

IOAS Inc.



IOAS Operating Manual

Information and requirements specific to

IFOAM Accreditation



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1. Introduction

This operating manual contains specific information and requirements of the IFOAM Accreditation scheme implemented by the IOAS on behalf of the scheme owner, IFOAM Organics International. It should always be read in conjunction with the IOAS General Operating Manual which contains a full description of the 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 the IOAS' approach to harmonise the assessment process for the increasing range of schemes offered so as 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 such that we can offer 'one assessment, many accreditations'.

2. Scheme owner

2.1 IFOAM Organics International (hereinafter referred to as IFOAM) is a grassroots and democratic organisation that currently unites 750 member organisations in 116 countries. Its mission is leading, uniting and assisting the organic movement in its full diversity and its goal is the world-wide adoption of ecologically, socially and economically sound systems that are based on the principles of organic agriculture.

2.2 In order to achieve its mission and address the complexity of the various components of the organic agricultural movement world-wide, IFOAM has established official committees and groups with very specific purposes, from the development of standards to the facilitation of organic agriculture in developing countries.

2.3 The IFOAM General Assembly serves as the foundation of IFOAM. It elects the World Board for a three-year term. The World Board appoints members to official committees, working groups and task forces based upon the recommendation of the IFOAM membership, and IFOAM member organisations also establish regional groups and sector specific interest groups.

2.4 As one of its principal work areas IFOAM developed and have maintained the IFOAM Basic Standards and IFOAM requirements (both currently compiled as the IFOAM Norms) for bodies certifying in organic agriculture and these were the basis for the IFOAM accreditation scheme that has been in existence since 1994.

3. IFOAM Accreditation

3.1 The IFOAM Accreditation scheme (IAS) is a voluntary accreditation scheme which was developed in the early 1990s to foster trust, harmonisation and collaboration between certification bodies active in the field of organic agriculture.

3.2 The scheme was initially operated by IFOAM themselves until the IOAS was founded in 1997 and IFOAM have licensed the IOAS to implement IFOAM Accreditation ever since.

3.3 The IAS is open to any certification body which meets the requirements of the scheme without need for membership of IFOAM or any other body.

3.4 **IFOAM Accreditation** allows two options:

- **General option:** Certification bodies can use any private standard or regulation approved in the **IFOAM Family of Standards**. The scope of their IFOAM Accreditation can therefore include all schemes based on organic standards approved in the IFOAM Family of Standards. For all the activities included in the scope, the certification body must operate in compliance with the IFOAM Accreditation Requirements. IFOAM Accredited Certification bodies may use the IFOAM Accreditation Seal according to the terms of IFOAM Accreditation Scheme.
- **Additional option:** Certification bodies can choose to operate a private standard that is compliant with the IFOAM Standard, in the scope of their IFOAM Accreditation. Such a standard will automatically be approved in the IFOAM Family of Standards based on its compliance with the IFOAM Standard which is itself in the Family. Certification bodies that choose this additional option can make an additional claim: that their private standard is compliant with the IFOAM Standard, including an option to use an "IFOAM-Standard" version of the IFOAM Accreditation Seal.

The IFOAM Accreditation is therefore based on the following concepts:

- **Equivalence**, when it comes to the standard (production rules). This is achieved through the reference to the IFOAM Family of Standards, and an audit by IOAS that verifies the correct application of those standards.
- **Compliance**, when it comes to the accreditation requirements (rules for how the CB should operate). This is achieved through an audit by IOAS that verifies full compliance of the certification body with the IFOAM Accreditation Requirements.

3.5 Under the compliance option with respect to the reference standards used by the certifier (ie issued to the operator), the certifier has three choices on the nature of the reference standard used. These are:

3.5.1 Use the IFOAM Standard itself- in this case the IFOAM Standard should be adapted where indicated (and only where indicated) to the local conditions. These adaptations will be assessed by the IOAS as in keeping with the intention of the regional allowance.

3.5.2 Use a standard owned by the certification body - the standard will be assessed against the IFOAM standard and any nonconforming issues will require amendment. The standard must be maintained thereafter in compliance with the IFOAM Standard and updated when that standard changes.

3.5.3 Use a standard owned by another entity - in this case the certifier uses the organic standard of a related or unrelated entity and must have an agreement with that entity that the standard will be amended in line with the IFOAM Standard. If there is linked use of the name and logo of the standard setter, that agreement must also include clauses that regulate it which provide for sufficient stability (e.g., long duration and with long notice periods for cancellation).

4. Requirements for accreditation

4.1 The requirements against which a certification body is assessed are the well established IFOAM accreditation requirements for bodies certifying organic production and processing. These can be downloaded for free from the IFOAM web site at <http://www.ifoam.bio/en/ifoam-standard> Certification bodies are advised to review these carefully and ensure their operational compliance before application.

4.2 The decision to grant accreditation rests with the Accreditation Committee of the IOAS and this Committee has the power to make interpretations on novel situations. However, it is also IOAS procedure to refer to the scheme owner (IFOAM) for an interpretation when necessary. Issues pending interpretation through either mechanism do not have to be acted upon until the interpretation is confirmed.

5. Reference to IOAS accreditation and the scheme owner

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

5.2 On being accredited, the certification body will receive a formal accreditation certificate which states that the organisation has been found to be 'IFOAM Accredited' and therefore in compliance with the IFOAM Norms for certification bodies for the scope of the chosen standard.

5.3 The accredited certification body may make suitable claims on promotional material (brochures, web sites etc) that the specified scheme operates in compliance with the IFOAM Norms or is IFOAM accredited. The certification body may make use of the IFOAM Seal on promotional material and certificates but only after a contract is signed with IFOAM controlling its use.

5.4 The general format of the IFOAM Seal is:



5.5 Certification bodies that choose the compliance option referred to above (3.5) may use the 'IFOAM Standard' version of this Seal.

5.6 Operators certified by any IFOAM accredited certification body that has signed a contract with the IFOAM may use the IFOAM Seal above in an approved combination with the CB logo.

5.7 Use of the IOAS accreditation logo on certification body certificates may also be made by the certification body in line with IOAS policy PL0515.

6. Fees

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

For any specific questions on the IFOAM accreditation scheme please contact your assigned Client Manager or Iris Rendon on rendon@ioas.org

End

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