



Proprietary standard

for water footprint certification

ISO 14046 · AWS · ESRS E3 · GRI 303 · CDP Water

aquafides

AQUAFIDES PROTOCOL v3.2

Executive Summary

A synthetic overview of the Aquafides Protocol v3.2

Public downloadable document

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RECOMMENDED CITATION

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VERSION HISTORY

Rev.	Date	Description of changes	Status
v1.0	15/03/2018	Initial release of the Aquafides Protocol	Superseded
v2.0	10/03/2022	Incorporation of AWARE factor and grey footprint	Superseded
v3.0	20/01/2025	Modular rewrite: CORE + compatible modules	Superseded
v3.1	15/09/2025	Incorporation of the M-ESRS E3 module (CSRD)	Superseded
v3.2.0	15/02/2026	Simultaneous coverage ISO 14046 + AWS + ESRS E3 + GRI 303 + CDP Water	ACTIVE

CONTACT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Aquafides Protocol v3.2

The proprietary standard for water footprint certification · 2026

What it is

The Aquafides Protocol v3.2 is the proprietary standard for water footprint certification developed and operated by Aquafides. It simultaneously integrates and verifies the water-related requirements of five international standards — ISO 14046:2014, AWS Standard v2.0, ESRS E3 (CSRD), GRI 303 (2018) and CDP Water Security— in a single body of evidence. An organisation certified under Aquafides v3.2 meets the demands of five frameworks with a single verified file, with no duplicated work and no methodological gaps between standards.

Architecture

The Protocol is structured as a proprietary core (CORE), which constitutes the mandatory baseline for every audit file, and a layer of five compatible modules activated on demand according to market and applicable regulation for each organisation. The core defines the calculation methodology (Water Footprint Network + ISO 14046), AWARE-based catchment impact assessment, the management system, the Reduction Plan and the requirements for governance, training and transparency. The modules M-ISO 14046, M-AWS, M-ESRS E3, M-GRI 303 and M-CDP Water add the datapoints and evidence specific to each international standard.

Functional separation Advisor–Auditor (Annex IV)

Annex IV of the Protocol is its ethical cornerstone: the person who advises the client and helps to implement the system cannot be the same person who later audits and issues the certificate. This separation is irrevocable and formalised in writing for every audit file. It is the structural guarantee that the Aquafides certification deserves the trust of the market, the regulator and the end client.

Certifiable typologies (Annex VIII)

The Protocol distinguishes three profiles of certifiable organisation, each with its own document catalogue and specific requirements: Productive Systems (SP) for entities that transform water and produce a good or service through direct physical operation; Supply Chains (CS) for multi-tier chains that distribute, market or aggregate water-intensive supply; and Public Administrations (AP) for entities with territorial competence over the water cycle.

Certification status

Aquafides certification may grant two complementary statuses: State B Aquafides Certified, which recognises the organisation that has implemented the management system, calculated its footprint, defined its Reduction Plan and passed the independent audit; and State B-Bis Aquafides Excellence,

an additional recognition reserved for organisations that demonstrate sustained leadership in transforming their water value chain in accordance with Chapter 5-Bis of the Protocol, through an additional independent audit, with three-year validity.

Aquafides Spread Effect

Specific Protocol doctrine applicable to every certified Supply Chain. A CS can only be Aquafides-certified if it accepts multi-year, quantitative and verifiable commitments to transmit water requirements to its water-intensive suppliers. In this way, every certified CS becomes a systemic agent of change that pulls hundreds of Productive Systems in its network towards their own certification. It is the mechanism by which the Protocol amplifies its impact beyond the individual organisation.

Who it applies to

The Aquafides Protocol v3.2 applies to any organisation that uses water as a direct or indirect material input: companies, productive sites, water-intensive supply chains (food, retail, hospitality, wholesale distribution, logistics, tourism platforms) and public administrations with territorial competence over water. Its modular structure allows the document scope to be tailored to the type of organisation and the target market of the applicant.

More information, downloadable annexes and the public 2026-2027 fee schedule at aquafides.org/protocolo. To open a certification conversation, contact info@aquafides.org.