

## Organic Farming Certification in India

**Pooja, Janardan Singh, Shilpa And Raveena**

Department of Agronomy Chaudhary Sarvan Kumar Himachal Pradesh Krishi  
Vishvavidyalaya, Palampur -176062 Kangra, (Himachal Pradesh)

**ARTICLE ID: 040**

### **Introduction**

Organic farming is a system which avoids or largely excludes the use of synthetic inputs (such as fertilizers, pesticides, hormones, feed additives etc) and to the maximum extent feasible rely upon crop rotations, crop residues, animal manures, off-farm organic waste, mineral grade rock additives and biological system of nutrient mobilization and plant protection. It is the system to produce organic food which meets the demands of people by supplying quality food.

### **Organic food**

Organic food means any form of food or its raw material (such as grains, oils, spices etc.) produces in a manner close to nature without using any synthetic man made inputs such as fertilizers, pesticides, hormones, antibiotics etc. Organic farming also prohibits the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). As organic food is grown, produced and processed through natural inputs and natural processes, it is absolutely free from chemical residues, have balance of all macro and micro nutrients and is considered safe and healthy for animals and human beings. Organic food is also known to be the best source of immunity and systemic resistance against disease and deficiencies. To ensure the food quality and standards, organic certification is necessary.

### **Organic certification**

Organic farming certification in India is governed by The National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry. The National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) provides for standards for organic production, systems, criteria and procedure for accreditation of Certification Bodies, the National (India Organic) Logo and the regulations governing its use. The standards and procedures have been formulated in harmony with other International Standards regulating import and export of organic products. Farms that have obtained Organic Farming Certification and adhering to



the norms specified by the National Programme for Organic Production will be allowed to use India Organic logo on the produce.

Certification is vital to the commercial success of organic producers and processors. It ensures credibility and enables greater access to markets for organic products. Many markets will only buy organic produce that is 'Certified Organic'.

### **Procedure for obtaining organic farming certification**

Any person looking to obtain organic farming certification for agricultural produce must submit an application in the requisite format along with the fee and complete field verification. Before submission of application, it is important for the applicant or farmer to ensure that his/her farm conforms to the standard laid out by the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) for organic crop production.

### **Organic farming requirements**

Any farm which proposes to obtain the Organic Farm Certification must confirm to the following standards set out by the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP).

1. Description of practices and procedures to be performed and maintained.
2. List of inputs used in production along with their composition, frequency of usages, application rate and source of commercial availability.
3. Source of organic material (seeds and seedling).
4. Description of the monitoring practices and procedures to be performed and maintained to verify that the plan is being implemented effectively.
5. Description of the management practices and physical barriers established to prevent commingling and contamination of organic production unit from conventional farms, split operations and parallel operations.
6. Description of the record keeping system implemented to comply with the requirements.
7. Prepare, implement and update annually an organic production plan every year.
8. Permit on-site inspections with complete access to the production and handling operation, including non-certified production and handling operations, areas, structures, offices by the Organic Certification Inspectors and other higher officials, whenever required.



9. Maintain all records applicable to the organic operation for not less than 5 years after the creation of such records and allow authorized representatives of the certification body, State or Central Government officials of accrediting agency access to such records during normal working hours for review and copying to determine compliance with NPOP norms.
10. Pay the prescribed fees charged for organic farming accreditation within the stipulated time.
11. Inform the authorities in case of any application, including drift, of a prohibited substances to any, production unit, site, facility, livestock, or product that is part of an operation and changes in certified operations or any portion of a certified operation that may affect the organic integrity in compliance with standards of NPOP.

#### **Applying for organic farm certification**

Once the requirements for organic farming are satisfied, the applicant can prepare and submit an application. The application for certification must contain the following information:

1. An organic production or handling system plan.
2. All information requested in the application shall be completed in full i.e. name, addresses, details of contact person, telephone number of the authorized person etc.
3. The names of organic certification body to which application is previously made and outcome, non-compliance noted if any, copy of such records and reason for applying shall be given.
4. Any other information necessary to determine the compliance with the standards specified.
5. The prescribed registration fee, one time inspection fee and one time travel cost should be paid by the operator along with the application form.

#### **Review of Application**

On submission and review of the application, the decision of acceptance or rejection on the application would be taken by the accreditation authority. All rejected application would be returned to the applicant quoting reasons for rejection.



### **Scheduling of Inspection**

Before sanctioning of accreditation, an initial field inspection would be fixed at a reasonable time so that the operator can verify the capacity to comply with the standards while conducting the inspection of land, facilities, and activities. The preliminary inspection can be delayed up to six months from the date of registration to give time for the operator to comply with required standards including record keeping. All onsite inspection must be conducted only in the presence of operator or an authorized representative of the operator who is educated about the operation. However, this requirement does not arise in the case of unannounced inspections. There should be one annual inspection and additional inspections can be fixed based on the risk assessment carried out during the initial inspection.

### **Verification during Inspection**

During field inspection, the concerned authorities would verify the compliance with the NPOP standards. The authorities would ensure that the prohibited substances/ materials are not used and in case of doubt, they can draw samples of soil, water, wastes, seeds, plant tissues, plant, animal, and processed products. The samples should be tested in NABL (National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories) accredited ISO 17025 laboratories. The operator would bear the cost of samples sent for analysis. During the inspection, the concerned authorities can also conduct an interview with the person responsible for the organic production system to confirm the accuracy of information gathered during the inspection and the completeness of observation gathered during the onsite inspection. The inspector can also collect other required information. After inspection, the concerned authority would draft a checklist, inspection report and obtain the signature of the operator or his representative.

A copy of the checklist and inspection report should be sent to the concerned operator and evaluator. Inspection reports must be valued by the evaluator within a reasonable time and any additional information required should be addressed to the operator. In case of any non-compliance with the general standards, an explanation should be called from the operator and sanctions can be levied based on requirements.

### **Granting Of Organic Farm Certification**

On conformance with the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP), the accreditation agency would issue the Certificate of Registration, Transaction Certificate and



Product Certificate to the eligible operators. The issue of this certificate shall be based on the decision made by the certification committee. If the operation does not comply with the standards, the operator would be intimated about denial of certification stating the reasons. Upon receipt of such reports, the operator can correct the noncompliance and submit the report to the accreditation agency. In case of denial, the operator can also file an appeal to the Appeal Committee.

### Renewing Certification: Annual Update

The annual update adds new information to the existing OSP. A certified operation must submit an updated OSP and fees to its certifier at least once per year to continue its organic certification. If the operation fails to submit its annual update and/or fees, the certifier issues a Notice of Noncompliance. The annual update must include a summary statement outlining any changes to the OSP that were made during the last year, as well as any changes planned for the coming year. If the certifier requires supporting documentation to verify these changes, then the operation will provide it.

### Labelling and marketing

<p><b>100 % Organic</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ All organic ingredients</li> <li>❖ Organic processing aids</li> <li>❖ USDA seal allowed</li> <li>❖ Must list certifier</li> </ul>	<p><b>Made with Organic ingredients</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ &gt;70% organic ingredients</li> <li>❖ Remaining 30% can be non-organic ingredients or non-organic Ag. Ingredients from the national list</li> <li>❖ USDA seal prohibited</li> <li>❖ Must list certifier</li> </ul>
<p><b>Organic</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ &gt; 95% organic ingredients</li> <li>❖ Remaining 5% can be non-organic ingredients or non-organic Ag. Ingredients from the National list</li> <li>❖ All Ag. Ingredients must be organic unless commercially unavailable</li> <li>❖ USDA seal allowed</li> </ul>	<p><b>&lt; 70% Organic ingredients</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Any level of organic ingredients</li> <li>❖ No restriction on remaining ingredients</li> <li>❖ No certification claims</li> <li>❖ USDA seal prohibited</li> <li>❖ Lists organic in ingredient list</li> </ul>

❖ Must list certifier	
-----------------------	--

### Importance of certification

The 'India Organic Certification' label is given to all organic items after going through a thorough process of validation. The certification ensures that all the raw materials used and the product itself were produced through organic farming means. In order to oversee such certifications, the National Standards for Organic Productions was established in India (in the year 2000).

This ensures that the products are-

- Free of pesticides.
- Have zero chemical fertilizers.
- Have not been farmed via induced hormones.

