

IOAS Inc



IOAS Operating Manual

**Information and requirements specific to
assessment and accreditation
against the COSMOS Scheme**

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IOAS Operating Manual

Information and requirements specific to COSMOS Accreditation

1. Introduction

This operating manual contains specific information and requirements of the COSMOS Accreditation scheme implemented by the IOAS on behalf of the scheme owner, COSMOS-standard AISBL. 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 industry and related fields which is performed in line with ISO/IEC 17011:2017.

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 COSMOS-standard AISBL is an International non-profit Association registered in Belgium, founded in June 2010 by a group of standards associations: BDIH (Germany), Cosmebio (France), Ecocert Greenlife (France), ICEA (Italy) and Soil Association (UK). The Association's Bylaws can be viewed on the COSMOS-standard AISBL [website](#).

2.2 The Association's highest body is the General Assembly, which appoints the Board of Directors. Only Full Members (founders) have voting rights.

3. COSMOS Accreditation

3.1 The COSMOS Accreditation scheme is a voluntary accreditation scheme which was first implemented by the IOAS in 2012. Accreditation can also be provided by other accreditation bodies approved by COSMOS-standard AISBL.

3.2 The COSMOS Accreditation scheme is open to any certification body which meets the requirements of membership of COSMOS AISBL and the scheme requirements. Membership of COSMOS AISBL is a prerequisite of COSMOS authorisation which in turn is a prerequisite to apply to IOAS for assessment. A summary of the process can be downloaded from the COSMOS [website](#).

3.3 Forms for membership application, application for approval and the certifier contract with COSMOS can be downloaded for free from the COSMOS-standard AISBL web site.

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

Scope 1 - Certification of organic or natural cosmetic products, raw materials with organic content, base formulas, bulkware

Scope 2 - Approval of non-organic raw materials that can be used in certified products according to scope 1.

4. Requirements for accreditation

4.1 The general application, assessment and surveillance procedures detailed in Section 7 of the IOAS General Operating Manual apply.

4.2 Applicant certification bodies must first apply to the scheme owner by completing the application form and paying the application fee. A prerequisite for the preapproval by COSMOS is that the CB already maintains a valid accreditation to perform certification to any standard according to ISO/IEC 17065:2012.

4.3 Once the application is accepted by COSMOS the CB may apply to the IOAS using the standard IOAS application form. Once the application is accepted the CB signs with IOAS a contract for provision of assessment and surveillance.

4.4 The requirements against which a certification body is assessed are the COSMOS-standard AISBL Control Manual (Approval Procedure for Certification Bodies) which can be downloaded from the COSMOS web site.

4.5 The certifier is obliged to adopt the COSMOS-standard, the COSMOS Labelling Guide and the COSMOS Technical Guide and any other requirements of COSMOS, all of which are available on the COSMOS website.

4.6 Applicant certification bodies may start to certify after the IOAS has verified conformity of all documents, and after COSMOS has concluded a certifier contract with the Certification Body. This process must be completed within 18 months and will then be subject to final authorization by COSMOS.

4.7 The COSMOS Control Manual contains its own requirements that the IOAS must implement during assessment and surveillance including:

- A review of the applicant Certification Body's documentation for the scopes applied for.
- an audit of the headquarters or main office of the applicant Certification Body;
- a witness audit (i.e. witnessing the Certification Body's inspection) of a representative manufacturing plant appropriate to each of the scopes being applied for;
- ongoing monitoring of the accredited Certification Body, including an update accreditation visit every 15 months to the/an office conducting standard certifications and concerning all COSMOS scopes (note that the IOAS requirement takes precedence per Section 4.1 above);
- checking the files of at least 1.5% of certified operators (with a minimum of five) on each update accreditation visit;
- use of a suitably qualified expert in quality assurance of organic/natural cosmetics manufacturing in the accreditation procedure;
- notifying COSMOS AISBL on the accreditation status following each significant change (e.g. extensions, withdrawal, suspensions).

4.8 In cases where the CB has no or few operators the witness audit at the initial on-site visit may be a mock inspection.

4.9 The IOAS reserves the right to require assistance from a technical expert as it deems necessary and depending on the standard scope. The cost of such experts at on-site visits is borne by the certification body. Such a need and a cost estimation will be communicated before the application proceeds.

4.10 Under IOAS procedures, assessment of the CB can be combined with assessment against other schemes.

4.11 Applicant CBs that are already IOAS clients may apply at any time in their accreditation cycle (but first applying to COSMOS) and the 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 schemes which means that the initial COSMOS accreditation cycle may be shorter than five years.

4.12 The IOAS is responsible for granting accreditation in line with its normal procedures. The accreditation decision is notified to COSMOS-standard AISBL which will in turn conclude a 'certifier's contract' with the CB. The COSMOS-standard AISBL reserves the right to withdraw or terminate the contract and to call on the IOAS to investigate problems. For further details, see the certifier's contract.

4.13 Geographical Scope: COSMOS accreditation may be granted globally, for a specific list of countries, or for another defined geographic region.

IOAS assesses the CB's demonstrated competence to certify and conduct audits in the countries / regions applied for, considering:

- At minimum one auditor and one reviewer / decision maker, both qualified for the specific scope, demonstrate sufficient knowledge of relevant local laws, as well as scope specific processes, issues, and risks.
- CB has in place effective measures to ensure local operators understand applicable scheme requirements.
- CB has in place effective measures to ensure accuracy, impartiality, and confidentiality in all communications with local operators and personnel, including 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, in which case IOAS applies the following additional criteria for assessment:

- CB has received no sanction or CNC (critical nonconformity) within the past 12 months.
- COSMOS must clearly allow global geographical scope.
- CB must demonstrate having in place a robust and reliable system to ensure auditing and certification quality meets competence and scheme requirements in all cases, regardless of audit location.

After approval of global geographical scope, IOAS must be able to verify that the system is continuously effective. Any finding indicating malfunction, even if country-specific, may lead to scope reduction returning the CB to approval on individual country basis.

4.14 Adding scope countries to COSMOS accreditation: CBs that are already COSMOS accredited by IOAS for a given scope may apply for additional countries (or global scope) for that given scope, at any time in their accreditation cycle and IOAS will conduct the assessment as document review. In case of approval, verification is conducted as part of on-going surveillance procedures. See section 4.12.

4.15 Regardless of geographical scope amplitude, the contractual requirement for informing the accreditation body of relevant changes to the system (accreditation contract PL0502, Clause C.12) always applies. Relevant changes such as new branch offices / local representations or new inspection bodies shall be informed in a timely manner to IOAS.

5. Reference to COSMOS 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 'in compliance with the COSMOS-standard AISBL Control Manual (Approval Procedure for Certification Bodies). The 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.

5.3 The COSMOS-standard AISBL web site also maintains information on accredited CBs.

5.4 No reference to approval by COSMOS or use of the COSMOS logo may be made until a 'certifier's contract' is concluded with COSMOS.

5.5 The accredited certification body may make suitable claims on promotional material (brochures, web sites etc.) that the specified scheme operates in compliance with the COSMOS-standard AISBL Control Manual (Approval Procedure for Certification Bodies).

6. Fees

6.1 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.

6.2 Under the certifier's contract signed with COSMOS-standard AISBL and as specified in the Approval Procedure and Requirements for Certification Bodies the CB is required to pay to COSMOS-standard AISBL an annual fee and to collect license fees from its certified entities.

End

For any specific questions on the COSMOS scheme, please contact your assigned Client Service Manager.

Contact details

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