



# BUILDING TRUST IN ORGANIC





# ***BUILDING TRUST IN ORGANIC***

*Gunnar Rundgren*

*January 2007*

Published in Germany by IFOAM.

© IFOAM, January 2007

Die Deutsche Bibliothek – CIP Cataloguing-in-Publication-Data

A catalogue record for this publication is available from Die Deutsche Bibliothek

**ISBN 978-3-934055-87-2**

Commissioned by IFOAM and funded through its program “IFOAM -- Growing Organic II” (I-GO II) which aims to strengthen the Organic Movement in Developing Countries. I-GO II is funded by HIVOS, Netherlands and the “Fund for Sustainable Biodiversity Management” of the Dutch Government, managed by HIVOS and NOVIB

Printed copies of this publication may be ordered via the IFOAM website at [www.ifoam.org](http://www.ifoam.org).

A download of the complete publication is available via the IFOAM web shop.

Price: *CD Rom - 28 Euros*

*Download version - 25 euros*

# BUILDING TRUST IN ORGANIC TABLE OF CONTENTS

## ***INTRODUCTION***

### ***THE GUIDE***

<b>1</b>	<b>Terminology</b>	<b>20</b>
1.1	Acronyms and Abbreviations	20
1.2	Glossary	20

## ***PART 1: ORGANIC CERTIFICATION CONCEPT***

<b>2</b>	<b>What is certification?</b>	<b>23</b>
2.1	Introduction and Definition	22
2.2	The Certification Mark	24
2.3	Certification and Regulation	24
2.4	Basic Principles for a Certification System	24
2.5	Conflicts in the Principles	26
2.6	What a Certification Body Should Do, Can Do, and Shouldn't Do	26
<b>3</b>	<b>International Norms for Certification</b>	<b>28</b>
3.1	ISO	28
3.2	IFOAM Accreditation Criteria	29
<b>4</b>	<b>Accreditation</b>	<b>30</b>
4.1	Who Can Accredite?	30
4.2	Peer Review	31
<b>5</b>	<b>Development of Organic Certification</b>	<b>31</b>
5.1	Additional Benefits of Certification	33
5.2	Other Models for Building Trust	33
<b>6</b>	<b>Organic Standards</b>	<b>35</b>
6.1	IFOAM Basic Standards for Organic Agriculture and Processing	36

6.2	Codex Alimentarius	36
6.3	Formulation of Standards	36
6.4	Procedures to Set Standards	36
<b>7</b>	<b>Overview of an Organic Certification System</b>	<b>38</b>
7.1	What Is Certified	38
7.2	Legal Entity and Organizational Form	39
7.3	Rules and Procedures	39
7.4	Inspection	40
7.5	Certification, Approval, and Handling of Non-conformity	40
7.6	Management	41
7.7	Labelling and Market Surveillance	41
7.8	Information	41
7.9	Costs	41
<b>8</b>	<b>Accreditation of Organic Certification Bodies</b>	<b>42</b>
8.1	IFOAM Accreditation	42
8.2	Accreditation by National Accreditation Bodies	43
<b>9</b>	<b>Regulations</b>	<b>44</b>
9.1	Regulations in the Major Organic Markets	44
9.2	Regulation of the Home Market	46
9.3	World Trade Organization	47
<b>10</b>	<b>Organic Market Recognition</b>	<b>47</b>

## ***PART 2: SETTING UP A CERTIFICATION BODY FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE***

<b>11</b>	<b>Why Develop Local Certification Bodies?</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>The First Steps</b>	<b>50</b>
12.1	When Is the Time Ripe?	50
12.2	The Organic Movement and the Certification Body	51
12.3	Local, National, or Regional Structure?	51
12.4	One or More Certification Bodies?	52
12.5	Making an Action Plan	52
<b>13</b>	<b>Structure</b>	<b>54</b>
13.1	Is There a Proper Structure?	54
13.2	Registration of Organization	55
13.3	Registration of Certification Mark	56
13.4	Leading Individuals	56

<b>14</b>	<b>Organizational Development</b>	<b>56</b>
14.1	Strategic Plan	56
14.2	Board and Manager	57
<b>15</b>	<b>Standards</b>	<b>58</b>
15.1	General Advice	58
15.2	Formulation and Communication of Standards	58
15.3	Relationship between National Standards, International Standards, and the Standards in the Main Market	59
<b>16</b>	<b>Staff, Personnel, and Committees</b>	<b>60</b>
16.1	Recruitment	60
16.2	Manager or Director	60
16.3	Certification Manager	61
16.4	Administrative Staff	61
16.5	Inspectors	63
16.6	Conflict of Interest	64
16.7	Performance Reviews and Feedback	66
16.8	Confidentiality and Transparency	66
16.9	Contractual Arrangements with Staff	68
16.10	Committees	68
16.11	Training	68
<b>17</b>	<b>The Operators and the Application</b>	<b>70</b>
17.1	Non-discrimination	70
17.2	Application	71
17.3	Contractual Arrangements with Operators	75
17.4	Who Is the Licensee?	76
17.5	Are There Special Solutions for Small Farmers?	78
17.7	Who Needs to Be Certified and Who Needs to Be Inspected	80
17.8	The Relationship to Operators	81
17.9	Certification Requirements for Operators	82
17.10	Clarifying the Scope of Certification	83
<b>18</b>	<b>Inspection</b>	<b>83</b>
18.1	Assignment of Inspectors	84
18.2	Inspection Programme and Risk Assessment	85
18.3	Making Inspections	86
18.4	Various Kinds of Inspection	90
18.5	Relationship between Operator and Inspector	91
18.6	Timing of Inspections	92
18.7	Samples and Analyses	92
18.8	Other Ways to Verify Compliance or Non-compliance	93
<b>19</b>	<b>Certification</b>	<b>94</b>

19.1	The Certification Authority	94
19.2	Certification Decisions	95
19.3	Certificate of Registration	97
19.4	Transaction Certificates	98
19.5	Interpretation of Standards	99
19.6	Non-conformities and Sanctions	99
19.7	Termination for Business Reasons	102
19.8	Appeals	102
19.9	List of Operators	102
19.10	Acceptance of Another Certification	102
<b>20</b>	<b>The Certification Mark</b>	<b>103</b>
20.1	General	103
20.2	Scope of the Mark	104
20.3	Design	104
20.4	Control of the Certification Mark	105
20.5	Use of the Mark	105
<b>21</b>	<b>Record keeping</b>	<b>107</b>
21.1	Operators' Files	107
21.2	Minutes	107
21.3	Special Records	108
21.4	Storage of Records	108
21.5	Using Computers	108
<b>22</b>	<b>Information and Market Activities</b>	<b>109</b>
22.1	Information to Consumers	109
22.2	Information to the Market Actors	110
22.3	Assisting the Certified Producers in Their Marketing	110
22.4	Marketing the Certification Service	110
<b>23</b>	<b>Quality Management System and Document Management</b>	<b>111</b>
23.1	The Quality Management System	111
23.2	Document Management	115
23.3	rVarious Policies and Procedures	125
23.4	Forms and Checklists	125
<b>24</b>	<b>Improving Service and Operations: Surveys, Complaints, Audits, and Reviews</b>	<b>126</b>
24.1	Client Surveys and Feedback	126
24.2	Complaints	127
24.3	Internal Audit	127
24.4	Management Review	127

### **PART 3: RUNNING THE BUSINESS**

25	Certification as a Business Operation	128
25.1	The Organic Market and the Demand for Certification Services	129
25.2	What Is Your Service Offer?	130
25.3	Are There Competent Persons and Resources Available?	132
25.4	Knowing the Competition	132
25.5	Offering Multiple Organic Certification	132
25.6	Expanding the Service	132
26	Business Planning	134
26.1	Look at the Service from the Process Perspective	134
26.2	Budgeting	137
26.3	Certification Fees	138
26.4	The Fee Schedule	138
26.5	Costs for Establishment (Initial Investment)	140
27	Getting Recognition	142
27.1	Mutual Recognition	142
27.2	Approval according to Regulations/National Accreditation	143
27.3	Managing the Accreditation Process	143
27.4	Market Recognition	143
28	Partnerships	143
29	Assistance for Development	147
29.1	Assistance for Development	147
	References	149

### **PART 4: CASE STUDIES**

Organic Agriculture Certification Thailand (ACT)	150
AFRISCO	157
ARGENCERT, Argentina	161
Balkan Biocert	166
Egyptian Center of Organic Agriculture (ECOА)	170
KRAV	174

Organic Food Development & Certification Center of China	179
Tancert	185
Washington State Department of Agriculture	188

## ***PART 5: RESOURCES***

30	Organic Inspection: Basic Training	193
31	List of Resources	194
31.1	Publications	194
31.2	Websites	196
31.3	Journals	197
31.4	Software	197
31.5	Testing	198
31.6	Organizations of Relevance	198
31.7	Support in Certification Development Projects	200
32	Quality Policy	205

## ***PART 6: DEVELOPING DOCUMENTATION***

33	Document Control Policy and Procedure	207
34	Document Register	208
35	Conflict of Interest Policy	210
36	Confidentiality Policy and Procedure	212
37	Terms of Reference for Committees	213
38	Recruitment and Training Policies	215
39	Job Descriptions	217
40	Application for Certification Documentation	218
41	Certification Decision Procedures	220
42	Appeals Policy and Procedure	221

43	Sanctions Policy and Procedure	222
44	Scope and Use of Certification Status	224
45	Policy and Procedures to Combat the Abuse of Certification Status	226
46	Complaints Policy and Procedure	227

## **SAMPLE ORGANIZATION AND QUALITY MANUAL**

1	Introduction	232
1.1	Preface	232
1.2	Scope and Application	232
1.3	Authority and Revision	232
1.4	Distribution	232
1.5	References	232
1.5.1	<i>External References</i>	232
1.5.2	<i>Internal References</i>	233
2	Definitions and abbreviations	233
2.1	Definitions	233
2.2	Abbreviations	236
3	Organization	236
3.1	Legal Form and Registration	236
3.2	Articles of Incorporation/Statutes/By-laws	236
3.3	Organs	236
3.3.1	<i>General Assembly/Annual General Meeting</i>	236
3.3.2	<i>Board</i>	236
3.3.3	<i>Certification Committee</i>	237
3.3.4	<i>Standards Committee</i>	237
3.3.5	<i>Finance Committee</i>	237
3.4	Management	237
3.4.1	<i>Executive Director</i>	237
3.4.2	<i>Other Senior Managers</i>	237
3.4.3	<i>Inspectors</i>	237
3.4.4	<i>Other Staff</i>	237
3.5	Conflicts of Interest	238
3.6	Organizational Chart	238
3.7	Planning	239
4	Quality policy and quality management	239
4.1	Quality Statement	239
4.2	Quality System	239

4.3	Quality Objectives	240
4.4	Design of the Quality System	240
4.5	Implementation of the Quality System	240
4.6	Further Development of and Improvements to the System	240
4.6.1	<i>Internal Audit</i>	240
4.6.2	<i>Audit Plan</i>	241
4.6.3	<i>Complaints</i>	241
4.6.4	<i>Appeals</i>	241
4.6.5	<i>Feedback from Customers</i>	241
4.6.6	<i>Feedback from Staff</i>	241
4.6.7	<i>Input from Third Parties</i>	242
4.6.8	<i>Management Review</i>	242
<b>5</b>	<b>Personnel</b>	<b>242</b>
5.1	Personnel Policies	242
5.1.1	<i>Contracts and Job Descriptions</i>	243
5.2	Recruitment	243
5.3	Training	243
5.3.1	<i>Annual Certification Workshop</i>	243
5.3.2	<i>Introduction of New Certification Staff</i>	244
5.3.3	<i>Inspectors</i>	244
5.4	Staff Review	244
5.4.1	<i>Executive Director</i>	244
5.4.2	<i>Other Staff</i>	244
5.5	Contracting Work	245
<b>6</b>	<b>Financial management</b>	<b>245</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Documentation management</b>	<b>245</b>
7.1	Policy	246
7.2	Procedures	246
7.2.1	<i>Proper Identification of Documents and Parts of Documents</i>	246
7.2.2	<i>Document Authorization and Responsibility</i>	247
7.2.3	<i>Distribution of Documents</i>	247
7.2.4	<i>Register of Documents</i>	247
7.2.5	<i>Archive of Documents</i>	248
7.2.6	<i>Document Revision</i>	248
7.2.7	<i>Document Codes</i>	248
7.2.8	<i>Standardized Templates</i>	248
<b>8</b>	<b>Certification services</b>	<b>249</b>
8.1	Policies	249
8.2	General Flow of the Certification Process	249
8.2.1	<i>Application</i>	249
8.2.2	<i>Assignment of Inspector</i>	249

8.2.3	<i>Inspection Visit and Report</i>	250
8.2.4	<i>Certification</i>	250
8.2.5	<i>Appeals</i>	250
8.3	Other Processes	250
8.4	Certification Contract	250
8.5	CB Mark	250
8.5.1	<i>Rules</i>	250
8.5.2	<i>Inspection and Market Surveillance of CB Mark Use</i>	251
8.6	Acceptance of Prior Certification	251
8.6.1	<i>Acceptance of Products Entering into the Process of a Certified Operator</i>	251
8.6.2	<i>Acceptance of Operators Certified by Other Certification Bodies</i>	252
8.7	Certification Programmes	252
8.7.1	<i>CB Certification</i>	252
8.7.2	<i>NOP Certification</i>	253
8.7.3	<i>EU Certification</i>	253
8.7.4	<i>Any Other Certification Programme</i>	253
8.8	Other Inspection and Certification Services	253
8.8.1	<i>Pre-assessment</i>	253
8.8.2	<i>Inspection Services</i>	253
8.9	Fees	253
<b>9</b>	<b>Record keeping</b>	<b>253</b>
9.1	Operators' Files	253
9.1.1	<i>Operators' Codes</i>	254
9.2	Minutes	254
9.3	Special Records	254
9.4	Staff Files	254
9.5	Confidentiality	255
9.5.1	<i>Policy</i>	255
9.5.2	<i>Procedures</i>	255
9.6	Backup	256
<b>10</b>	<b>Complaints</b>	<b>256</b>
10.1	Validity of Complaints	256
10.2	Submission	256
10.3	Confidentiality	257
10.4	General Procedures	257
10.5	Complaints against CB	257
10.6	Complaints about Certified Operators	258
	<b>Annexes</b>	<b>259</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>260</b>

1.1	Purpose	260
1.2	Scope	260
1.2.1	<i>Revision and Authority</i>	261
1.3	Policies	261
1.4	Certification Scope	261
2	Cost for Services	261
3	Overview of Main Flow and Responsibilities	262
4	Application	263
4.1	Operators	263
4.1.1	<i>Commissioner</i>	263
4.2	Application Date	263
4.3	Application Procedure for New Clients	263
4.3.1	<i>Inquiries</i>	263
4.3.2	<i>Application Pack</i>	264
4.3.3	<i>Registration of Application Fee</i>	264
4.3.4	<i>Review of Application</i>	264
4.3.5	<i>Assignment of Code</i>	264
4.3.6	<i>Certification Contract</i>	264
4.3.7	<i>Completion of Application Stage</i>	265
4.3.8	<i>Registration</i>	265
4.4	Application Procedure for Currently Certified Clients	265
5	Inspection	265
5.1	Assignment of Inspector	265
5.2	Inspection	266
5.2.1	<i>Exit Talk</i>	266
5.2.2	<i>Sampling</i>	266
5.2.3	<i>Refusal of Inspection by Operator</i>	266
5.2.4	<i>Inappropriate Behaviour by the Operator</i>	267
5.3	Inspection of New Applicants	267
5.3.1	<i>Initial Inspection</i>	267
5.4	Inspection of Existing Clients	267
5.4.1	<i>Inspection Frequency</i>	267
5.4.2	<i>Spot Check Inspections</i>	267
5.4.3	<i>The Routine Inspection Visit</i>	268
5.4.4	<i>Extra Inspections</i>	268
5.5	Submission of the Report	268
5.6	Review and Approval of the Inspection Report	268
6	Certification	269
6.1	Authority	269
6.1.1	<i>Review</i>	269

6.2	Timing and Period for Certification Decisions	269
6.3	Certification Checklist	270
6.3.1	<i>Data</i>	270
6.3.2	<i>Category of Certification</i>	270
6.3.3	<i>Decision regarding Data</i>	270
6.3.4	<i>Assessment</i>	270
6.3.5	<i>Decision</i>	271
6.3.6	<i>Other Outputs from the Certification Process</i>	271
6.3.7	<i>Suspended Certification</i>	271
6.3.8	<i>Withdrawal of Certification</i>	271
6.4	Notification of Certification	271
6.4.1	<i>Certificate of Conformity</i>	272
6.5	Registration of the Certified Operator	272
6.6	Changes in Certification Scope	272
6.7	Market Surveillance	272
6.8	Appeals	272
<b>7</b>	<b>Procedures for Special Cases and Processes</b>	<b>273</b>
7.1	Handling of Non-conformities and Sanctions	273
7.1.1	<i>Non-conformities Revealed outside the Normal Inspection Procedure</i>	273
7.2	De-registration	273
<b>8</b>	<b>Procedures for Special Cases and Processes</b>	<b>273</b>
8.1	Certification of (New) Products for an Already Certified Company	273
8.1.1	<i>Procedures</i>	274
8.2	The Results of a Random Inspection	274
8.3	Decisions regarding the Fulfilment of a Corrective Action Request	274
8.4	Acceptance of Previous Certifications	274
8.5	Status of Certified Products of an Operator Leaving the Programme	274
8.6	Transaction Certificates	275
8.6.1	<i>Background</i>	275
8.6.2	<i>The Transaction Certificate</i>	275
8.6.3	<i>Procedures</i>	276
<b>9</b>	<b>Annex 1: Transaction Certificate Format</b>	<b>277</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Annex 2: Policy, Procedures on Non-conformity with Organic Standards and Regulations</b>	<b>278</b>
10.1	Purpose	278
10.2	Scope	278
10.3	Definitions	278
10.4	Authority	278
10.5	Scale of Sanctions	278
10.5.1	<i>Written Warning</i>	278
10.5.2	<i>Fines</i>	278

10.5.3	<i>Damages</i>	279
10.5.4	<i>Partial Withdrawal of Organic Status</i>	279
10.5.5	<i>Suspension of Certification</i>	279
10.5.6	<i>Withdrawal of Certification</i>	279
10.5.7	<i>Combination of Sanctions</i>	279
10.5.8	<i>Additional Verification Visit</i>	279
10.5.9	<i>Use of Income from Sanctions</i>	279
10.6	Procedures	279
10.6.1	<i>Management</i>	279
10.6.2	<i>Standard Letters</i>	279
10.7	Application Guideline	279
10.7.1	<i>Deficiencies and Non-substantial, Unintentional Non-compliances in the First Instance</i>	280
10.7.2	<i>Intentional Non-compliance</i>	280
10.7.3	<i>For Violations</i>	280
10.7.4	<i>Immediate Actions</i>	280
<b>11</b>	<b>Annex 3: Appeals Policy and Procedures</b>	<b>281</b>
11.1	Scope	281
11.2	Policy	281
11.2.1	<i>Appeals Committee</i>	281
11.2.2	<i>Authority over the Policy</i>	281
11.3	Procedures	282
	<b>Scope of the policy</b>	<b>284</b>
	<b>Definition</b>	<b>284</b>
	<b>Policy</b>	<b>284</b>
	<b>Procedures</b>	<b>285</b>
	<b>A Preamble</b>	<b>288</b>
1	Introduction	288
2	Scope	288
3	Definitions	288
4	Access and Distribution	288
5	Authority and Revision	288
	<b>B Terms of Reference</b>	<b>288</b>
1	Name	288
2	Status	288
3	Membership of the Committee	288
4	Responsibilities	289
5	Termination of Membership	289

6	Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality	290
7	Procedures	290
8	Dissolution	290

## **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this publication is to provide guidance on how to set up an effective organic certification programme that takes into account local conditions and conforms to IFOAM criteria and international norms. The purpose is also to ensure that certification bodies act as service providers to the public and support the development of organic agriculture. The focus of the guide is to assist newly established certification bodies. It may also be of value for already established certification bodies.

The background is the growing domestic and international trade in products from organic agriculture. This trade is largely based on certification. Still, more than 100 countries lack local service providers. IFOAM has accepted the challenge, first by developing the IFOAM Basic Standards, later by establishing the IFOAM Accreditation Programme, and increasingly by providing practical assistance, for instance publishing this handbook. Its first edition was published 1998 and was very much in demand. After eight years, it is time for a new edition. The new edition is more comprehensive and expands in particular on the business aspects of organic certification. It also contains the main parts of another IFOAM publication, the *Guide to Compiling Documents for Organic Certification bodies*, as well as earlier unpublished documents from GroLink AB.

Most of the well-known certifiers in the industrialized world began operation more than 20 years ago. At that time the requirements were not very high. A new certification body could easily get “recognition” by publishing standards, registering a trademark, becoming a member of IFOAM, and making itself known. It would learn and improve over the years. Today, the situation is much more complex. The requirements are increasing due to internal development within the movement (as reflected in the IFOAM accreditation criteria), state and international regulations, and increased knowledge in the marketplace. This means that it is much more difficult to start up today. New certifiers should call upon experience from others and take international norms into consideration.

There is some resistance to certification from various groups. In the beginning of this guide, some of the arguments against certification are discussed. The intention of this guide, however, is not to resolve this conflict but to assist in the establishment of reputable certification bodies. Further, it can be argued that it would be more appropriate if organic producers sold their products as “normal”, and producers who use agrochemicals were required to declare that on their products and pay the costs for such a system. That discussion is also outside the scope of this guide.

In the guide we have put together information with the focus of setting up of certification bodies in developing countries. The guide does not describe the highest possible level of performance

but rather a level that is considered to be achievable. It should be satisfactory for getting the recognition that is very much needed for a new organization.

*Gunnar Rundgren, January 2007*

# **THE GUIDE**

## **Contents**

This second edition has been produced by Gunnar Rundgren with Ong Kung Wai compiling case studies and commenting on the whole work. Further comments and suggestions have been received from Diane Bowen and Eva Mattsson.

The previous edition was edited and written to a large extent by Gunnar Rundgren with contributions from Bo van Elzakker, Jim Riddle, Ong Kung Wai, and Roberto Ugas.

It also contains material (in the section in documentation and in part 6) from the *Guide to Compiling Documentation for Organic certification bodies*, published by IFOAM 2002 and compiled by Ken Commins with input from Krista Kennedy, Vitoon Panyakuul, Jorge Casale, Jochen Neuendorrf, Rochelle Bosche, Robert Simmons, and Virginia Zenteno.

Case studies have been written by Piyaphan Phinthuphan, Diana Callear , Laura Montenegro, Beate Huber, Marlene Heeb, Gergana Nentcheva, Yousef Ali Hamdi, Gunnar Rundgren, Xiao Xingji, Leonard Mtama and Miles McEvoy

In addition, it contains sample documents developed by GroLink AB.

## **How to Read the Guide**

The first part offers theoretical background on certification, regulations, norms, and accreditation. It also tries to place the function of certification in its proper context. Part 2 offers hands-on instructions and practical examples for the organization and technical work of a certification body. Part 3 contains business aspects. Case studies of certification bodies are described in part 4. Part 5 contains resources that can be useful. Part 6 contains instructions for the development of the quality system documentation. Part 7 presents a number of sample documents.

There are large boxes in the document with examples or additional discussion. There are also smaller boxes with questions. These can be typical things to discuss in a study group.

## **Terms Used**

A list of acronyms and definitions appears at the beginning of the guide. Most of the terms are defined or explained when first introduced. It should be noted that the term *certification*

*body* refers to the organization performing certification. This body may sometimes be referred to as the *certification organization*, *the certification agency*, or *the certifier*. *Certification programme* is used for the service package of the certification body (in this case, the service of certification of organic production). One certification body may execute several certification programmes.

**An important note:**

There are often several ways to do one thing, and it is not always easy to say what is right and wrong or what is best, especially in an international context. The practical part of this guide tries to balance the need for clear instructions with the necessity to be open-minded about how things can be done.

## 1 TERMINOLOGY

### 1.1 *Acronyms and Abbreviations*

BRC	British Retail Consortium
GAP	Good Agricultural Practice
HACCP	Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points
IAF	International Accreditation Forum
IFOAM	International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements <sup>1</sup>
IOAS	International Organic Accreditation Services, Inc.
ISO	The International Organization of Standardization
ISO 65	ISO/IEC Guide 65: 1996(E); General requirement for bodies operating product-certification systems. In the European standardization context it is called “EN 45011”.
JAS	Japanese agricultural standard
MLA	multilateral agreement (between countries, or certification or accreditation bodies)
NOP	National Organic Program (of the United States)
PGS	participatory guarantee systems
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

### 1.2 *Glossary*

The following terms are used in this guide (and in the organic sector):

**accreditation:** the procedure by which an authoritative body formally recognizes that a body or person is competent to carry out certain tasks

**approval:** procedure by which a body (other than an accreditation body) gives formal recognition that a body or person is competent to carry out certain tasks, or that a product fulfils certain requirements

**certification:** a system by which the conformity of products, services, etc. to applicable standards is determined and confirmed

**certification body:** organization offering certification services. A certification body can be a limited company, a producers’ association or co-operative, or a government agency

**conformity assessment:** a general term for the demonstration that specified requirements relating to a product, process, system, person, or body are fulfilled. A conformity assessment includes certification, accreditation, testing, and other methods

---

1 A sector association with 750 member organizations in 108 countries.

**EU regulation:** Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91, with amendments and additional regulations

**IFOAM norms:** The IFOAM Basic Standards for production and the Accreditation Criteria for certification, which form the basis for IFOAM accreditation

**IFOAM accreditation:** Accreditation to the IFOAM norms of a certification body, the status of which is often referred to as “IFOAM-accredited”

**inspection:** a visit to a site to verify that the performance of an operation is in accordance with a particular set of production or processing standards. In other sectors of conformity assessment, this is often referred to as “auditing” (e.g., “environmental auditing”) or “assessment”

**inspection body:** normally, a body performing inspection services. In the context of this paper, inspection body is used synonymously with *certification* body because of the way the term is used in the EU regulation on organic farming

**ISO 65 accreditation:** accreditation (by an accreditation body) of a certification body for compliance with the ISO 65. The status is often referred to as “ISO 65 accredited”

**JAS certification:** certification of producers to the JAS standards

**JAS registration:** the formal approval of certification bodies by MAFF

**non-conformity:** any situation or action that leads to the operator’s or production’s not fulfilling in some way the standards or the requirements set by CB. Non-conformities can be classified and described by many terms, among them *non-compliances, deficiencies, violations, transgressions, infringements, irregularities, fraud and deviation*

**NOP certification:** certification of producers according to NOP production standards

**NOP accreditation:** accreditation of a certification body to the NOP requirements for certification bodies by the USDA

**operator** is used in this guide for anyone who has some activities subject to certification, be it a farmer, a handler, or a processor. These are sometimes referred to as “licensees” (and in ISO language as the “supplier”)

**quality system:** documented procedures which are established, implemented, and periodically audited to ensure that production, handling, management, certification, accreditation, and other systems meet specified requirements and outcomes by following standardized protocols

**recognition:** used mostly in its common sense, if not linked to a specific expression such as *mutual recognition*

**third-country list:** the list of the non-EU of countries that have been recognized as having an equivalent organic regulation as the EU, according to Article 11.6 of the EU regulation

Note: The terms *IFOAM-accredited*, *NOP accredited* and *ISO 65 accredited* are used throughout this report as abbreviated forms of the more complete phrasing, such as “Accredited by the USDA to the NOP”. This kind of use is widespread not only in the organic sector but also in other sectors. E.g., “ISO 9001 certified”

## **PART 1: ORGANIC CERTIFICATION CONCEPTS**

This section gives an overview about inspection, certification, standards, and accreditation, both in general and in the organic sector. It is recommended that this section be read thoroughly and used as a reference when reading the later sections.

### **2 WHAT IS CERTIFICATION?**

#### **2.1 Introduction and Definition**

Certification is a system by which the conformity of products, services, etc. to applicable standards is determined and confirmed. This confirmation can be done any of the following:

the first party  
the second party  
a third party

the supplier (producer)  
the customer (buyer)  
an independent body

*Certification* in organic agriculture generally refers to third-party certification. The independent body in this case is expected to be neutral or have a balance of interests (as opposed to a body controlled by one of any interested parties). In this guide, the term certification is used only for third-party certification.

Certification is not unique to organic agriculture. Many things are certified: products, quality systems, services, people, and production methods, to mention the more important categories. What is common to all is that they are based on a norm or standard (such as ISO 1992) against which the certified products or service are assessed (evaluated, tested, audited).

Certification of organic agriculture includes the certification of products and the certification of quality systems. It is primarily certification of a production system or a production method, including the products thereof. The term *organic*, as in *organic agriculture* or *organic products*, refers to certain farming and processing methods or products from such systems. The organic quality cannot be verified through product testing. In some cases, product testing can be used to detect non-conformity. Certification of organic agriculture uses concepts developed both in product certification and quality systems certification in addition to concepts developed from the field to meet the unique needs of the organic industry.

## 2.2 *The Certification Mark*

Certification is often associated in the marketplace and among the public by a mark or symbol.<sup>2</sup> It is an effective way of informing the consumer that the production and/or the products are certified. Normally it is the ability to use the mark that the operator is seeking. Not all prominent organic marks, however, are certification marks. Technically speaking, marks are only certification marks when they represent the certification decision. For example, the Soil Association mark represents products certified by the Soil Association according to the Soil Association's standards. Some prominent organic marks are not certification marks (e.g., the German "Bio"). It is the German government's national mark to identify organic products. Operators have to be certified to the EU regulation to be able to use the Bio mark. The certification can be by any of the numerous recognized certification bodies in the EU.

It is the producer who labels the product with the mark, and it is the producer who is continuously responsible for how the mark is used. "The mark is not a form of conformance guarantee by the certification body, but rather by the product supplier" (ISO 1992). The ability of the certification body to monitor the proper use of the mark is limited. Non-conformities are normally discovered after the damage has been done: i.e., after the products have been sold.

## 2.3 *Certification and Regulation*

Regulations are normally mandatory, whilst certification, unless required by regulation, is normally voluntary. Most regulations are controlled or inspected by governmental authorities with the purpose of disclosing violations and taking legal action against offenders. The activities of a certification programme are directed to ensure that certain requirements are met. Certification is basically a positive statement about operators, complying to set standards. State control aims at identifying those who don't follow the rules.

Governments are increasingly referring to certification for the regulation of various activities. Examples include machinery, household goods, and shipping classifications. Governments have been requiring certification by independent certification bodies to verify compliance with national or international standards. Some certification institutions are also government bodies.

## 2.4 *Basic Principles for a Certification System*

There are fundamental principles on which a certification body should be based. They are further developed in standards for certification bodies such as the ISO Guide 65 and the IFOAM accreditation criteria. These norms mainly address principles that affect the reliability and credibility of a certification body and not principles that relate to efficiency, client service, and general business operations.

---

<sup>2</sup> In this guide, certification mark is used to describe the logo or symbol that indicates that the product is certified.