



# ORGANIC CERTIFICATION



## Organic certification

It is a certification process for producers of organic food and other organic agricultural products. In general, any business directly involved in food production can be certified, including seed suppliers, farmers, food processors, retailers and restaurants. Requirements vary from country to country, and generally involve a set of production standards for growing, storage, processing, packaging and shipping that include:

- Avoidance of synthetic chemical inputs (e.g. fertilizer, pesticides, antibiotics, food additives, etc) and genetically modified organisms;
- Use of farmland that has been free from chemicals for a number of years (often, three or more);
- Keeping detailed written production and sales records (audit trail);
- Maintaining strict physical separation of organic products from non-certified products;
  - Undergoing periodic on-site inspections.





## Purpose of certification

Organic certification addresses a growing worldwide demand for organic food. It is intended to assure quality and prevent fraud. For organic producers, certification identifies suppliers of products approved for use in certified operations. For consumers, “certified organic” serves as a product assurance, similar to “low fat”, “100% whole wheat”, or “no artificial preservatives”.

Certification is essentially aimed at regulating and facilitating the sale of organic products to consumers. Individual certification bodies have their own service marks, which can act as branding to consumers. Most certification bodies operate organic standards that meet the National government’s minimum requirements.

## The certification processes

In order to certify a farm, the farmer is typically required to engage in a number of new activities, in addition to normal farming operations:

**Study-** the organic standards, which cover in specific detail what is and is not allowed for every aspect of farming, including storage, transport and sale.

**Compliance** - farm facilities and production methods must comply with the standards, which may involve modifying facilities, sourcing and changing suppliers, etc.

**Documentation** - extensive paperwork is required, detailed farm history and current set-up, and usually including results of soil and water tests.

**Planning** - a written annual production plan must be submitted, detailing everything from seed to sale: seed sources, field and crop locations, fertilization and pest control activities, harvest methods, storage locations etc.

**Inspection** - annual on-farm inspections are required, with a physical tour, examination of records, and an oral interview.

**Fee** – A fee is to be paid by the grower to the certification body for annual surveillance and for facilitating a mark which is acceptable in the market as symbol of quality.

**Record-keeping** - written, day-to-day farming and marketing records, covering all activities, must be available for inspection at any time.

In addition, short-notice or surprise inspections can be made, and specific tests (e.g. soil, water, plant tissue analysis) may be requested.

For first-time farm certification, the soil must meet basic requirements of being free from use of prohibited substances (synthetic chemicals, etc) for a number of years. A conventional farm must adhere to organic standards for this period, often, three years. This is known as being in transition. Transitional crops are not considered fully organic. A farm already growing without chemicals may be certified without this delay.

Certification for operations other than farms is similar. The focus is on ingredients and other inputs, and processing and handling conditions. A transport company would be required to detail the use and maintenance of its vehicles, storage facilities,



containers, and so forth. A restaurant would have its premises inspected and its suppliers verified as certified organic.

## Certification system in India

In India, there are two accreditation systems for authorizing Certification and Inspection agencies for organic certification. National Program on organic Production (NPOP) promoted by Ministry of Commerce is the core program which governs and defines the standards and implementing procedures. National Accreditation Body (NAB) is the apex decision making body. Certification and Inspection agencies accredited by NAB are authorized to undertake certification process. The NPOP notified under FTDR act and controlled by Agricultural Processed Foods Export Development Authority (APEDA) looks after the requirement of export while NPOP notified under APGMC act and controlled by

Agriculture Marketing Advisor, Directorate of Marketing and Inspection looks after domestic certification. Currently 20 certification agencies have been authorized to undertake certification process. Details of the system are available at [www.apeda.com/npop](http://www.apeda.com/npop). In 2006, India's organic certification process under NPOP has been granted equivalence with European Union and Switzerland. It has also been recognized for conformity assessment by USDA's NOP.

## National Program on Organic Production

National Program on Organic Production (NPOP) was launched during 2001 under the Foreign Trade &

Development Act (FTDR Act). The document provides information on standards for organic production, systems criteria, and procedures for accreditation of Inspection and Certification bodies, the national organic logo and the regulations governing its use.

The NPOP shall, among others, include: (i) Policies for development and certification of organic products, (ii) National standards for organic products and processes, (iii) Accreditation of program to be operated by Inspection and Certification Agencies and (iv) Certification of organic products

## Operational Structure:

National Steering Committee for National Program for Organic Production, is the apex policy making body and operates the entire program through National Accreditation Body (NAB), Technical Committee (TC) and Evaluation Committee (EC).

Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) is the secretariat and implementation office for NPOP for export while Agriculture Marketing Advisor, Directorate of Marketing and Inspection, Department of Agriculture and Cooperation is the secretariat and implementation office for NPOP for domestic certification.

National Standards for Organic Production (NSOP) National Standards for Organic Production are grouped under following six categories:

- 1) Conversion
- 2) Crop production
- 3) Animal husbandry



- 4) Food processing and handling
- 5) Labeling
- 6) Storage and transport

**Standard requirements for crop production, food processing and handling are listed below:**

## I. Conversion Requirements

The time between the start of organic management and cultivation of crops or animal husbandry is known as the conversion period. All standard requirements should be met during conversion period. Full conversion period is not required where organic farming practices are already in use.

## 2. Crop Production

**2.1 Choice of crops and varieties** – All seeds and planting materials should be certified organic. If certified organic seed or planting material is not available then chemically untreated conventional material can be used. Use of genetically engineered seeds, pollen, transgenic plants are not allowed.

**2.2 Duration of conversion period** – The minimum conversion period for plant products, produced annually is 12 months prior to the start of the production cycle. For perennial plants (excluding pastures and meadows) the conversion period is 18 months from the date of starting organic management. Depending upon the past use of the land and ecological situations, the certification agency can extend or reduce the minimum conversion period.

**2.4 Fertilization policy** – Biodegradable material

of plant or animal origin produced on organic farms should form the basis of the fertilization policy. Fertilization management should minimize nutrient losses, avoid accumulation of heavy metals and maintain the soil pH. Emphasis should be given to generate and use own on-farm organic fertilizers. Brought in fertilizers of biological origin should be supplementary and not a replacement. Over manuring should be avoided. Manures containing human excreta should not be used on vegetation for human consumption.

**2.5 Pest disease and weed management including growth regulators** –Weeds, pests and diseases should be controlled preferably by preventive cultural techniques. Botanical pesticides prepared at farm from local plants, animals and microorganisms are allowed. Use of synthetic chemicals such as fungicides, insecticides, herbicides, synthetic growth regulators and dyes are prohibited. Use of genetically engineered organisms or products is prohibited.

**2.7 Soil and Water conservation** – Soil and water resources should be handled in a sustainable manner to avoid erosion, salination, excessive and improper use of water and the pollution of surface and ground water. Cleaning of land by burning (e.g. slash and burn and straw burning) should be restricted. Clearing of primary forest for agriculture (jhuming or shifting cultivation) is strictly prohibited.

## 3. Collection of non-cultivated material of plant origin and honey –

Wild harvested products shall only be certified organic, if derived from a stable and sustainable growth



environment and the harvesting shall not exceed the sustainable yield of the ecosystem and should not threaten the existence of plant or animal species. The collection area should not be exposed to prohibited substances and should be at an appropriate distance from conventional farming, human habitation, and places of pollution and contamination.

#### **4. Food processing and handling General principles -**

Organic products shall be protected from co-mingling with non-organic products, and shall be adequately identified through the whole process. Certification programme shall regulate the means and measures to be allowed or recommended for decontamination, clearing or disinfection of all facilities where organic products are kept, handled, processed or stored. Besides storage at ambient temperature the following special conditions of storage are permitted.

**Controlled atmosphere, cooling, freezing, drying and humidity regulation.**

**Pest and disease control** – For pest management and control following measures shall be used in order of priority

Preventive methods such as disruption, and elimination of habitat and access to facilities. Other methods of pest control are:

Mechanical, physical and biological methods

Permitted pesticidal substances as per the standards and Other substances used in traps. Irradiation is prohibited. Direct or indirect contact between organic

products and prohibited substances (such as pesticides) should not be there.

#### **5. Packaging**

Material used for packaging shall be ecofriendly. Unnecessary packaging material should be avoided. Recycling and reusable systems should be used. Packaging material should be biodegradable. Material used for packaging shall not contaminate the food.

#### **6. Labelling**

When the full standard requirements are met, the product can be sold as “Organic”. On proper certification by certification agency “India Organic” logo can also be used on the product.

#### **7. Storage and transport**

Products integrity should be maintained during storage and transportation of organic products. Organic products must be protected from co-mingling with non-organic products and must be protected all times from contact with the materials and substances not permitted for use in organic farming.

#### **Grower Group Certification System**

This system is based on the internal quality system and shall apply to producer groups, farmer’s cooperatives, contract production and small-scale processing units. The producers in the group must apply similar production systems and the farms should be in geographical proximity.



## Constitution of group

The group should have a legal status or constitution of the organization and shall be presented by an organizational chart.

## Internal quality system

Group certification is based on the concept of an Internal Quality System comprising of the following: -

- Implementation of the internal control system
- Internal standards
- Risk assessment.

An external inspection and certification body should be identified for conducting annual inspection of the individual group / unit. The external inspection agency shall evaluate by checking the IQS documentation, staff qualifications and reinspecting some farms.

## Developing IQS

The following are the minimum requirements for setting up an IQS for grower groups:

- Development of Internal Control System (ICS)
- Identification of producer groups
- Creation of awareness about group certification
- Identification of qualified personnel for maintaining the internal control system
- Give necessary training in production and IQS development
- Preparation of IQS manual containing policies and procedures
- Implementation of the policies and procedures
- Review and improvement of the IQS document for maintaining a harmonized IQS.

**The system is operated through following workers**

1. Internal quality system manager (IQS Manager)
2. Internal inspectors
3. Approval manager / committee
4. Field officers
5. Purchase officers
6. Warehouse manager
7. Processing manager (in case of processing unit)

## Internal standards

The internal standards shall be prepared in local language by the IQS manager for the region of operations under the framework of NPOP standards. If the farmers are illiterate, the internal standards shall contain illustrations in the text for better understanding.

## Conflict of interest

The IQS personnel shall not have any conflict of interest that might hinder the work. All possible conflicts shall be declared in a written statement. In such cases, the IQS shall ensure that alternative solutions are found.

## Scope of certification

The certification shall be granted to the group with reference to the regulations / standards adopted by the group.

### Procedure for implementation of ICS

1. Registration of members - All members of the group will be formally (legally) registered under a single entity.
2. Provision of documents to the members of the grower group - Each member of the grower



group will be supplied with docket in local languages, which will contain – Copy of IQS manual, Internal standards document, NPOP document, Definition of the production unit, .. Farm Entrance Form, Field records, Written contract, Annual farm inspection checklist and Information on training programmes and provision of advisory services

### Internal inspections

At least two inspections of the group (one in growing season of each crop) shall be carried out by the internal inspector and will be documented. The inspection will be carried out in presence of the member or his representative and must include a visit of the whole farm, storage of inputs, harvested products, post-harvest handling and animal husbandry. In case of non-compliance, the results will be reported to the IQS manager and all measures should be taken according to the internal sanction procedures.

### External inspections

The external Inspection and Certification Agency will re-inspect some of the farms for the evaluation of the grower group for efficient internal control system for compliance with the NPOP Standards. The sampling plan for inspection shall be based on the inspector's perception of risk.

### Yield estimates

Yields will be estimated for each crop for individual farmer in the group. This activity should be carried out especially during harvesting and should be counter-checked with the estimates during buying.

### Certification Procedure in brief

- Application is made to the certification agency in the prescribed format with necessary farm and process details
- Screening of application by certification agency and if necessary further details/clarification sought
- Cost estimate comprising of certification charge, inspection charge, travel cost, reporting cost, laboratory charges etc is sent for acceptance
- Acceptance of cost by the grower/producer
- Signing of agreement between grower/producer and certification agency
- Certification agency seeks cropping/production/cultivation /processing plan and supply a copy of the standards to the grower/producer to follow
- Certification agency raises an invoice and asks the producer to release 50% of the certification cost in advance
- Grower/producer pays the fee
- Inspection schedule is worked out
- Inspection is carried out at one or more than one occasion
- If required unannounced inspection can also be done. In case of doubt the inspection, team can also draw plant/soil/raw material/input/product sample for laboratory analysis.
- Inspection report/(s) submitted to the certification committee
- Certification agency asks for final payment
- Final payment is made
- Certification is granted
- Grower/producer releases the stock for sale with Certification Mark (India Organic Logo)



### Conditions for Products used in fertilization and soil conditioning in organic farming

ITEMS CONDITIONS	CONDITIONS FOR USE
<b>Plant and animal origin</b>	
<b>Matter produced on an organic farm unit</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farmyard and poultry manure, slurry, urine</li> <li>• Crop residues and green manure</li> <li>• Straw and other mulches</li> <li>• Composts and Vermicompost</li> </ul>	Permitted Permitted Permitted Permitted
<b>Matter produced outside the organic farm unit</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blood meal, meat meal, bone meal and feather meal without preservatives</li> <li>• Compost made from plant residues and animal excrement</li> <li>• Farmyard manure, slurry, urine</li> <li>• Fish and fish products without preservatives</li> <li>• Guano</li> <li>• Human excrement</li> <li>• Wood, bark, sawdust, wood shavings, wood ash, wood charcoal</li> <li>• Straw, animal charcoal, compost and spent mushroom and vermiculate substances</li> <li>• Compost from organic household</li> <li>• Compost from plant residues</li> <li>• Sea weed and sea weed products</li> </ul>	Restricted Restricted Restricted Restricted Restricted Prohibited Restricted Restricted Restricted Restricted
<b>By products from the industries</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By-products from the food and textile industries of biodegradable material of microbial, plant or animal origin without any synthetic additives</li> <li>• By products from oil palm, coconut and cocoa (including fruit bunch, palm oil mill effluent, cocoa peat and empty cocoa pods.</li> <li>• By-products of industries processing ingredients from organic agriculture</li> <li>• Extracts from mushroom, Chlorella, Fermented product from Aspergillus, natural acids (vinegar)</li> </ul>	Restricted  Restricted  Restricted Restricted
<b>Mineral Origin</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic slag</li> <li>• Calcareous and magnesium rock</li> <li>• Lime, limestone, gypsum</li> <li>• Calcified sea weed</li> <li>• Calcium chloride</li> <li>• Mineral potassium with low chlorine content (e.g. sulphate of potash, kainite, sylvinite, patenkali)</li> <li>• Natural phosphates (rock phosphate)</li> <li>• Trace elements</li> <li>• Sulphur</li> <li>• Clay (bentonite, perlite, zeolite)</li> </ul>	Restricted Restricted Permitted Permitted Permitted Restricted Restricted Permitted Permitted Permitted
<b>Microbiological origin</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bacterial preparations (biofertilizers)</li> <li>• Biodynamic preparations</li> <li>• Plant preparations and botanical extracts</li> </ul>	Permitted Permitted Permitted



### Conditions for Products used in Plant pest and disease control

ITEMS CONDITIONS	CONDITIONS FOR USE
<b>Material from plant and animal origin</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plant based repellents (Neem preparations from <i>Azadirachta indica</i>)</li> <li>Algal preparations (gelatin)</li> <li>Casein</li> <li>Extracts from mushroom, chlorella, fermented products from <i>Aspergillus</i></li> <li>Propolis</li> <li>Beeswax, Natural acids (vinegar), plant oils, Quassia</li> <li>Rotenone from <i>Derris elliptica</i>, <i>Lonchocarpus</i>, <i>Tephrosia</i> spp.</li> <li>Tobacco tea (pure nicotine is prohibited)</li> <li>Preparation from <i>Ryania</i> species</li> </ul>	Permitted Permitted Permitted Permitted Restricted Permitted Restricted Restricted Restricted
<b>Mineral origin</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chlorides of lime/soda</li> <li>Burgundy mixture</li> <li>Clay (bentonite, perlite, vermiculite, zeolite)</li> <li>Copper salts/ inorganic salts (Bordeaux mix, copper hydroxide, copper oxychloride)</li> <li>Quick lime</li> </ul>	Restricted Restricted Permitted Not allowed Restricted
<b>Mineral origin</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diatomaceous earth</li> <li>Light mineral oils</li> <li>Permanganates of potash</li> </ul>	Permitted Restricted Restricted
<b>Insects origin</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Release of parasites, predators of insect pests</li> <li>Sterilized insects</li> <li>Sterilized insect males</li> </ul>	Restricted Restricted Not allowed
<b>Microorganisms used for biological pest control</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Viral, fungal and bacterial preparations (biopesticides)</li> </ul>	Restricted
<b>Others</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carbon dioxide and nitrogen gas</li> <li>Soft soap, soda, sulphur dioxide</li> <li>Homeopathic and ayurvedic preparations</li> <li>Herbal and biodynamic preparations</li> <li>Sea salt and salty water</li> <li>Ethyl alcohol</li> </ul>	Permitted Permitted Permitted Permitted Permitted Not allowed
<b>Traps, barriers and repellants</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical methods (e.g. chromatic traps, mechanical traps)</li> <li>Mulches, nets</li> <li>Pheromones – in traps and dispensers only</li> </ul>	Permitted Permitted Permitted



**Contact for More Information**

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