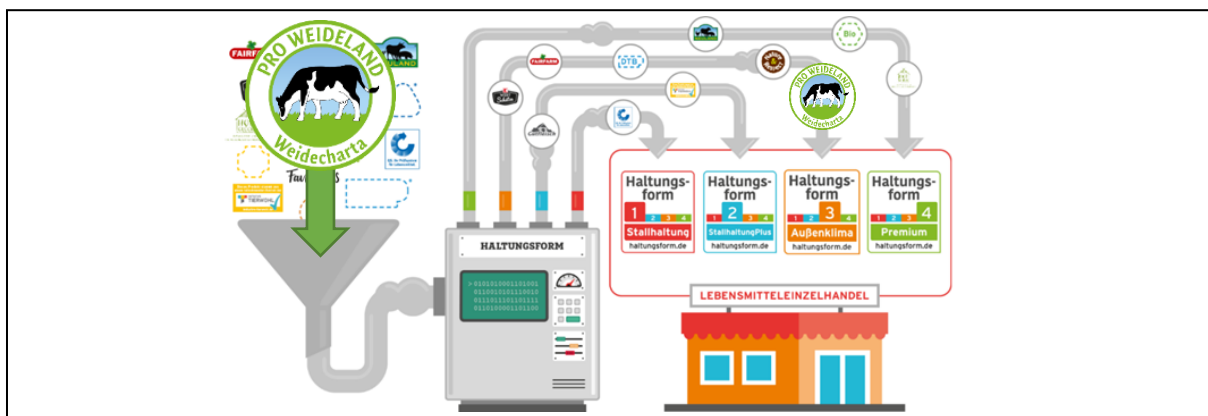
Compliance with the PRO WEIDELAND criteria in the processing companies and on the farms is monitored by qualified auditors from the certification bodies. The auditors must have knowledge in accordance with DIN EN ISO/IEC 17065. The certification bodies ensure that their auditors also have specialist knowledge of the PRO WEIDELAND inspection process and the respective audit.

### 5.2.1 Training and further education

The auditors must be trained for the PRO WEIDELAND standard before they start their work. The training courses can be offered and carried out by the responsible certification body itself. This presupposes that corresponding "multipliers" of the certification body have participated in a training course organised by PRO WEIDELAND. This is because only an employee of the certification body trained by PRO WEIDELAND is authorised to train other auditors (in accordance with "train the trainer"). The audits may therefore only be carried out by an auditor trained by an authorised employee of the certification body or an auditor trained directly by PRO WEIDELAND. An updated list of all trained auditors shall be submitted to the PRO WEIDELAND GmbH.

## 6. Labelling of farm methods in the food retail trade

Meat products have been able to be labelled with the four-stage husbandry form label since 2019 and milk and dairy products such as cheese and butter since 2022. This allows consumers to immediately recognise the animal welfare level associated with the products they are buying. The PRO WEIDELAND programme is classified in husbandry system level 3. The required minimum criteria of the husbandry system for certification in level 3 (see [www.haltungsform.de/kriterien-und-mindestanforderungen/](http://www.haltungsform.de/kriterien-und-mindestanforderungen/)) are also included as criteria in the PRO WEIDELAND programme. This makes it possible for certified PRO WEIDELAND products to be used for labelling in farming method level 3.



Source: [www.haltungsform.de](http://www.haltungsform.de)

### Other applicable documents from PRO WEIDELAND

Further details of the PRO WEIDELAND programme are set out in the following documents:

- Charta Weideland Norddeutschland
- Rahmenbedingungen und Kriterien für die Erzeugung und Vermarktung von Weideprodukten unter PRO WEIDELAND
- Styleguide – Richtlinien zur Nutzung des PRO WEIDELAND-Logos
- Dairy audit
- Grazing calendar
- Initial farm audit
- Initial farm audit manual
- Farm audit
- Meat processing audit