



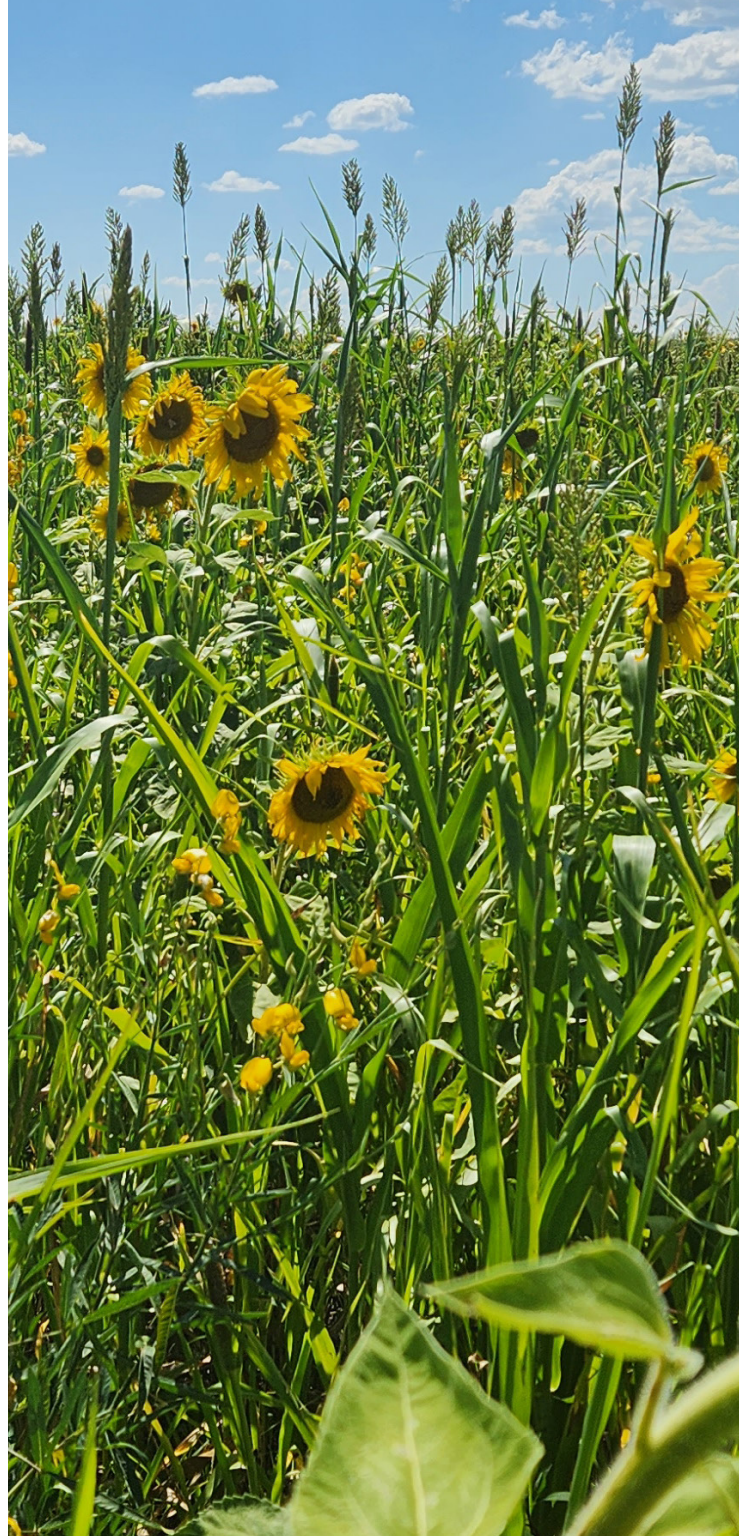
From Regenerative Practice to Verified Market Value

How Orizon helped South African farmers turn soil-health improvements into high-integrity carbon credits under Verra's rigorous VM0042 methodology

Summary

Since 2021, Orizon Agriculture in South Africa has worked directly with farmers to develop regenerative agricultural practices that enhance value in the form of carbon credit revenues. By supporting farmers to implement more sustainable land use practices, such as cover cropping, reduced or zero tillage, reducing synthetic fertilizer use, and building soil health, Orizon also helps farmers improve profitability and gain access to the carbon credit market.

For the past few years, Orizon has run the CarbonCrop Rewards Programme, a preeminent South African carbon credit project that seeks to promote responsible land use while diminishing the burden of a climate-conscious transition on individual farmers. To meet the evolving demands of the global carbon market and contribute to broader climate goals, Orizon aimed to earn registration under the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS).





Challenge

When Orizon first began preparing to elevate a selection of South African farms' sustainability performance, the broader universe of carbon offsets — including validation and verification services — was marred by controversy. Media outlets around the world were zeroing in on particularly volatile instances of the misuse of carbon offsets and credits. But Orizon was committed to supporting farmers gaining access to the carbon market while remaining loyal to reducing emissions and improving soil health through legitimate, verifiable methods.



Orizon set its sights on achieving registration with the global administrator of the Verified Carbon Standard, Verra. Orizon sought to meet the requirements of Verra's relatively new and complex methodology, VM0042 — Improved Agricultural Land Management. Orizon was ready to demonstrate the value and integrity of their work by meeting VM0042's rigorous requirements. Partway through the process, however, the verification and validation body (VVB) originally contracted for the assessment made the decision to step back from VM0042 assessments altogether, having ceased taking on any projects under this methodology. As a result, Orizon was left without a VVB shortly before the assessment was due to begin.

Process

Orizon collaborated with farmers under the banner of the CarbonCrop Rewards Program to refine regenerative practices that sequestered carbon into soils and reduced on-farm emissions before seeking out the expertise of SCS Global Services in 2023. As the Verra-selected methodology assessor of VM0042, v2.0, and one of the only accredited third-party VVBs willing to adjudicate a carbon offset project against the methodology, SCS Global Services' international audit team did not shy away from the challenge.

Instead, SCS Global Services leveraged more than three decades of experience verifying and validating some of the most respected carbon offset projects against the world's most rigorous standards — including another project in South Africa operating under VM0042, v1.0.

The audit team meticulously reviewed the project's reports, data, and documentation in addition to visiting each farm on the ground in South Africa. After extensive testing and review against the requirements of VM0042, Orizon earned their validation and verification approval from SCS Global Services. Orizon then submitted all project documentation to Verra, and SCS Global Service's positive opinion of Orizon's project was upheld following a thorough review process at Verra.

“The successful registration and verification of Orizon’s CarbonCrop programme have been a goal of ours for the last decade. Thanks to SCS Global Services’ maintenance of only the highest standards of sustainability performance, we were finally able to achieve our goal. We celebrate not only this significant achievement, but also what we hope will be a long-lasting collaboration with the GHG team at SCS. The 22 farmers who earned these credits for implementing regenerative practices — and the wider regenerative farming community here in South Africa — are so proud of this meaningful work.”

Michael Lilje

Chief Executive Officer

Orizon



Outcomes

After receiving a positive opinion by SCS Global Services and approval from Verra, the CarbonCrop project was successfully registered under VM0042 and associated credits were issued. Once verified, they were able to begin selling approved carbon credits for the highest possible market value, ensuring that participating farmers receive maximum payouts for their superior land stewardship. Orizon and the 22 farmers working as part of the CarbonCrop Rewards Programme proved that harmonizing trusted traditions with innovative, twenty-first century sustainability was not only possible but beneficial — for land, farmers, and climate.

Orizon does not plan to rest on these remarkable laurels. Their next submission to Verra includes more than 60,000 hectares of cropland, more than 70 farmers, and stretches across all nine provinces of South Africa.





Key Takeaways

Orizon's CarbonCrop Rewards Programme was successfully validated and verified by SCS Global Services, a third-party VVB, under the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) VM0042.

With more than 200 projects seeking registration globally at the time, the CarbonCrop Rewards Programme became the third project to have credits approved under Verra's popular VM0042.

At the time, the programme was the largest carbon project registered globally under Verra's flagship VM0042 (Improved Agricultural Land Management).

Orizon's participating farmers will receive between 65-75% of the carbon revenues, making it the highest potential payout to farmers in South Africa.

While credits are just one of the many benefits of regenerative agriculture, they will enable farmers to expand their regenerative practices even further.

“SCS Global Services is proud to have played a key role in the rigorous and ultimately successful verification of Orizon’s project under VM0042. Our verifiers saw firsthand the discipline, attention to detail, and commitment required from Orizon’s team in South Africa, qualities that were essential to reaching this important milestone.”

Doug Baldwin

Senior Verification Scientist, GHG Agriculture
SCS Global Services

