

Policy on Granting Emergency Exceptions

A Preamble

1 Introduction and purpose of the policy

There may be occasional justification for IOAS to grant exceptions to accreditation requirements where certification bodies find themselves in highly extraordinary circumstances. This document provides guidance in such circumstances regarding how the exception shall be approved and the relevant parties notified.

2 Scope

This document guides IOAS in

Considering, granting and working with exceptions to accreditation requirements under extraordinary, generally short term, circumstances beyond control which include but are not limited to:

- Conditions of war or political unrest
- Bankruptcy of a certification body
- Quarantine restrictions
- Global disease outbreak
- Extreme climatic conditions

It does not refer to:

- On-going circumstances due to stage of development of organic agriculture in the region
- Lack of certification clients
- Standards variations or exceptions approved by the scheme owner

Document PL 0510 Policy on assessment and surveillance in special situations describes IOAS approach to assessment and surveillance when exceptional conditions prevent on-site visits by IOAS assessors. Reference is made to IAF document IAF ID 3: 2011 IAF Informative Document for Management of Extraordinary Events or Circumstances Affecting ABs, CABs and Certified Organisations.

3 Definitions

For definitions, reference is made to the current IOAS Operating Manual.

4 Access and Distribution

This document is distributed to the IOAS Board of Directors (BoD) and Accreditation Committee (AC) annually. Staff are informed of changes as soon as they have been finalised. Interested parties may obtain a copy on request.

5 Authority and revision

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

B Procedures

The following procedure will be followed:

1. A request, or the need, for special exception from an accreditation requirement may originate from:
 - a) any applicant or accredited certification body;
 - b) a scheme owner;
 - c) regulatory body;
 - d) country authority.
2. The request is to be addressed to the ED who will collect or designate the task of collection of all relevant information on the subject on which to base the decision. Such information shall take into account requirements or guidance of the IAF, any relevant scheme owner or authority if not originating from them.
3. Decisions on emergency exceptions originating from scheme owners, regulatory bodies or other country authorities shall be confirmed by the ED. Decisions on specific exemptions to individual CBs or groups of CBs shall be taken by the IOAS Executive Committee based on a written report from the ED. The decision of the Executive Committee must be unanimous. The advice of the Accreditation Committee may be sought prior to making the decision.
4. All confirmations and decisions noted in B3 shall be notified to the Board immediately.
5. The decision of the IOAS will be notified to the requesting CB, all other accredited and applicant certifiers (unless confidentiality is considered justified), the relevant scheme owner and where appropriate regulatory authorities.