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Photograph by David of a Sri Lankan Tea plantation, 2015. SAN standards include requirements on housing conditions for workers.
The year progressed with the IOAS being as busy as it has ever been and the staff, as ever, rose to the challenge with their usual diligence and professionalism.

On June 16, 2016 the IOAS became a signatory of the Multilateral Recognition Arrangement for Product Certification operated by the Pacific Accreditation Cooperation, a regional group of the International Accreditation Forum. We are proud to have achieved this recognition because it demonstrates the equivalence of IOAS with other accreditation bodies around the world. This step is important in IOAS’ ongoing commitment to excellence in its work, helping us continue to widen our range of services under our mission of credibility within the application of organic, sustainable and social standards. It also provides further assurance to IOAS’ clients.

We were sad to see the retirement of Jan Deane, our former Executive Director of Operations, who had worked with the IOAS for 18 years. Her departure offers a phased internal restructuring and Maxime Sizaret was welcomed as a new Associate Executive Director with David Crucefix stepping into the Operations ED position and Ken Commins undertaking the Business ED role. The recently recruited Client Managers, Polonca Repic and Andres Millan, successfully completed their training and two new contracted evaluators were also added to the pool of professional staff. The IOAS’ continued success pays testament to the professionalism of the IOAS team. Preparations for further refinements to the management structure are underway.

The complexity of our work is demonstrated by a snapshot of some key areas during 2015:

* IOAS wrote 24 annual reports for those certification bodies (CB) under our supervision already recognised by the European Union as a third country CB. IOAS continues to monitor the implications of the ongoing revision of the European Regulation;

* In response to the 3-year transition and implementation period for ISO/IEC 17065, 2015 saw a large number of the IOAS accredited CBs undergo a re-evaluation where they were screened against the new standard;

* The opening up of IFOAM accreditation caused no loss of IOAS clients to other ABs, although we continue to see a steady decrease of clients and/or their programmes aligned to the IFOAM Accreditation Programme;

* Canada continues to progress with its equivalence agreements for the Canada Organic Regime and the IOAS was included in the monitoring process of the European Commission in Canada during 2015;

* IOAS staff members continued to effectively update their skills with internal and external training programmes as accreditation in the fields of organic textiles and cosmetics continue to grow.

It is with great pleasure that I look forward to a bright and successful future for both the IOAS and its clients.

Robert Duxbury
IOAS President
Introducing the IOAS

Since the establishment of the IOAS by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) in 1997 we continue to be focused on encouraging the growth of organic and sustainable agriculture.

"The ultimate goal of farming is not the growing of crops, but the cultivation and perfection of human beings."

— Masanobu Fukuoka, The One-Straw Revolution

Our objective is, through the use of internationally recognised assessment and accreditation to certification bodies, to increase the use of organic and ecologically sound methods of production which respect the environment and the rights and welfare of all participants all over the world.

We currently have around 60 certification bodies under our assessment programmes, all of which are listed with their accreditation details in our certification body database on our IOAS website.

In 2015 we were able to congratulate two longstanding clients, IBD Certifications Ltd and the International Certification Services Inc. (ICS) for their hard work and success in achieving 20 years of accreditation and assessment with the IOAS.

IBD Certifications Ltd. based in Brazil operates in diverse countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, Columbia, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Uruguay, United States, Canada, Belgium, Holland, New Zealand, China, India, and Thailand. They currently participate in the SAN, EU recognition, IFOAM and ISO17065 accreditation and assessment programmes.

ICS based in the US operates in Canada, Mexico and the US and are currently enrolled in our COR and ISO17065 accreditation and assessment programmes.

Both remain as committed to organic values, their clients, communities and the environment and working towards sustainable production and stimulating fair trade as when they first became accredited.
Our work

The IOAS offers accreditation and assessment of certification bodies against a scheme requirements.

The requirements are set by legislation or by the scheme owner.

If the certification body meets the requirements then the IOAS will either issue the accreditation or recommend the certification body for accreditation. The IOAS will continue to evaluate the certification body throughout the entire period the certification body requires accreditation.

Once certification bodies are fully accredited they are able to audit producers of organic / sustainable products and certify that the products meet the required scheme’s standards.

Producers of trade organic / sustainable products become certificate holders and can sell their products to other businesses and consumers. The consumer can be confident that the product they are buying meets the set standards.

Our areas of work

| Organic inputs | Sustainable agriculture |
| Organic cosmetics | Sustainable fisheries |
| Organic farming & food | |
| ORGANIC | SUSTAINABLE |
| Organic aquaculture | |
| Organic textiles | |
| ENVIRONMENT | |
| Non - GMO | SOCIAL |
| | Fair Trade |
| | No child labour |

The IOAS will not work with a scheme whose standard claims that it is organic, sustainable, natural and/or environmentally responsible and includes an allowance for intentional use of GMOs. This includes the intentional use of GM crops, GM animal, GM feed, and ingredients in processing. It does not include the use of products which come from contained processes or which are the results of enzymatic processes aided by GMOs and where the GM organisms in the process are not part of the final product.

Scheme owners and collaborators

We continue to work with private and regulatory scheme owners who set high organic and sustainable standards.

The IOAS works in partnership with the American National Standards Institute providing assessment services to certification bodies for a range of food safety schemes including GlobalGAP.

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.

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.

"COSMOS is pleased to work with IOAS for the accreditation of certifiers wishing to use the COSMOS-standard. With both organisations rooted in the organic movement, we share the twin goals of high ethical values and professionalism, so as to ensure integrity in the organic and natural cosmetics industry and the trust of consumers."

Betty Santornut, Secretary General, COSMOS.

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 and is the main accreditation partner.

"IOAS plays an important role for us ensuring the quality of GOTS certification by accrediting Third Party Certification Bodies. GOTS is a standard recognised world-wide and we provide credible assurance to the entire supply chain, including chemical, social, environmental criteria. A standard is only as effective as it is credible. Verification is crucial to building credibility. IOAS is a strong partner to our effort to ensure a reliable, believable and credible globally acceptable standard."

Rahul Bhajekar, Director Standards Development & Quality Assurance, GOTS.
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.

"Fraud is a big threat to the 80 billion US$ organic consumer purchases on which millions make their livings. The global organic guarantee system proves that most producers are honest and comply with the standards. To find out mistakes and fraudulent activities, we need institutions like the certification bodies to do the audits and checks. On top we need accreditation of the certifiers in order to help them become compliant with the rules on how to do the audits. IOAS, our accreditation body is brilliantly leading the global integrity campaign and the learning process on how to breed trust year by year and day by day. It deserves our big gratitude for that."

Markus Arbenz, Executive Director, IFOAM - Organics International

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.

"By working with IOAS we have gained a lot more experience in ensuring all our processes and procedures are clear and applicable in an unified way, leading to an even greater reliability of the NATRUE standard to the benefit of the producers and ultimately to the consumers."

Francesca Morgante, NATRUE Label and Communication Manager

The Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN) promotes efficient agriculture, biodiversity conservation and sustainable community development by creating social and environmental standards. This mission is supported by the use of the Rainforest Alliance logo and accreditation of certification bodies by the IOAS which brings recognition and trust.

Textile Exchange has developed a range of standards and requirements to support the textile industry on various content claims including organic and recycling and in 2015 launched a new standard on Responsible Down. The IOAS has worked with TE since 2010 and is their main cooperating partner on accreditation.
Working with internationally recognised credible standards

Our worldwide experience of organic and sustainable standards has provided the IOAS with a unique accreditation knowledge and skill set to help support the integrity for organic and sustainable products.

We continue to work with private and regulatory scheme owners on high quality schemes that provide fairness for producers and traders and confidence to consumers.

We aim to provide certification bodies with an efficient and cost effective accreditation service, so they may have the ability to obtain all successful accreditation required for the organic and sustainable environment.

IOAS Clients applying, accredited or under surveillance (COR & EU) by scheme (June 2016)

The changes in regulations and equivalency agreements and the demand for private standards affect the accreditation schemes certification bodies apply for.

Graph showing the change in the number of Certifiers in IOAS accreditation schemes over the last 5 years from 2011 to 2016.

Looking ahead to our planned changes and improvements

During 2016 the IOAS will be developing a risk based approach to the level of surveillance that is applied to accredited certification bodies. The IOAS has long considered the one size fits all to be an inadequate approach. In addition, the not yet finalized revision of ISO 17011 includes the need for accreditation bodies to undertake risk analysis.

The IOAS model will result in those bodies deemed to be highest risk having days added to their visits, while others considered to be lowest risk will have their visit length reduced to the extent that the programs for which they are accredited will allow. The intention is to make this change income neutral meaning that there will be no financial benefit to the IOAS. The criteria that will be used to determine a certification body’s risk level will be circulated for comment before the changes are put into effect. As visits are determined well in advance of any given year the goal is for this to be implemented for the 2018 visits.
The IOAS aims to help improve the life of our planet and its human and animal population through organic, social justice and sustainable accreditation.
The year in summary

Assisting in the development of credible standards

In the last year IOAS has continued to work towards supporting internationally recognised mechanisms for the assessment and accreditation of organisations which certify organic and other ecologically sound products and activities that meet respected standards.

In line with our mission to help provide internationally recognised mechanisms for the assessment and accreditation of organisations which certify organic and sustainable products, on June 16, 2016 IOAS became a signatory of the Multilateral Recognition Arrangement for Product Certification operated by the Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (PAC).

PAC is an association of Accreditation Bodies and other interested parties that are established and operate in the member economies of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). PAC’s objectives are to facilitate trade and commerce among APEC economies, within the system of global recognition of programs for conformity assessment. PAC promotes the international acceptance of accreditations granted by its accreditation body members, based on the equivalence of their accreditation programmes.

PAC operates within the framework of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF). The IAF is the world association of Conformity Assessment Accreditation bodies and other bodies interested in conformity assessment in the fields of management systems, products, services, personnel and other similar programs of conformity assessment.

Multilateral Recognition Agreements (MLA) recognise the equivalence of their members’ accreditations. Mutual recognition of product certification reduces duplicative conformity assessment costs for importers and exporters on a global scale. Bodies accredited by the MLA signatories are recognized as operating equivalent ISO/IEC 17065 product certification programs in accordance with international requirements. The marketplace can have the same confidence for certification bodies accredited by one signatory as in those accredited by other signatories.

World Accreditation Day is an annual global initiative, jointly established by the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC), to raise awareness of the importance of accreditation. This year’s theme focused on how accreditation can be a global tool to support public policy for all areas in the public sector – national and local government, regulators. The IOAS works formally and informally with three regulators in support of their systems to regulate organic production and trade.

IOAS participates in ISEAL compliance process

The IOAS is a founder member of the ISEAL Alliance, a global membership alliance for sustainability standards. The four goals of ISEAL are to improve the impact of sustainability standards, define credibility for such standards, increase their uptake and improve their effectiveness and innovation. IOAS is one of three accreditation members of ISEAL and is taking part in 2016 in a compliance process which verifies compliance with ISO/IEC 17011. The process is one of a combination of peer and external review.
Cultivating Integrity and trust

This year we have looked at helping to reduce the sector’s susceptibility to fraud, contamination and misrepresentation by attending an Anti-Fraud Initiative workshop for improving the organic integrity of organic agricultural production in Ukraine with the aim of strengthening the organic sector and integrity of the supply chain to Europe.

In the interest of improving the quality and transparency of our work we also continue to promote the awareness of applications and surveillance visits. Our web posts endeavour to encourage anyone with concerns regarding any organisation we are working with to contact us with their concerns.

Our online presence through our website has seen the number of users grow. The IOAS is rightly proud of its core values and reputation concerning transparency and integrity. The publications of IOAS policies and board minutes on our website have been part of our aim to further improve this. The IOAS website now provides access to over a hundred IOAS documents and policies.

Improving the quality of our work

This year, with a view to improving the accreditation and assessment service we provide, we have undertaken two separate surveys. One investigating the package we provide to our client certification bodies and the second exploring the service we deliver to our scheme owners.

It was good to hear the majority felt that working with the IOAS helped improve the quality of their work.

The recent recruitment of additional client managers who have now finished their internal training will enable us to continue to improve the service we provide and become more responsive.

The feedback was helpful in helping us to identify areas of difficulty such as the application checklist and responding to NCs and as a result we are now making continual strides to improve these areas.

Client assessment of where difficulties can occur within the accreditation process.
Objectivity, Sanctions and Complaints

As part of our impartial and transparent assessment and accreditation service, allegations of improper performance of an applicant or accredited certification bodies including complaints and reports of misuse of accreditation status are always investigated. We also launch our own investigations as ‘complaint’ cases when we feel it necessary. Our policies on dealing with such complaints and the certification bodies option to appeal against an IOAS decision are strictly followed to ensure objectivity and fairness.

The IOAS uses a range of defined sanctions to ensure certification bodies maintain compliance or ideally quickly return to compliance when there are findings that prove otherwise. When sanctions are applied, the certification body is allowed the opportunity to appeal. Sanctions are applied in a generally progressive manner moving from light to severe which means that the same case, if unresolved, may be subject to a number of sanctions.

Complaints in 2015-16

- 5 cases regarding certifiers under the Canada Organic Regime
- 1 investigation of an IOAS accredited certifier linked to a withdrawal of an accreditation by a government authority
- 1 case regarding a claim against a certifier regarding employment conditions
- 3 cases regarding certifiers under the SAN/RA scheme
- 3 cases regarding certifiers under IOAS surveillance for the EU Recognition scheme

2 cases were rejected as invalid, 3 cases remain open and all other cases are resolved and involved corrective actions by the CBs.

False claims in 2015-16

- 2 cases of false claims under the IFOAM scheme
- 1 case of a false claim under IOAS EU surveillance

All cases have now been closed.

Appeals in 2015-16

- The IOAS received no appeals

During 2015-16 the IOAS applied the following sanctions:

- 1 warning letter
- 3 fines for violating contract obligations or for non-implementation of an agreed corrective action.
- 4 notifications of intent to suspend
- 2 suspensions of a scheme
- 2 withdrawals of accreditation
Certification Bodies under accreditation and assessment by IOAS

IOAS clients as at 30/6/2016
IOAS Finances

Seeking to fulfill our goals through our non-profit status

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.

In 2015/16 the IOAS achieved a long term goal of a precautionary surplus. This brought the reserves up to 6 months of budget, a challenging task given that this has been achieved with very few price increases over the previous decade. The purpose of the reserve is to provide a buffer against the vagaries of the areas within which we operate. Changes in regulations such as the proposed changes in the EU regulation, increasing country to country trade agreements and changes in scheme owner focus, all pose business risks to IOAS. Having reached the goal of 6 months reserves, the IOAS will ensure that any further surplus is spent on advancing its mission.

The breakdown of how IOAS income is earned and what it is spent on has remain fairly consistent over the years.
Would you like to know more about accreditation?

If you are a certification body and want to talk to the IOAS about obtaining accreditation:
Please contact Amaia Aldana at aldana@ioas.org

If you are a scheme holder or a regulatory body:
Please contact Ken Commins at commins@ioas.org

If you would like further general information:
Please visit our website at www.ioas.org

If you would like to be kept up to date with IOAS News, regulation and market developments:
Please subscribe to our newsletter through our website www.ioas.org

Everyone is welcome to visit our stand at Biofach, Nuremberg, Feb 15-18th 2017.
If you would like a specific appointment or have any other queries, please email us at info@ioas.org.

Cultivating integrity and trust across the organic community