



INTERNATIONAL ORGANIC ACCREDITATION SERVICE

A non-profit organisation

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Official Notice Number 2012 - 01 **EU Recognition Programme** **Requirement for annual on-site visits and witness/review audits**

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On 23rd May, 2012, the European Commission invited all accreditation bodies who had written assessment reports for 3rd country CB equivalence recognition to a meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to start to develop common guidelines for the accreditation of organic production certification both inside the European Union and in 3rd countries. One outcome of this meeting was the Commission's decision that all recognised certification bodies must have an on-site visit and witness or review audit every year.

The IOAS has long had a system where CBs in good standing were allowed to have a bye year every other year. This will no longer apply to those certifiers under IOAS surveillance for their EU recognition. Instead during a bye year the certifier will have a short visit of two days - one day in the office and one day in the field which will cover the EU only. A surveillance visit of the normal length will take place during the alternative year.

Because the year is already quite far advanced and we already have a very full programme schedule, the IOAS wrote to the Commission requesting to extend the period for conducting the 2012 visits until early March, 2013. The Commission has agreed to this provided that all visits are done in time to be included in the annual reports due at the end of March. Although this will have a knock on effect which means that some CBs will be visited twice in either 2013 or 2014, we cannot see any alternative.

The 2012 programme schedule is currently being revised and CBs will begin to receive their notifications for an EU surveillance visit. The IOAS will endeavour to group these visits in order to reduce the economic burden as much as possible.

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