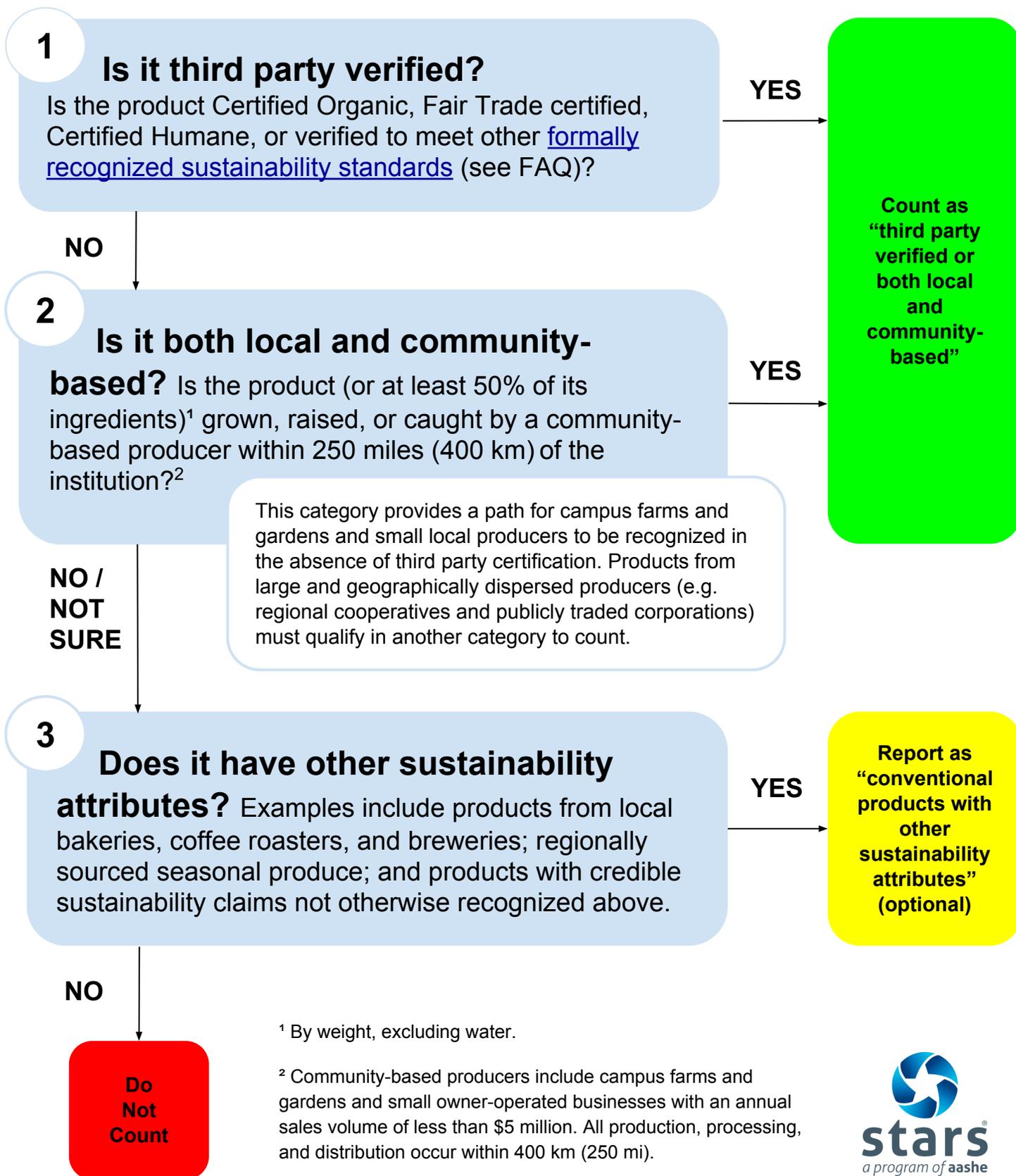


STARS Food and Beverage Product Classification Guide

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Frequently Asked Questions

1. What certifications and standards count as “third party verified”?

The [STARS Technical Manual](#) includes a list of [recognized food and beverage sustainability standards](#). All products that meet or carry the label of one or more of the standards listed count as “third party verified”, irrespective of geographic origin, the percentage of ingredients that are certified, or other factors.

2. My institution obtains produce and other food products from a local distributor. Do those products count as local and community-based?

The attributes of food processors or distributors (i.e., whether they are local or not) are not relevant to the determination of whether the products count as “both local and community-based”. What matters are the location and production methods of the farm or fishery that produces the food.

3. A major food corporation is based locally. Do its products count as local and community-based?

The “both local and community-based” category is designed to recognize campus farms and gardens and small local producers that may not have the resources necessary to pursue third party sustainability certifications. The expectation is that larger local producers and geographically dispersed companies will achieve third party certification to verify their products’ sustainability attributes. Consistent with [Bon Appetit’s Farm to Fork criteria](#), small producers are defined as having less than \$5 million in annual sales.

3. How do I find out the sales volume of a local producer?

The institution may have direct relationships with small local producers through which it can verify annual sales. It may also source products through a farm-to-institution (or equivalent) program that aims to connect institutional purchasers with small local producers, in which case it is reasonable to assume that such products are both local and community-based. In the end, actual sales are less important than the intent, which is to support small local producers that employ sustainable methods, but typically do not have access to the recognition systems and distribution networks that larger producers enjoy.

4. My institution purchases dairy products from a local cooperative. Do those products count as local and community-based?

Because all but the smallest dairy producers aggregate milk from many different sources for processing and distribution (which may include large intensive livestock operations and non-local farms), you must be able to confirm that all potential sources are both local and community-based to count a product in that category. Otherwise, such products will need to be third party verified to count.

5. My institution purchases bread and other baked goods from a local bakery. Do those products count as local and community-based?

If the business is small and 50% or more of product ingredients (by weight, excluding water) remain within 250 miles (400 km) of the institution during all stages of production, processing and distribution, the product may count as “both local and community-based”. Otherwise, products from local bakeries, coffee roasters, breweries, wineries, and similar producers must be third party verified to count toward scoring.

6. How do I identify local intensive livestock operations (ILOs) or CAFOs in order to exclude them?

Once you have identified animal products that are third party verified and small producers that meet the “both local and community-based” criteria, most, if not all, operations that would qualify as ILOs will have been excluded. Therefore, it is not necessary to conduct further research unless you have the capacity to do so.

7. What about products that we just aren’t sure about?

When in doubt, a product must be third party verified to earn points. You may opt to count unverified products that you believe to have positive sustainability attributes in the “conventional products with other sustainability attributes” category. Although such products do not contribute to scoring, identifying them can help provide a more comprehensive picture of your institution’s sustainable purchasing efforts.