



Questions and answers on:

VERA

– Verification of environmental technologies for agricultural production

Who are the initiators of VERA?

The initiators behind VERA are the Danish Environmental Protection Agency (Danish EPA), the Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM), and the German Association for Technology and Structures in Agriculture (KTBL).

What is the purpose of VERA?

Basically VERA pursues two goals: 1) to verify the performance of environmental technologies and 2) to coordinate test and verification activities between countries.

Verification of the performance of environmental technologies for agricultural production

To meet the environmental challenges within the agriculture sector several new technologies are developed each year in the EU member states and elsewhere. These technologies are referred to as environmental technologies. Farmers, authorities and other central stakeholders however only have limited information on their performance which hampers the wider use of these technologies within the agricultural sector. Basically the goal of VERA is to fill this information gap of central stakeholders by offering independent verification of the environmental technologies' performance based on specific test protocols. Thus, VERA will provide reliable and comparable information on technologies that can be used by:

- Farmers and advisors to identify the best technology solution for a production in order to meet different environmental targets and therefore as a sound basis in their investment decisions
- Technology producers to sell their technologies not only on a national but on a international level, too
- Authorities in developing regulation that can fulfil the environmental targets at the lowest costs and in the practical enforcement of environmental policies in connection with environmental approvals and inspections of farms.

The information provided by VERA can therefore assist several stakeholders and facilitate the wider application of environmental technologies in the agricultural sector. The VERA test and verification will also encompass assessments of technologies impact on working conditions and health and animal welfare.

Coordination of test and verification activities of environmental technologies between countries

In several countries environmental technologies for agricultural production are already tested. Often however, the test results are only approved in the country the test has been conducted due to the fact that the different test methods applied fail international acceptance. A central goal of VERA is to coordinate the test activities taking place in different countries and to disseminate reliable and comparable test results based on international accepted test protocols and verification



procedures. VERA will therefore also be established with an open invitation to other countries and organisations to join.

What is a VERA verification?

A VERA verification is a third party conformation that a technology has been tested based on a specific VERA test protocol.

What is a VERA test protocol?

A VERA test protocol is a document where the rules, procedures and methods for testing the environmental performance of technologies are stated and which companies are required to comply with in order to have their technologies verified by VERA. The test methods include the strategy and techniques to measure technologies' environmental performance and operational stability.

So far test protocols are under development for the following types of technologies:

- Housing systems and techniques applied in housing systems
- Air cleaners
- Covers for slurry containers
- Manure separation technologies
- Manure application technologies.

Who can conduct the tests required to have an environmental technology verified by VERA?

Every type of organisation can conduct the required tests as long as they fulfil the different requirements and qualifications stated in the VERA test protocols.

What is an environmental technology?

Environmental technologies are defined as technologies that enhance the level of eco-efficiency in a given production by reducing material inputs, emission of pollutants, energy consumption, recover valuable by-products or minimize waste disposal problems.

The term environmental performance refers therefore also to technologies' impact on the level of eco-efficiency of a given production.

How will VERA affect the market for environmental technologies for agricultural production?

Supplying central stakeholder with essential and reliable information on environmental technologies' performance will basically reduce the level of uncertainty connected to these technologies. It will make it easier for different stakeholders to decide how these technologies can be used in agricultural production and to identify the optimal technology solution for a certain production problem. VERA will therefore facilitate the use of environmental technologies in agricultural production and therefore also facilitate the development of a market for these technologies.

How will VERA affect the environment?

By facilitating the market for environmental technologies VERA will contribute to that new means are available in meeting the environmental challenges in agricultural production. In general VERA



can therefore be expected to increase the possibilities of the agricultural sector to reduce the environmental pollution.

Is VERA a part of the regulation in the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany?

No, VERA is not a part of the regulation in any of the three countries. The goal is that the test methods of VERA are recognized by environmental and agricultural authorities in general, and that information provided by VERA on technologies' environmental performance is used for various purposes, e. g. type approvals and certification tests, defining the state-of-the-art of techniques to be applied and as a reference for environmental regulations, agricultural cross-compliance regulations and funding programmes.

On the European level VERA could be the basis for the assessment of BAT technologies under the IPPC-Directive.

Is VERA connected to the EU Commissions' planned Environmental Technology Verification Scheme (ETV)?

VERA is not directly connected to the EU ETV which is expected established in 2011. The ideas behind EU ETV however have been a source of inspiration. The initiators of VERA hope it will be possible to merge with the planned EU ETV when it is established.

For further information on EU ETV: www.eu-etv-strategy.eu

When will it be possible to have technologies tested and verified by VERA?

The developments of the first five VERA test protocols are expected to be finalised in May this year. It will thereafter be possible to initiate the test activities specified in the protocols as a preparation for the VERA environmental technology verification.

What is the price of having a technology tested and verified by VERA?

The price of a test and verification will vary depending on the nature of the technology, the test protocol, and the market forces*. It is therefore difficult at this time to make an exact estimate. However, it is of course the aim of the initiators that it pays off to technology developers and vendors to have technologies tested and verified by VERA.

*Test organisations that fulfil the requirements and qualifications of the test protocols are allowed to perform the tests. This is expected to further a strong competitive market among the test organisations.

Who pays for a VERA test and verification?

Anyone can pay, but normally the company that wants to have a technology tested and verified will carry the costs.

Can other tests than the tests in the VERA protocols be used to achieve a VERA verification?

Normally this will not be possible, but where the tests or elements of the tests are similar to the tests stated in the VERA test protocols it will in some cases be possible to make exceptions in a transition period. Additional test might be required in order to fulfil all the test requirements of the VERA test protocols.



What is the difference between environmental technology verification and (product) certification?

Environmental technology verification is intended for innovative technologies ready for the market, whereas (product) certification is intended for products that have been available for so long that product performance standards have been developed.

Will VERA comply with rules and procedures of confidentiality?

Yes, VERA will comply with the general rules and procedures concerning confidentiality, unless other agreements have been made with the party financing the test and verification.

Is a VERA verification the same as having a new technological invention patented?

No, a verification is something completely different from having your invention patented.