

"ORGANIC FARMING CERTIFICATION IN INDIA"

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Organic farming is an agricultural system that excludes the use of synthetic agrochemicals and includes inputs of organic origin (compost, FYM, green manure etc.) and places emphasis on techniques such as crop rotation and companion planting. During mid to late 1960s, the Green revolution increased the yield exponentially by introducing HYVs and synthetic Fertilizers but at a certain point, high input use had reached its maximum and is sustained with deteriorating soil health and ecosystem. Here, the best solution to revive the soil and plant ecosystem came as organic farming. With the beginning of promotion of organic farming begins the idea of its certification. Organic certification system is a quality assurance initiative, intended to assure quality, prevent fraud and promote commerce, based on set of standards and ethics.

WHY ORGANIC CERTIFICATION?

- Assure the consumer about the producer through an authorized third party.
- Easy to recognize- uniform labelling.
- Assures the consumers that his concern for healthy food has been addressed.
- Effective marketing tool for Image, credibility, visibility/ Transparency.

PROGRAMS: NPOP & PGS-INDIA

NPOP

National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) launched during 2001 laid the foundation for systematic development of organic agriculture sector in the country. Provides an institutional framework for accreditation and certification of various facets of organic agriculture processes. Has international recognition and agreements with European Union, Switzerland and USDA - NOP.

NPOP is being managed and operated by the APEDA under Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India.

Certification Procedure

- Application for certification is given to the certification agency in the prescribed format with necessary details.
- Screening of the application is done by the concerned agency and if required further details/clarifications are sought.
- Then the applicant is given the cost estimate for inspection and certification including certification charge, inspection charge, travel cost, reporting cost, laboratory charges etc.
- When the producer/grower accept to bear the cost then 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.

- Then an invoice is raised by the certification agency asking the producer for the payment of initial fees.
- Then grower/producer pays the fee and inspection schedule is worked out.
- Inspection is carried out at one or more than one occasions.
- If required unannounced inspection can also be done. If any doubt arises then, the inspection team can also draw plant/soil/raw material/input/product sample for laboratory testing.
- Inspection report/(s) are now submitted to the certification committee.
- Certification agency asks for final payment.
- After completion of final payment, certification is granted.
- On grant of scope certificate producer/operator applies for license for use of India Organic Logo.
- Certification body grants the license for use of India Organic Logo
- Grower/producer releases the stock for sale with Certification Mark.



PGS-INDIA:

PGS-India launched in 2011 by Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare with National Centre of Organic Farming as its secretariat. PGS is a process in which people in similar situations (in this case producers) assess, inspect and verify the production practices of each other and collectively declare the entire holding of the group as organic. PGS- India is a quality assurance initiative which is locally relevant and based on the participation of stakeholders, including consumers, operators and producers outside the frame of third party certification.

- Free Certification.
- Only For domestic purpose.
- Cluster based approach (minimum 5 farmers).
- Trust is the main guiding principle.

The guiding principles of PGS India are: Participation, Shared vision, Transparency, Trust, Horizontality and National networking. Though it is also based on the standards of organic production as laid by NPOP but the certification process is different. Operational structure of the PGS India is given below:

Local groups (Farmers group) (LGs)

Regional Councils (RCs)

Zonal Councils (RCOFs)

National Centre of Organic Farming (NCOF) (PGS-INDIA Secretariat)

National Advisory Committee (NAC)

Certification Procedure

- Farmer gets information about organic standards and stop using agrochemicals.
- Farmer proposes to convert his entire holding to organic and obtain gradual conversion approval from group.

- Then hi sign a PGS pledge committing to adhere to the standards.
- Farm and livestock diary should be maintained in order to keep record of farm operations.
- At least once in every crop season, the farmer is appraised by group of peers from the local group. Minimum three peer reviewers must be present to sign and validate the appraisal form.
- Not mandatory, but if it is possible an external advisor or representative of consumers or a local State Agriculture Department Officer may be included.
- The Appraisals are scripted and they include both physical checks of various parts of the farm and a questionnaire for the farmer to know whether he understand the organic standards and are applying it in his farm or not.
- After inspection the decision is made by the group as a whole or by the certification committee about who will and who will not get certified in that particular year.
- The Local Group prepares local group summary worksheet on-line and sends a signed hard copy to the Regional Council.
- On acceptance by RC, Group prints individual certificate and distribute to the farmers.



Certificate of Authorization for Regional Council

After the registration is completed, following 2 types of certification logo provided through this scheme

- PGS- INDIA GREEN** – Can be used when the land under organic conversion (at least 2 years before sowing or in case of perennial crops other than grassland, at least 3 years before the first harvest of products.).
- PGS- INDIA ORGANIC** – After completion of conversion period.



CONCLUSION:

NPOP and PGS-INDIA both are schemes for obtaining organic farming certificates. The main idea behind this certification is to promote organic farming by providing a proper framework for certification. This will ensure the consumer that they are consuming the product which is authentic as well as talking about the farmers' side he will get a good value of his product after its proper certification. NPOP is valid both in our country as well as other countries like USA, Switzerland, European Union so this programme provides facility to export our product in addition to the local market supply. Though NPOP provides farmer with a wide range of market but it is very costly and most of the small or marginal farmers can't afford this also many are not planning for export because of their small quantity of production. Especially for small and marginal farmers and those who want to trade within the country the government introduced PGS-INDIA scheme, in this there is no extra burden of charges for inspection, forms etc. instead it is free and based on trust and integrity of the farmer and farmers' group. Again a problem arose among consumers about the certification logo, to sort out this issue Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) in December 2017, introduced the Jaivik Bharat logo to help customers identify authentic organic food.

