

Procedure PR0501 - Initial Processing of a new Application

A Preamble

1 Introduction and purpose of the policy

This document establishes the policies and procedures for new applications for accreditation/assessment and to ensure that all the necessary documentation has been received in order to determine whether the applicant complies with IOAS requirements and those of the relevant scheme owner(s).

2 Scope

The policy is limited to the process of receipt of applications by the IOAS. The procedure ensures that all requested documents have been received and contain the necessary information to commence the accreditation process and that IOAS verifies the scope of the application is clear and within IOAS' field of activity. It does not relate to any aspects of the accreditation process itself which are covered in documents [PR0502 – PR0514](#).

3 Definitions

Reference is made to the IOAS General Operating Manual and relevant Operating Manuals for general definitions.

4 Distribution and Access

This policy is distributed to all Board members, AC members and staff. It is available to all interested parties including applicant and accredited certification bodies on request.

5 Authority and revision

This policy is approved by the IOAS Executive Director. It is the responsibility of the IOAS Executive Director to review the appropriateness of the policy from time to time. It may be revised when the need arises. Revisions must be approved by the IOAS Executive Director. Its effectiveness in meeting the quality policy of the IOAS will be assessed during Internal Audit and any measures for improvement notified to the Executive Director and the Board.

B Policy

Access

1. The IOAS works with a number of scheme owners relevant to the field of organic and sustainable agriculture, environmental management, fair trade and social justice.
2. Application for accreditation or assessment is open to all certification bodies whose activities fall within these areas of interest. Current programmes and accepted scopes of activity offered by the IOAS are described on the IOAS web site at www.ioas.org
3. The IOAS is willing to discuss applications relating to programmes and scopes that are not currently covered and will assess whether they contribute to the IOAS mission and whether sufficient expertise and resources are available before proceeding.
4. Access is not conditional upon membership of any association or group, the size of the applicant or the number of certification bodies (CBs) already accredited. Some scheme



owners with which the IOAS works have their own application procedure and requirements (including application fees) which must be observed before the IOAS can proceed with the assessment. When this is the case it is indicated in the relevant IOAS Operating Manual for the programme.

Language

5. The operating language of the IOAS is English and all formal written communication between parties is conducted in this language. For this reason CBs need to have on staff (preferably) or available at least one person with full command of English. An exception to this rule may be applied when prior agreement has been made between IOAS and the scheme owner.

Status of certification body

6. Applicants must have a fully developed certification programme at the time of application in order that the IOAS assessment is meaningful. This means that the certification body (CB) has an established quality system and supporting documentation relevant to the scheme.
7. The IOAS will conduct an on-site audit, including visits to clients of the CB, only when the CB can guarantee the availability of at least one operator that can be the subject of a witness audit during the on-site visit. Accreditation shall not be awarded until a certification decision has been made for at least one operator under the programme. Where necessary, both the witness audit and the certification decision can be mock processes.
8. Where scheme owners prescribe, the number of operator visits at the time of the initial assessment visit may be more than that stated above. Whether this is the case is indicated in the relevant IOAS Operating Manual for the programme.
9. Unless scheme owner rules state otherwise, CBs must have at least one operator in the scheme before the first anniversary of issue of the first accreditation certificate and maintain at least one client in the programme otherwise the accreditation will be withdrawn.
10. CBs that are already accredited by another entity that works in compliance with ISO 17011 and that wish to transfer accreditation to the IOAS for the same scope may do so without undergoing a full assessment process. In the case of COR, specific requirements apply for CBs already accredited by the CFIA willing to change conformity verification body (CVB). See COR Operating Manual and IOAS Canada Operating Manual ([OM Canada](#)) for further details. For the rest of the schemes, the assessment is subject to the following criteria:
 - a. The CB's accreditation is current and in good standing with the other entity
Note: Current accreditation should be valid until new accreditation is granted by the IOAS;
 - b. The scope of the accreditation requested is the same as that held with the current Accreditation Body (AB) or authority i.e. IOAS will not accept accreditation according to one standard and apply it to another;
 - c. Extension of geographic or category scope within a scheme or standard may be performed as part of this process but the ability to do so will be judged on a case by case basis;
 - d. The transfer is also possible for schemes in which the IOAS is not the decision maker unless the scheme owner does not allow it;



- e. Applications for transfer will only be accepted after communication with the previous accreditation body to verify that the CB is not subject to suspension or withdrawal proceedings;
- f. The most recent results of surveillance or assessment by their current AB or authority, any pending nonconformities and the resolution of any issues must be made available in a language acceptable to the IOAS;
- g. In case the previous AB is a signatory of the MLA for Product Certification of the IAF, granting accreditation by the IOAS will be subject to fulfillment of the criteria mentioned above and the CB paying the IOAS annual fee pro rata for the remainder of the calendar year.
- h. In case the previous AB or authority is NOT a signatory of the MLA for Product Certification of the IAF, a surveillance visit is conducted by the IOAS before granting accreditation. Granting accreditation in this case, will be subject to the surveillance visit showing no significant failings and the CB paying the IOAS annual fee pro rata for the remainder of the calendar year. If the surveillance visit shows significant failings the CB shall be required to undergo a full assessment process before accreditation and be charged applicable fees for a new application.

C Procedure

Application

1. For those schemes that require a pre-application and/or ISO17065 accreditation as a pre-requisite, the IOAS application procedure will only commence once confirmation of acceptance has been received from the scheme owner and/or copy of the ISO17065 accreditation certificate is supplied;
2. On initial enquiry the IOAS will send the CB the Application cover letter ([FR0501a](#)) and all the referred documents.
3. The CB is requested to complete and return Application form ([FR0501](#)) and the CB Application profile ([FR0502](#)) so that the IOAS can proceed with the application review. Any documents referenced in the Application or CB profile must be attached. For re-application notification, refer to [PR0510](#). Upon reception of the completed documents, the Assistant Executive Director (AED) will check the CB profile and Application form for completeness and clarity.

Acknowledgement

4. Only for Canada: Within 10 working days from receiving the Application form and the CB Application profile complete, the CM will send an Application acknowledgement ([FR0580](#)) to the CB and a Notification of Application to the CFIA ([FR0913](#)). The same Notification will be also sent in case of CB transferring accreditation .
5. The AED will communicate receipt of the completed application to the Office Administrator and an invoice for the appropriate application fee will be issued.
6. The AED (or CM if allocated at this stage) will enter the CB data in Main and Application databases and will generate the corresponding document checklist following [WK0201](#). The checklist will be sent to the applicant with the corresponding



instructions ([FR0567](#)) to be completed within the timeframe indicated in the CB schedule.

7. The AED notifies the PM of the new application so that a Client Manager can be assigned (if not already done so) to the applicant CB in preparation for the document submissions.

CB document submissions

8. The CB returns the completed electronic checklist and supporting documentation and pays the application fee within the timeframe indicated in the CB schedule.
9. CB document submissions are required to be made in English unless prior agreement has been made between IOAS and the scheme owner.
10. As soon as the document checklist and payment are received, the CM has a look at the checklist to ensure that no fields are blank or obvious documents are missing. Once this first check is done, the CM proceeds with the pre-screening as per [WK0201](#).
11. The CM prepares the Application review record ([FR0500](#)) with the results of the pre-screening and the Application screening and sends it to the PM for review. The Assistant Programme Manager (APM) may substitute these tasks subject to availability.
12. The PM assesses the appropriateness of the application, to verify scope, the Application screening, results of the pre-screening and IOAS resources in terms of competence and staff availability to ensure that the application can be handled in a timely manner and registers the results on the Application review record ([FR0500](#)).
13. In case IOAS is not able to conduct the initial assessment in a timely manner, this will be communicated to the CB.

Acceptance of application

14. If the review of the application by the PM is not satisfactory, the CM sends out the letter Application rejection [FR0581](#), giving a new deadline for submitting additional or corrected forms/documentation;
15. Once the above procedures are completed and the application review is satisfactory, the CM prepares the Application acceptance letter ([FR0520](#)). At the same time, the CM changes the CB status in Application DB to "Applicant";
16. The Communication Manager shall be informed to enter CB's name and relevant details in the public list of applicant CBs.
17. The announcement of the application and call for comments is published in the IOAS website.

Transfer of accreditation

18. The transfer of accreditation referred to at B10 above will proceed as follows:
 - a) Following enquiries, the IOAS will send the CB the Application cover letter ([FR0501a](#)) and all the referred documents.
 - b) The CB completes an Application form and CB Application profile. No application fee is due at this stage;
 - c) The application form is checked to verify the scope of accreditation requested is the same as that currently held with the other AB (or sending CVB) or authority;



- d) The IOAS requests information ([FR0557](#)) from the previous accreditation body on current status of the CB, at the same time copying the CB so that they may give their consent. In case of COR, the CFIA receives the information of the CB from the sending CVB and shares it with the receiving CVB (IOAS);
- e) The CB submits the most recent results of surveillance or assessment by their current AB or authority and the resolution of any issues as well as any pending information requested by any decision-making authority (where relevant);
- f) The IOAS Programme Manager assesses the appropriateness of the application, to verify scope, the CB Application profile review, documentation from prior accreditation and IOAS resources in terms of competence and staff availability to ensure that the application can be handled in a timely manner ([FR0500](#)).
- g) Acceptance of CB's application for transfer is sent to the CB ([FR0520](#)) together with the surveillance contracts ([PL0502](#)) and arbitration agreement ([PL0526](#)), if applicable and the relevant scheme owner informed. In case of COR, IOAS shall send the CFIA document [FR0907](#) accepting the CB accreditation status and requesting the name of CVB to be changed in the CB accreditation letter. In the case of COR transfer, the annual fee is to be charged from the new date of CFIA accreditation letter.
- h) Where relevant, the CB signs a surveillance contract with IOAS;
- i) In case the previous AB is a signatory of the MLA for Product Certification of the IAF, the OA will send the CB the information on financial figures for calculation of the annual fee. The CM will forward the file to the IOAS Accreditation Committee for accreditation decision. Granting accreditation by the IOAS will be subject to positive decision by the AC and the CB paying the IOAS annual fee pro rata for the remainder of the calendar year.
- j) A full reassessment process commences (reapplication form received) at the time that the CB would have been due to commence the reassessment process with their previous AB. Applicable fees will be charged in line with the IOAS fee schedule [LS0503](#).
- k) In case the previous AB is NOT a signatory of the MLA for Product Certification of the IAF, a surveillance visit will be conducted by the IOAS, the length, nature and cost of which will follow standard IOAS procedures.
- l) Assuming the surveillance visit shows no critical deviations, accreditation will be granted subject to a decision by the IOAS Accreditation Committee and the CB will be required to pay the appropriate IOAS annual fee *pro rata* for the remainder of the calendar year and, where relevant, sign an accreditation contract.
- m) A full reassessment process commences (reapplication form received) one year after acceptance of the CB's application for transfer (see g. above) or at the time that the CB would have been due to commence the reassessment process with their previous AB if this is sooner.
- n) Where the timing of the application for transfer is such that a re-assessment visit will not take place during the following calendar year, a second surveillance visit may be necessary.



- o) Accreditation is granted for a limited period such that it expires 30 months from the acceptance of CB's application for transfer by which time a full reassessment process will have been completed and a re-accreditation decision made.