Cover photograph taken during an IOAS surveillance visit in Thailand.
Contents

IOAS President's message 2
IOAS Executive Director 4
IOAS accreditation 5
Professional knowledge and experience 6
Impartiality, improved efficiency and environmental policy 7
Who we work with 8
Alliance for Organic Integrity 10
IOAS Client Manager 2019 diary 11
Quality 12
2019 A year in summary by Iris Rendon, Assistant Executive Director 13
IOAS clients 14
Experienced professionals 15
Finance 16
Dear Friends and Colleagues,

We entered this year focused on strengthening organic integrity and more proactively addressing fraud, as our main challenges. This included shifting our oversight from one of strict compliance to one based more on assessment of risk and performance as the new model for conformity assessment. Risk must be understood as comprehensive assessment from the operators, to inspectors to certifiers and all the way up to accreditation bodies. The greater the risk, the more intensive the oversight must be and conversely lower risk and greater performance should also be rewarded accordingly.

However, by the time of Biofach in February 2020, it was already becoming quite clear that we were facing yet another new and invisible threat that was and is forcing all of us to remember and place everyone’s health and safety as our top priority. As a result we are having to redefine and build credible remote surveillance techniques for accreditation and certification, while forcing new applicants to wait until the on-site visits can be conducted again. It is critical that the organic community seek common approaches to remote surveillance to ensure consistency during this very vulnerable period and that we prepare ourselves for both a backlog of new business, as well as potential for additional frauds due to this crisis.

This pandemic while fierce and terrible is also stimulating innovation, providing some much-needed reduction in all of our carbon footprints and is demonstrating that virtual businesses like IOAS and our new sister organization, Alliance for Organic Integrity, (AOI), can adapt quite quickly to unexpected changes.

We also note at the more personal level, that shorter, decentralized food supply-chains that connect eaters directly to producers actually thrive and expand in this new environment; knowing your food supplier is now so essential to your very survival. Whilst social distancing and following all proper medical precautions, we can still move forward.

Looking back to 2019 and the pre-pandemic world, we were able to accomplish many of our goals, as well as completing a very valuable year-long collaboration with the USDA/NOP by studying two very different and complex organic supply chains from farms to retail, the lessons of which will position the organic community well, as we all address new organic regulations for EU, Canada and US, in this coming year or so.

We remain hopeful that we can all learn the many important lessons from this pandemic while keeping ourselves safe and sound. This could be one of our best chances to change “business as usual” to a new normal by fueling more demand for organic, ecological and regenerative systems of agriculture that can reduce our carbon footprints.

We do send out our heart-felt condolences for the many losses this year and our best wishes for better times ahead – please be kind to each other and as my mother always said – ‘keep washing your hands’!

Michael Sligh
IOAS President
Accreditation

“The official granting of approval to an institution such as a Certification Body that it has met specific requirements and is qualified to perform certain activities.”
I write this in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis and renewed attention, demonstrations and actions on race relations. Meanwhile the climate crisis remains as the biggest threat to all our futures. These issues challenge our view of the world and put our own work in perspective and ask of us to do what we can in our field. Some time ago IOAS set out 5 core values:

Value 1
Improving the life of our planet and its people

Value 2
Quality

Value 3
Integrity

Value 4
Innovation

Value 5
Respect for people

These are not merely words on a page, we try to embody these in our day to day work.

During 2019, the IOAS undertook a strategic planning process towards 2025 which is now helping us chart our course with greater deliberation and with these values in mind. Along with bigger picture initiatives supporting the Alliance for Organic Integrity and seeking new and closer collaborations with regulators and private scheme owners we are also very much focused on delivering more effective and efficient assessment service. Rethinking how we work, considering what is core to integrity, and what our various clients and interested parties want from us is top of mind.

As part of this annual report, we give the stage to two of our newer staff members to describe their work year, not only to give readers a better picture of what goes on behind the scenes but to show off the undoubted commitment and expertise of our team. These are absolutely challenging times for us all but working together will get us through.

David Crucefix
Executive Director

585
Number of scopes overseen for IOAS clients

143
Number of schemes overseen for IOAS clients

67
IOAS Client certification bodies
IOAS Accreditation

Ecolabelled goods are amongst the fastest growing international trade sectors. IOAS provides accreditation to help bring order and confidence to further enhance that market and the environmental and economic benefits inherent in the linked production system. We provide Certification Bodies (CBs) with a professional accreditation process so they in turn can provide cost effective legislative and private certification throughout the supply chain, and the consumer can have faith in organic and sustainable products they purchase.

Recognised professional integrity and competency

IOAS Inc. is an independent non-profit organisation. We are dedicated to providing expert assessment and surveillance services within the framework of ISO/IEC 17011 and with fairness and rigour around the world.

We offer assessment and accreditation to certification bodies for standards that define organic and sustainable agriculture, environmental improvement, social justice and fair trade themes. Working with private and regulatory scheme owners, we verify the correct application of their standards and certification requirements.

IOAS is assessed to the requirements of ISO/IEC 17011 by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) in order to be one of the very few organisations recognised by the CFIA to conduct evaluation work as a Conformity Verification Body for the Canada Organic Regime.

Third party oversight is also provided through membership of the Asia Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (APAC) and being a signatory of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) MLA for the main scope ISO/IEC 17065.
Professional knowledge and experience

Founded by IFOAM Organics International in 1997, we have now been an established part of the Organic movement for over 23 years. During this time we have built up a unique skill set and extensive experience and IOAS has evolved to providing leading organic and sustainable accreditation services to Certification Bodies, governmental and private organisations around the world.

The total number of operators our CBs certify is 29,042.

On land or at sea, IOAS provides accreditation to Certification Bodies with operators in over 130 countries

We are dedicated to the growth of Organic and sustainable markets to support world health

By providing CBs with an efficient, effective accreditation process and access to a choice of legislative and private schemes our CBs benefit from a cost effective one stop service. We continue to strive for improved efficiency and cost effectiveness - one more way that IOAS aims to help CBs and in turn their clients, succeed in the organic and sustainable market.

2019 photographs of a witness audit for oyster farming in Australia.
Focus on Impartiality

Following the formation last year of the IOAS impartiality committee we have now undertaken a significant review of IOAS documents and processes with regard to real or imaginary impartiality risks. The committee will continue to review, challenge our assumptions and identify possible action points. Already we feel we have improved our due diligence regarding financial changes that could affect our clients and made further robust changes to certain policies to support the high standards of integrity we set ourselves.

Improved Efficiency

This year we worked on several improvements including making the Certification Body application process simpler. Continuing on from these process changes, we intend to replace our current client and assessment management system and implement a new database that will optimize the efficiency of our assessment, surveillance, documentation and reporting. A further future benefit for our clients will be the ability for them to interact through a web portal improving the ease of data submission.

Our environmental policy assists IOAS in identifying and implementing procedures intended to guide the day to day operations of the organisation in order to ensure that negative environmental impacts are minimised, and positive environmental policies and practices are implemented where possible.

Annual emissions will be calculated along with other environmental impacts in order to identify reduction options and protocols to minimise negative impacts and to track progress over time. We are looking at use of teleconferencing, ethical procurements and the environment policies of those we have business relationships with.

Air travel contributes the single largest impact that the IOAS has on the environment. IOAS activities revolve around international assessment visits and meetings but we are looking at ways of mitigating this impact. COVID-19 has definitely increased the use of remote inspections and highlighted problems and possible solutions. After an IOAS survey in May 2020 to gather information on CB remote inspections we hosted a workshop webinar to help support our clients and promote good practice.

Let’s Change For The Good

130
The number of IOAS documents that were reviewed and updated in the first 6 months of 2020.
Who we work with

ISO/IEC 17065

ISO/IEC 17065 is often used as the basis for conformity assessment schemes for bodies certifying products, processes and services. Using this standard, IOAS provides accreditation for private schemes, as well as some country specific regulations (Mexico LPO, Chile, Australia, etc).

Canada Organic Regime (COR)

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 Safe Food for Canadians Regulations (SFCR). The IOAS makes recommendations for accreditation to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA).

The COSmetics Organic and natural Standard (COSMOS)

A voluntary accreditation for organic and natural cosmetics operated by COSMOS-standard AISBL, an international non-profit association. The standard sets out innovative, challenging and progressive criteria that consumers can trust, and that are clear for the industry and good for the environment.

European Union Equivalency

IOAS performs assessment and makes a recommendation to the European Commission against ISO/IEC 17065 for equivalence to the European regulation (EC) 834/2007 for the production and sale of organic products in Europe including equivalence of imports from third countries.

IFOAM

IFOAM was the very first international verification of competence for certification bodies active in organic agriculture. IFOAM accreditation is awarded to certification bodies that comply with “IFOAM Accreditation Requirements” (IAR) and use compliant or equivalent standards as per the IFOAM Standards Requirements.
Global Organic Textile Standard

The GOTS voluntary standard ensures the organic status of textiles from the harvesting of the raw materials through ecological, environmental and socially responsible manufacturing all the way to labelling in order to provide credible assurance to the consumer.

NATRUE AISBL

NATRUE has worked with IOAS since 2012 to develop an independent accreditation scheme to ensure the availability of quality natural and organic cosmetic products. There are now 31 countries around the world actively using the NATRUE label and over 5800 products from more than 250 brands.

GLOBALG.A.P.

A voluntary worldwide standard for the certification of agricultural products for safe and sustainable agriculture practices. Producers comply with widely accepted criteria for food safety, sustainable production methods, worker and animal welfare, and responsible use of water, compound feed and plant propagation materials.

Textile Exchange

A comprehensive range of voluntary standards and requirements recognised worldwide to support the textile industry on Content, Organic Content, Recycled, Global Recycled, Responsible Down and Responsible Wool Claims. The IOAS has worked with Textile Exchange since 2010.
Alliance for Organic Integrity

In our drive to provide expert assurance to governmental and private scheme owners to build trust and market confidence we have continued to strive to improve our service and support our daughter organisation the Alliance for Organic Integrity (AOI).

IOAS’s decision to form the Alliance for Organic Integrity, following our 20th Anniversary Seminar in Delhi in 2017, came to fruition this year. The Alliance is now a fully independent, US registered, non-profit 501(c)(3) company.

Demonstrating its commitment to this new sister organisation, IOAS has allocated seed funding of $250,000 over the next five years. While the AOI is an independent organisation, the IOAS will continue to have an ongoing presence on the AOI Board. The current members are Francis Blake and Michael Sligh who also sit on the IOAS Board, and Bo van Elzakker BV who is an IOAS Accreditation Committee member, together with IFOAM-OA head of capacity development Konrad Hauptfleisch.

The Alliance is concentrating on three main areas in its first year:

- Developing a number of integrity-related projects, in line with the issues raised at the Delhi Seminar, particularly concentrating on:
  - E-learning for best practice in organic controls, with the intention that this will lead to a recognised qualification supported by Continuing Professional Development;
  - Investigating the creation of a toolbox of anti-fraud measures, and
  - Identifying main differences between key regulatory systems and to work towards greater harmonisation between them;

- Setting up the Alliance network, especially partners, supporters, funders and other stakeholders who share its aims of strengthening organic assurance globally;

- Establishing the organisation, especially appointing an executive director (ED) to lay sound foundations and start really pushing forward to build a progressive and successful programme.

Despite the challenges afforded by the Coronavirus in the last few months, the AOI has achieved a major step forward – the Alliance has just appointed Konrad Hauptfleisch as ED, with a formal start date of 1st August (he will therefore being stepping down as Board member). In the gloom of the global lockdown, this is a great step forward and all those involved are very excited to see what new horizons the AOI will achieve in the coming year under Konrad’s leadership.

AOI presentation at Biofach 2020
A new year and it's January, after checking through my annual calendar my first overseas surveillance visit takes place in February to the UK. The visit was successful and after the assessment I even managed to see Baker Street in London - sadly the only missing part was Sherlock Holmes!

In March, I was off to visit a Certification Body in France. Although not typical at this time of the year I appreciated the beauty of the flower blossom on fruit trees. The trip back home did not proceed smoothly as I experienced the ups and downs of transferring from train to plane, but all ended well, and I finally arrived safely home.

April was busy with reviewing reports, planning visits, and document screenings. I also visited another operator during a certification inspection and witnessed a well performing auditor.

May was all about the long-awaited annual IOAS training. Finally, all the team members could see each other! It's hard work helping to review and improve our internal processes but lots of fun also at the sunny Parthenon in Greece. Those moments together and exploring a wonderful country are valued even more after the current travel restricted situation.

Summer, and I'm off to Sarajevo the beautiful city in Bosnia, then before I know it, I am in Canada. There was a twist to this visit - I was not only assessing the certification body (a verification audit with a mushroom producer) but I was also assessed by the competent authority of the Canadian government!

The following weekend was spent mostly travelling to the Midwest US, I really enjoyed the historic surroundings and a great steak. Then, I was traveling on again all the way to Oregon where craft beers and famous seed production areas were waiting for me. Finally, I am able to fly back home to spend the early summer with my family apart from a short stay based in Germany for an audit being observed by my senior colleague (we all need to make sure that we are doing well). This was followed by a surveillance visit to magical Armenia where I saw the historical and religious Ararat mountain.

The rest of the summer passed quickly with the preparation for the coming visits. In the autumn, I was heading to the far east, first to Thailand meeting with the praying Buddha, next to the rice fields and after that travel to Indonesia to observe sugar production in the remote villages in the mountainous area.

Nothing can beat visiting a German organic poultry farm in November and while I missed the world-famous beer festival, I did see the certification activities of a wonderful German private organic label.

While it seems I may have missed some details, let it be said that this job is always interesting.
Quality

Within the IOAS we have a dedicated Quality Manager, Cristina Comezaña. This year Cris has been able to focus on the functioning of the IOAS quality improvement programme and the dynamic and strong Quality Management System supported by the daily hard work and commitment of staff at all levels.

During the first six months of 2020 IOAS has been working on the re-design of many of its internal procedures to improve efficiency on the whole accreditation process. The Quality Area has supported that process providing the corresponding document management frame and internal training for achieving that goal.

At the moment, we are being re-evaluated by the Asia-Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (APAC) in accordance with the IAF and ISO/IEC 17011 requirements, to support our signatory status with the IAF Multi-Lateral Agreement (MLA) for accreditation of Product Certification. The Quality Area has been and is coordinating all the actions from IOAS side to accomplish this important achievement.

Cris is dedicated to her work on the continuous improvement of the services that the company offers.

Thorough and Fair

We deal with complaints regarding clients and our own organisation seriously, continually reviewing and making sure that we are consistently fair and rigorous in our approach.

Comments and complaints are always investigated, with reports provided to the informant on the validity of the issue and the outcome of the investigation.

Complaints from Jan - Dec 2019

• Ten complaints were received regarding accredited certification bodies. Three were rejected, four were closed, two are on hold and one remains under investigation.

• Four complaints were received against IOAS regarding annual fee calculations, observer support for trainee assessors and compliance concerning local laws. All were investigated, accepted and resolved.

As a result, procedures have been amended where necessary to prevent the reoccurrence of any issues identified.

Cristina Comezaña
Quality Manager
2019

A year in summary by Iris Rendon,
IOAS Assistant Executive Director

As I settle in to my third year with IOAS, I look back and reflect on my experiences here.
2019 started out with the closure of our Dickinson office at the end of January and moving our business to our current address in Fargo, ND.
February provided me the opportunity to roll up my sleeves and get very hands on with our financial procedures, including invoicing, collections, and payroll. This experience gave me a great foundation to take more of a lead role in budget and finance business decisions.
In March we kicked off the Country Commodity Study, a collaborative project sponsored by the USDA’s National Organic Program. I played a supporting role in this activity which formed a backdrop to our daily work and served as an additional reminder of the values that drive our business every day which include Quality, Integrity, and Respect for People.
April brought a Strategic planning session in Athens with our Board members and Management team. The vision and goals developed in this session have helped focus and guide our future direction. One of the strategic goals that I really sunk my teeth into this year, which reflects our core value of Innovation, is optimizing the efficiency and effectiveness of IOAS accreditation processes. To kick off the initiative I led a two day workflow mapping workshop at our 2019 all staff training in Athens in May.

I had the honor of hosting the COR assessment team and helping facilitate the audit activities with our Quality and Programme Managers.

In July I led the annual financial audit, another great learning opportunity.
Autumn allowed me to focus on internal affairs such as performance reviews and budget planning including developing a new annual fee model that is simpler and more transparent.
Our 2019 annual Board and Accreditation Committee Joint meeting was held in Budapest in November, where we accomplished a lot of great work and then enjoyed the local sights by riverboat.

The output of this session is now informing our ongoing process changes, and ultimately leading to the selection and implementation of a new CRM and workflow database system coming in 2021.
Another aspect of our work is the oversight we receive from various external parties. In June the CFIA assessment of the IOAS accreditation system and processes was conducted remotely in Ottawa.

Upon returning to Canada I attended the CFIA annual COR CVB meeting, where we discussed requirements changes, standard interpretations, and other topics pertinent to our COR accreditation work.
To wrap up the year, I took a holiday in December reflecting on our accomplishments and gathering my thoughts and energy in preparation for the new adventures ahead.
2020 is now ramping up to be one of the most challenging years in many people’s professional lives around the world and IOAS is no exception. No matter what trials the world brings I am very proud of our IOAS team and pleased to be part of such a great company that values improving the life of our planet and its people.
IOAS Clients

CUBG Turkey
India

Applicant and accredited clients 1st June 2020.
Experienced Professionals

IOAS personnel are located all over the world. Board, committee members, employees and contractors are appointed for their knowledge and skills to ensure our assessment of competence is based upon expert knowledge and a rigorous approach.

IOAS Board
Francis Blake, Michael Sligh, Peggy Miars, Rikke Lundsgaard, Robert Duxbury, Sandeep Bhargava and Vitoon Panyakul.

IOAS Employees

- Adel Enderson
  Operations Assistant
  UK

- Amaia Aldana
  Programme Manager
  Spain

- Andreas Georgakakis
  Client Manager
  Greece

- Andrea Tucker
  Comms. Manager
  UK

- Andrés Vásquez Millán
  Ast. Programme Manager
  Argentina

- Cristina Comezafia
  Quality Manager
  Argentina

- Dániel Szalai
  Client Manager
  Hungary

- David Crucifix
  Executive Director
  UK

- Gergana Nentcheva
  Client Manager
  Germany

- Iris Rendon
  Assistant Executive Director
  Canada

- Jennyfer Karall
  Client Manager
  Brazil

- Jessica Lambert
  Office Assistant
  Canada

- Polonca Repič
  Client Manager
  Slovenia

- Quynh Vo
  Client Manager
  USA

Operator visits undertaken by IOAS in 2019

IOAS Accreditation Committee
Boudewijn van Elzakker, Dorota Metera, Jochen Neuendorff, Joyce Ford, Julia Perez, Roberto Setti, Sahana S.C. and Vitoon Panyakul.

IOAS Impartiality Committee
Jan Deane, Alexandra Thoring and Pedro Landa.

APPROVED

IOAS Accreditation decisions made in 2019
2019 represents another steady year for the IOAS in terms of finances, with total revenue holding constant around $1 million USD as it has for the last several years. The budget anticipated an overall deficit due to the seed funding provided to AOI, and while actual income was a bit higher than expected the real gains came from conservative spending on the expenses side, resulting once again in the year-end profit and loss nearly breaking even.

With a remote-based workforce the IOAS runs on a very lean overhead, the majority of our expenditure is on personnel as our talented and highly qualified staff are the most important assets IOAS has. We also prioritize additional expenditure for personnel development under the categories of Meetings and Quality.

In terms of income, half of the regular income is from annual fees, nearly a third is surveillance visit fees, and the rest comes mostly from application and evaluation fees for new and renewing accreditations. The annual fees paid by our clients are intended to cover development and promotional costs, which includes many things such as staff training and resources for all standards we offer, attendance and materials for events and tradeshows such as Biofach, IOAS website maintenance including Accredited CB listings, and publishing this annual report. All of these activities increase the value of IOAS accreditation and are done in the context of supporting and promoting our clients and their achievements.

Overall, we are pleased with our year-to-year financial performance and look forward to continuing to serve our clients and support our staff for years to come.