

IOAS Inc.



## **IOAS Operating Manual**

**information and requirements specific to  
assessment against procedures and  
requirements of the**

## **Global Organic Textile Standard**



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# IOAS Inc.

## IOAS Operating Manual Information and requirements specific to GOTS Accreditation

### 1. Introduction

This operating manual contains specific information and requirements of the Global Organic Textile Standard Accreditation programme implemented by IOAS on behalf of the scheme owner, Global Standard gGmbH. It should always be read in conjunction with IOAS General Operating Manual which contains a full description of IOAS and its overall approach to its work conducting accreditation and surveillance of certification bodies working in the field of organic and sustainable agriculture and related fields which is performed in line with ISO/IEC 17011.

It is IOAS' approach to harmonise the assessment process for the increasing range of schemes offered to reduce the burden of accreditation to all certification bodies. We are also continually working to gain recognition or equivalence of our work with scheme owners and government authorities so that we can offer 'one assessment, many accreditations'.

### 2. Scheme owner

Global Standard gGmbH was established in August 2008 by four founding organisations: International Association Natural Textile Industry (IVN), Germany, Soil Association (SA), UK, Organic Trade Association (OTA), USA and Japan Organic Cotton Association (JOCA), Japan.

The Advisory Council is the decisive committee for all relevant structural and political issues related to the Global Organic Textile Standard programme.

The Standards Committee is in charge of generating proposals for revisions of the standard and conducting the multi stakeholder revision process, issuing interpretation documents, developing the quality assurance system and supervising its accredited certification bodies. Members are appointed jointly by the founding organization. The Committee is coordinated by GOTS Managing Director.

The GOTS-approved certifiers are tasked with implementation of the GOTS quality assurance system. In this context, they work with the operations applying for GOTS certification and use the Standard, Manual and tools of the GOTS programme on a daily basis. The broad expertise gathered during this work is vital to establish and further develop a functioning and practical system in the market. Based on these considerations, GOTS has formed a Certifiers Council in which each Approved Certifier is represented by a responsible expert. The Certifiers Council has an advisory function regarding all issues related to the GOTS quality assurance system. The collaboration of all approved GOTS certifiers in this unique forum is an important prerequisite for a consistent interpretation of the criteria of the standard and an equal implementation of its quality assurance system. Coordinated by the GOTS Managing Director, the Certifiers Council makes proposals to the Standards Committee.

### 3. GOTS Accreditation

GOTS Accreditation is a voluntary accreditation programme governed solely by Global Standard gGmbH. It is open to any certification body (CB), which meets the requirements of the programme and has received application approval by the scheme owner.

IOAS is responsible for granting accreditation in line with its normal procedures. The accreditation decision is notified to Global Standard gGmbH which will in turn conclude a 'certifier's contract' with the CB. The scheme owner reserves the right to withdraw or terminate the contract and to call on IOAS to investigate problems. Applicants are informed that Global Standard gGmbH has the right to accompany IOAS assessors on site visits. For further detail, refer to the current GOTS certifier's contract.

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**3.1 GOTS accreditation requirements**, against which a certification body is assessed, are the *Global Organic Textile Standard Approval Procedure and Requirements for Certification Bodies v 2.0*. These requirements are based upon the International Requirements for Organic Certification Bodies and can be downloaded from <https://www.global-standard.org/certification-and-labelling/how-to-become-a-certification-body>.

Certification bodies accredited to GOTS are required to certify against the *Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS)* and abide by the interpretations and guidance contained in the GOTS Manual and the Licensing and Labelling Guide, as well as any additional normative documents and interpretations released by the scheme owner, all of which can be downloaded from the public GOTS web site: <https://www.global-standard.org/> or its internal area.

## **3.2 Application**

### **3.2.1 Application to the scheme owner**

Applicant CBs must first apply to GOTS. The application form can be downloaded from <https://www.global-standard.org/certification-and-labelling/how-to-become-a-certification-body>. Application to the scheme owner must specify scopes and indicate the accreditation body (AB).

A prerequisite for the preapproval by Global Standard gGmbH is that the CB already maintains a valid accreditation to perform certification to any standard according to ISO/IEC17065.

After application approval by the scheme owner, applicant CBs need to apply for GOTS accreditation with their chosen AB.

IOAS has been operating GOTS Accreditation since 2009, is currently the main cooperating partner for the GOTS accreditation process and can be contacted at [info@ioas.org](mailto:info@ioas.org) for enquiries.

### **3.2.2 Application to IOAS**

3.2.2.1 IOAS will provide a standard application form to be completed by the applicant CB, clearly indicating the scheme, scope category/ies and geographical scope as per 3.2.3 and 3.2.4. IOAS application procedure follows that is described in IOAS General Operating Manual at Section 7.

3.2.2.2 The applicant is made fully aware of its rights and obligations before application through the provision of this Operating Manual, IOAS General Operating Manual and having access to sample copies of the Contract for provision of IOAS assessment and surveillance ([PL0502](#)) and the fee schedule ([LS0503](#)).

3.2.2.3 The completed application form must clearly indicate the scheme, the scope standard/s, scope category/ies and geographical scope. The applicant CB must provide evidence that GOTS has approved the application as stated in 3.2.1.

3.2.2.4 If the application form review is satisfactory, the applicant is offered to sign the referred contract ([PL0502](#)) and IOAS proceeds with the certification body document review.

3.2.2.5. After the document review is completed and satisfactory, IOAS carries out an on-site visit (office and operator sites) as describe in 3.3.

3.2.2.6 If the visit result is positive, IOAS will address the case to its Accreditation Committee for an accreditation decision.

3.2.2.7 If the accreditation decision is positive, the CB will be issued a certificate as referred to at Section 4.

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## 3.2.3 scope categories

GOTS accreditation shall be for one or more of the following scopes:

1. Certification of mechanical textile processing and manufacturing operations and their products.
2. Certification of wet processing and finishing operations and their products.
3. Certification of trading operations and related products.
4. Approval of textile auxiliary agents (chemical inputs) on positive lists (also known as “scope 4”).

## 3.2.4 geographical scope

GOTS accreditation may be granted globally, for a specific list of countries, or for another defined geographic region. IOAS assesses the CB’s competence to operate in the countries / regions applied for based on demonstrated knowledge of issues and risks specific to the textile sector in countries where audits will be conducted, as well as requirements related to the use of interpreters/translators. In principle, each country to be added to the accreditation scope is assessed individually by IOAS. However, a CB may also apply for ‘global’ scope or for a geographical region (e.g. ‘Latin America’), in which case IOAS applies the following criteria for assessment:

- The scheme owner must clearly accept such approach to geographical scope;
- The CB must have a robust, reliable system in place to ensure auditing quality meets scheme requirements and CB requirements in all cases, regardless of the audit location, demonstrating knowledge of the relevant local laws as well as of issues and risks specific to the sector and country of each organisation being audited, and ensuring that competent and independent translators are used whenever auditors are not proficient in the language spoken or written in that country and organisation.
- IOAS must be able to verify that the system is effective.
- IOAS views achievement and maintenance of ‘global’ or a similarly broad geographical scope as reward for CBs with good performance in managing personnel competence and impartiality – any finding indicating malfunction of the system, even if applicable to just one country, may lead to withdrawal of such broad geographical scope returning the CB to a situation where competence must be checked for each individual country for approval.
- Even if a CB is approved for operating globally or in a large geographical area, the contractual requirement for informing the accreditation body of relevant changes to the system still applies (accreditation contract, Clause C.12) - relevant changes such as new branch offices / local representations or new inspection bodies shall be informed in a timely manner to IOAS.

## 3.3 Assessment

IOAS assessment and surveillance service for GOTS accreditation is conducted in line with *ISO/IEC 17011* and the *GOTS Approval Procedure and Requirements for Certification Bodies v 2.0*.

### 3.3.1 The initial assessment of a CB includes at a minimum:

- On-site assessment of the headquarters / main office and all critical offices of the applicant CB.
- Witness audit performed at a textile manufacturing mill (preferably vertical mill including wet processing unit, provided the CB has applied for this scope) of the CB. In cases where the CB has no operators at the time of initial assessment, a mock audit may be witnessed.
- Review of operator files as per the scheme owner requirements, covering all applicable GOTS scopes and representing the CB’s geographical scope.

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- If a CB has fewer than five active scope certificates (or fewer than five reviewed chemicals) at the time of the assessment, all files shall be reviewed. As new sites become certified (or new chemicals become assessed), the files shall be reviewed remotely (i.e. document review) up to five in total.

### **3.3.2 Surveillance assessments of a CB include at a minimum:**

- On-site assessment of the headquarters / main office of the certification body once every 2 years.
- Witness or review audit performed at a textile manufacturing mill once every 2 years (preferably vertical mill including wet processing unit, provided the CB has applied for this scope). In cases where the CB still has no operators at the time of surveillance, a mock audit may be witnessed.
- On-site assessment of all critical offices over the accreditation cycle.
- Review of the CB's annual report using IOAS standard format and procedure for that purpose.
- crosscheck of the figures of certified and withdrawn sites for each scope category, based on site data received from the scheme owner. IOAS shall immediately report any deviations to Global Standard gGmbH.
- Certification files as per the scheme owner requirements.
- IOAS procedure is to carry out surveillance assessments every year, distributing the minimum elements required for GOTS surveillance over two surveillance years. IOAS may carry out the assessment on-site every year, or alternate on-site and remote assessment, or combine both methods, depending on the risk level identified for the CB, and always observing the minimum surveillance requirements determined by Global Standard gGmbH.
- IOAS will inform Global Standard gGmbH prior to each office assessment, to receive latest list of operators and if applicable chemicals as submitted by the CB, as well as information on any issues to be additionally covered by the assessment.

### **3.3.3 Technical experts**

An expert in quality assurance of environmentally and socially responsible textile processing, who is notified to the Global Standard gGmbH, shall be involved in the accreditation process.

### **3.3.4 Translators / interpreters**

IOAS reserves the right to require assistance from translators/interpreters as it deems necessary and depending on the country/ies the CB operates in. The cost of translation/interpretation is borne by the certification body. Such a need and a cost estimation will be communicated before the application proceeds or before proceeding with the visit.

### **3.3.5 combined assessment/ surveillance**

Under IOAS procedures, surveillance or assessment of the CB can be combined with surveillance and /or assessment for other schemes.

## **3.4 scope additions**

**3.4.1 adding GOTS accreditation** - applicant CBs that are already IOAS clients for other schemes may apply for GOTS accreditation at any time in their accreditation cycle (always first obtaining application approval from Global Standard gGmbH) and IOAS will endeavour to conduct the assessment linked to on-going surveillance procedures. However, if the timing of the application does not fit with existing schedules, additional visits may be required, and corresponding fees will be charged. The duration of the initial accreditation contract in such circumstances will be synchronised with all other programmes which means that the initial GOTS accreditation cycle may be shorter than five years.

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**3.4.2 adding scope standards to GOTS accreditation** – CBs that are already GOTS accredited by IOAS for some scopes may apply for additional GOTS scopes at any time in their accreditation cycle (always first obtaining application approval from Global Standard gGmbH) and IOAS will endeavour to conduct the assessment linked to on-going surveillance procedures.

## **4. Reference to GOTS accreditation and the scheme owner**

The accredited certification body may refer to being accredited by IOAS in accordance with the requirements described and referred to in the General Operating Manual.

After the certification decision is made, the CB will receive a formal accreditation certificate which states that the organisation has been found to be 'in compliance with' the **GOTS Approval Procedure and Requirements for Certification Bodies**. The relevant scope/s will be indicated. IOAS will also publish the name of the CB on a public list indicating full details of the accreditation, the current scope and countries of activity. It is this list which takes precedence over any other source.

The GOTS web site also maintains information on accredited CBs at <https://global-standard.org/certification-and-labelling/certification#approvedcertificationbodies>.

No reference to approval by Global Standard gGmbH or use of the GOTS logo/s may be made until a 'certifier's contract' is concluded with Global Standard gGmbH. Any references and claims must be fully in line with provisions of that contract and relevant normative documents published by Global Standard gGmbH.

Once the AB has issued a GOTS accreditation certificate and a contract has been signed with Global Standard gGmbH, the accredited certification body may make suitable claims on promotional material (brochures, web sites etc.) that the specified programme operates in compliance with the **GOTS Approval Procedure and Requirements for Certification Bodies**.

## **5. Fees**

IOAS fee schedule is available at <https://ioas.org/accreditation/application/>. IOAS can provide a quotation of fees for the requested services but due to the many variables involved, these can only be used for orientation.

There are fees applied directly by the scheme owner. For further detail, please contact Global Standard gGmbH.

For any specific questions on the GOTS accreditation programme operated by IOAS please contact [info@ioas.org](mailto:info@ioas.org).

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