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The IOAS is a not for profit organisation providing accreditation and assurance services for organic products and sustainable rural activities around the world. Originally formed by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement (IFOAM), the IOAS is now celebrating its 20th successful year.

The IOAS’s dedication as an independent third-party accreditation body providing expert assurance to governmental and private scheme owners and certification bodies has built trust and market confidence in organic and sustainable standards assisting the growth of these markets and helping to nurture our planet’s future and improve the life of its people.

IOAS is a founder member of the ISEAL Alliance as well as a member of the International Accreditation Forum and a signatory of the Multilateral Recognition Arrangement for Product Certification operated by the Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (PAC), a regional group of the International Accreditation Forum.
OUR FOCUS

ORGANIC

SUSTAINABLE

SOCIAL
CORE VALUES

IMPROVEMENT
QUALITY
INTEGRITY
INNOVATION
RESPECT
President's message

2017 sees the IOAS celebrating two major milestones in its history.

It was twenty years ago that the IOAS was incorporated in the USA as a non-profit organization with IFOAM as the sole member. In March 1997 an agreement between the newly formed International Organic Accreditation Service (IOAS) and IFOAM was signed. The IFOAM World Board of Directors had been discussing the possibility of establishing a separate legal entity to operate the IFOAM Accreditation Programme for some time and there were already twelve accredited certification bodies together with six applicants.

The history of the IOAS began with the unanimous vote of the IFOAM General Assembly in Sao Paulo in 1992 to proceed with implementing the IFOAM Accreditation Programme based on the IFOAM Basic Standards and the IFOAM Criteria (requirements for certification bodies) that had been developed over the previous two years. An interim IFOAM Accreditation Programme Board (IAPB) was appointed by the World Board of Directors. The driving force behind this development had been Ken Commmins who had been the sole staff member of the IAPB and then became the Executive Director of the IOAS.

We can also mark our 20th anniversary by celebrating the IOAS becoming an IAF accreditation member. The approval by the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) of the IOAS application for accreditation body membership (multi-lateral agreement MLA) for the main scope ISO/IEC 17065, was confirmed by the IAF board on 4 July 2017. This achievement places the IOAS in a peer position with national and international accreditation bodies worldwide.

The IAF is the world association of Conformity Assessment Accreditation Bodies and other bodies interested in conformity assessment. Its primary function is to develop a single worldwide programme of conformity assessment which reduces risk for business and its customers by assuring them that accredited certificates may be relied upon. Accreditation body and Regional Accreditation Group members of the IAF are admitted to the IAF MLA only after a most stringent evaluation of their operations by a peer evaluation team, which is charged to ensure that the applicant member complies fully with both the international standards and IAF requirements.

Elsewhere the IOAS has had continued success in developing its core businesses as well as exploring new areas of work.

Our people continue to be the most important resource the IOAS has and an additional client manager will be starting in August 2017. It was, however, with great sadness that earlier this year we had to announce the tragic death of Accreditation Committee member Rod May, aged 63, after a road accident near his family farm in Australia.

I have no doubt that the IOAS will see significant and most likely surprising changes over the next 20 years as it continues to evolve. We can expect development and innovations to continue because any organisation with the commitment and expertise that we see assembled within the IOAS, staff and volunteers can only go from strength to strength. I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank my Board and Committee members, and their organisations for contributing their expertise and time.

Robert Duxbury
IOAS President
Following the successful introduction of the IFOAM Accreditation Programme in 1992 and with twelve certification bodies already accredited, the IFOAM World Board of Directors and the IAPB establish a separate non-profit legal entity the International Organic Accreditation Service, the IOAS, in March 1997.

The IOAS establish an accreditation committee chosen to provide an impartial process for accreditation decisions. At this time the IOAS had only two professional employees, Ken Commins and Jan Deane and 13 accredited certification bodies as clients on the IFOAM programme.

With 5 employees, the IOAS now offers IFOAM and ISO/IEC 65 accreditation to 33 certification bodies.

The CFIA approves the IOAS as a Conformity Verification Body (CVB) and the IOAS offers Canada Organic Regime (COR), Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) programmes and EU Equivalence reports.

The IOAS offers Textile Exchange (TE) programme.

The IOAS offers COSMOS Organic programme.

The IOAS offers NATRUE programme.

The IOAS becomes a signatory of the PAC MLA on product certification.

The IOAS is proud to announce that it has become an IAF Accreditation body member. We currently have 13 employees, work with 58 certification bodies and this year have issued 136 accreditations and recommendations around the world.
Experience and knowledge has built success

The IOAS has been privileged throughout its 20 years of existence to have had the benefit of many knowledgeable experts in the organic and sustainable field.

Over half of the current members of the Board or the Accreditation Committee have served for over 10 years, while some Board members have served from its inception in 1997. Over the course of the first 20 years only 7 people have filled the three seats on the Executive Board.

Below are those individuals and past and current Board and Accreditation Committee members whom have helped make the IOAS such a successful organisation.

Those who served on the IFOAM Accreditation Programme Board (IAPB) 1993 -1997 (responsible for establishing IFOAM Accreditation).

- Gunnar Rundgren (Sweden)★★
- Bo van Elzakker (Holland)★★
- Reginbert Keller (Germany)
- Gerald Hermann (Germany)
- Sampsa Heinonen (Finland)
- Franz Rivetti (Italy)
- Ong Kung Wai (Malaysia)
- Jim Riddle (USA)
- Beate Huber (Germany)
- Roger Blobaum (USA)★★
- Ahmed El Araby (Egypt)
- Roberto Ugas (Peru)
- Robert Beauchemin (Canada)
- Joe Smillie (USA)
- William Friedman (USA)
- Perry Spiller (New Zealand)
- Tim Marshall (Australia)

The IOAS Board over the past 20 years.

- Bo van Elzakker (Holland)★★★★
- Roger Blobaum (USA)★★★★
- Jim Riddle (USA)★★★★
- Beate Huber (Germany)
- Ong Kung Wai (Malaysia)
- Diana Callendar (South Africa)★★★★
- Jenny Barnes (Australia)
- Peggy Miars (USA)★★★★
- Roberto Ugas (Peru)★★★★
- Sampsa Heinonen (Finland)
- Franz Rivetti (Italy)
- Ahmed El Araby (Egypt)
- Elke Roder (Germany)
- Francis Blake (UK)★★★★
- Rikke Lundsgaard (Denmark)★★★★
- Felicia Echeverria (Costa Rica)
- Robert Duxbury (UK)★★★★
- Gunnar Rundgren (Sweden)★★★★
- Paolo Foglia (Italy)
- Michael Sligh (USA)★★★★
- Jacquelin Haessig Alleje (Philippines)
- Vitoon Ruenglerlpanyaku (Thailand)★★★★
- Gabriella Soto (Costa Rica)

Individuals who have served on the IOAS Accreditation Committee over the past 20 years

- Roberto Ugas (Peru)
- Ahmed El-Araby (Egypt)
- Roger Blobaum (USA)
- Bo van Elzakker (Holland)
- Elke Roder (Germany)
- Roberto Setti (Italy)★★
- Dorrotta Metera (Poland)★★
- Patricia Garcia (Argentina)
- Paolo Foglia (Italy)
- Ong Kung Way (Malaysia)
- Robert Duxbury (UK)
- Qiao Yuhui (China)★★
- Michael Sligh (USA)
- Anne Macey (Canada)
- Debbie Miller (Canada)★★
- Rod May (Australia)
- Urs Meier (Switzerland)
- Melanie Adcock (USA)
- Denis Paul Bouffard (Canada)
- Frank Rumpe (Switzerland)
- Patricio Parra (Chile)★★
- Vitoon Ruenglerlpanyaku (Thailand)★★
- Jochen Neuendorff (Germany)★★

★Individuals who have served on the IOAS Executive Committee.
★★Individuals who are currently serving on the Board / Accreditation Committee.
IOAS Employees

Utilising a virtual office system our team of international and experienced employees are located all over the world. Their specialist knowledge of organic and sustainable accreditation is enhanced by past employment within the organic industry including production and certification. We are proud that many of our staff have been with the IOAS for many years.

As we celebrate the IOAS 20th anniversary we wish to thank all the individuals who have been employed by the IOAS over the years who have helped the IOAS become the successful organisation it is today. We wish to particularly acknowledge Jan Deane who was employed in 1998 and chose to retire as Executive Director in 2016 but continues to provide her support and assessor services to the IOAS.
Over the last twenty years the IOAS has gained extensive worldwide experience and knowledge of organic and sustainable standards. We continue to work with private and regulatory scheme owners on high quality schemes that promote fairness for producers and traders and confidence to consumers.

As a specialist accreditation and assessment body focusing its efforts to build sustainable futures for people and the planet, we offer assessment and accreditation of certification bodies applying a standard which complements and does not contradict the IOAS mission. This means that the IOAS is open to applications that involve organic and sustainable agriculture, environmental protection, social justice, fair trade and related themes. We are currently assessing certification bodies with activity in the following areas:

- Organic agriculture and aquaculture
- Inputs for organic agriculture
- Sustainable agriculture
- Sustainable fisheries
- Social justice
- Fair trade
- Content Claims
- Recycled content
- Organic and natural cosmetics
- Ingredients for organic and natural cosmetics
- Organic textiles
- Inputs for organic textiles

The requirement for accreditation of product certification is normally assessment against ISO/IEC 17065 plus any additional sector requirements that may have been described by the scheme owner or the certification body itself. We invite certification bodies or scheme owners to consult with us and are happy to receive requests of this nature.

IOAS Certification bodies by scheme participation.
The IOAS is an approved Conformity Verification Body and able to assess the competence of certification bodies both inside and outside of Canada as specified under the COR Organic Products Regulations of 2009 (OPR 2009). The IOAS makes recommendations for accreditation to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA).

The USDA National Organic Program (NOP) and the Canadian Organic Regime (COR) have an organic standards equivalency agreement. Products from anywhere in the world certified to Canadian standards may be shipped to the United States and use the USDA NOP logo as long as the product meets the critical requirements.

COSMOS
ORGANIC

The COSMetics Organic and natural Standard (COSMOS) scheme is a voluntary accreditation for organic and natural cosmetics operated by COSMOS-standard AISBL, an international non-profit association.

The European regulation (EC) 834/2007 provides a framework for rules on production and sale of organic products in Europe including equivalence of imports from third countries. As part of an ISO 17065 accreditation the IOAS makes an assessment of equivalence of certification body production rules and control measures and makes a recommendation to the European Commission.

The Global Organic Textile Standard is the leading set of norms in the field of organic textile processing and its logo appears widely on organic textile products world-wide. The IOAS has worked with the GOTS since 2009.

IFOAM accreditation was the very first international verification of competence for certification bodies active in organic agriculture. During 2014-15 the scheme was opened to implementation by other accreditation bodies and now allows use of equivalent standards as part of IFOAM accreditation.

The NATRUE scheme aims to ensure the availability of quality natural and organic cosmetic products and has worked with the IOAS since 2012 to develop an independent accreditation scheme in support of that mission. There are now 25 countries actively using the NATRUE label.

The Textile Exchange has developed a range of standards and requirements to support the textile industry on Content, Organic content, Recycled, Global recycled, Responsible down and Responsible wool claims. The IOAS has worked with TE since 2010.
Our clients

Our clients benefit from a one stop service for multiple accreditation schemes

The overall goals of the IOAS are:

- Farmers and businesses can work in a fair environment and find markets for their products.
- Consumers can trust the label on the products they buy.

We do this through supervision of intermediary organisations that provide inspection and certification services to the farmers and businesses.

These certification or control bodies operate within a number of schemes which may be regulatory or established by private organisations. These ‘scheme owners’ set down standards for producers, requirements for the certification bodies and also requirements for how accreditation bodies like the IOAS should work.

Our role is as an independent, technical expert that verifies correct application of the standard and the requirements for certification; objectivity, transparency and freedom from conflicts of interest amongst others.

IOAS Clients by their home country.

Certification is not limited to our clients countries. They work in 149 countries around the world. Any of these countries may be visited in the course of the IOAS accreditation and ongoing surveillance work.
Certification Bodies under accreditation and assessment by IOAS

Clients accepted by the IOAS as at 30/6/2017.
Credibility and Integrity

We believe a professional service should have a transparent process

Accreditation is a mechanism for confirming competence of certification bodies which in turn ensures compliance of organic products to the standard being applied. For that to work an accreditation system has to have teeth. For IOAS these teeth come in various forms of sanction as follows:

- Warnings;
- Fines;
- Threats of suspension;
- Suspension;
- Termination of application process;
- Withdrawal of accreditation.

In the year to end of June 2017 the IOAS issued the following sanctions.

In a healthy, objective and transparent accreditation system, the certification bodies have the right to ask for reconsideration and ultimately appeal adverse decisions. In the year to end of June 2017 the IOAS appeal process has been well exercised with 4 appeals taking place, 3 of which were denied and 1 being accepted. Appeals are generally requested in response to the most severe sanctions (suspension, termination or withdrawal) and the appeal is a very formal process and proceeds as follows:

- The certifier is informed of the decision and told that it may appeal within a certain time;
- The certifier submits their argument and evidence for why it believes the IOAS decision is not justified;
- This is reviewed for relevance by IOAS staff and formally accepted;
- An Appeal Committee is formed of 3 people who have the expertise and have not been involved in the decision;
- A hearing is arranged to allow the Committee and the certifier to discuss;
- The Appeal Committee makes its decision.

IOAS also invites comments and complaints against both its own operations and those of its certifiers. In the year to end of June 2017 two complaints were received regarding IOAS and 11 against accredited certifiers. Three of the latter were rejected. All other complaints have been closed. The majority of complaints have been related to the Canada Organic Regime. Complaints are a valuable source of feedback and can lead to sanctions or more focused surveillance from IOAS but should also lead to self-analysis by the certifier assuming the complaint turns out to be valid. Ideally complaints against a certifier should be first addressed to them to give them the chance to respond. If the complainant does not wish to do that for some reason or the complainant is not happy with the response, the IOAS will investigate. During the course of our work we hear rumours and allegations and are willing to investigate but we need as much objective evidence as possible to help us do so.
Finances

Working to achieve quality whilst being affordable and accessible

IOAS income only comes from the services we provide: accreditation, assessment, training or projects in the field of conformity assessment and sustainability standards. We are committed to providing a quality service of high integrity at the lowest possible cost to certification bodies.

This year the 2016 accounts showed IOAS’ actual expenses fell 6% compared to 2015 and we successfully achieved our long term goal of a precautionary surplus. This has been achieved with very few price increases over the previous decade. The reserve will provide a buffer against the vagaries of the areas within which the IOAS operates. Having achieved the requisite precautionary surplus, the IOAS Board members agreed to refocus on the IOAS long term objective to alleviate the cost of accreditation by lowering the fixed part of the annual fee. Therefore from January 2017 the fixed part of our annual fee has been reduced by $500.

IOAS income earned from the respective fees for 2016

Breakdown of IOAS expenditure for 2016

The breakdown of how IOAS income is spent has remained fairly consistent over the years.
Looking ahead

We are pleased to announce that our risk based surveillance procedure is moving forward and is on target to be implemented for visits in 2019. Those Certification Bodies deemed to be the highest risk will have days added to their visits, while others considered to be of a lower risk will have their visit length reduced where possible for the programs for which they are accredited. Our clients have now been issued with the full details of the model and the criteria used to determine a certification body's risk level.

We have also made changes to our surveillance cycle removing bye years so that surveillance visits take place each year and with a full new application required every 5 years.

In the near future, we are planning to offer new services to clients especially in food safety with Global G.A.P. and the upcoming FDA's Voluntary Qualified Importer Programme in addition to other opportunities that contribute to the IOAS mission and core values.

We will continue to improve our operations to ensure we are an efficient organisation for the benefit of our directors, staff, partners and clients. Through our increased involvement with the International Accreditation Forum and its regional body the Pacific Accreditation Cooperation, we will continue to be present at an international level as a quality organisation fulfilling its goals.
Come and meet us

Each year, in February, the IOAS has a stand alongside IFOAM at the Biofach exhibition in Nuremberg.

If you would like to talk to us, please visit the IOAS stand or email us for a specific appointment at info@ioas.org.