

THE OGS COURIER

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Two new IFOAM Norms open for consultation: don't miss the comment period!

"This issue of the OGS Courier opens up the consultation period on two long-awaited documents: the new IFOAM Standard (successor of

and compromise on detailed standards, thereby taking over the role that the IFOAM Basic Standards had in the past in this regard. It will also be a highly recognized, globally applicable standard. The Common Objectives and Requirements of Organic Standards will provide a template for governments to use when running their equivalence assessments and will be the basis for

The IFOAM Standard will be a globally applicable standard.

IFOAM to build the IFOAM Family of Standards. Their combined potential to promote harmonization and equivalence in organic standards is huge!

On behalf of the OGS committees and IFOAM and GOMA staff who worked on these drafts, I invite you to take a critical look at these documents, discuss them with your own constituencies and send us your comments."

Joelle Katto-Andrighetto,
IFOAM Program Manager

the IFOAM Basic Standards) and the Common Objectives and Requirements of Organic Standards (COROS) - the IFOAM Standards Requirements. This last tool has been developed in cooperation with the Global Organic Market Access (GOMA) project, implemented by IFOAM, FAO and UNCTAD.

The IFOAM Standard now offers a global platform for organic standard setters to discuss, exchange, negotiate

BIOFACH NUREMBERG: AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXCHANGE

IFOAM and GOMA staff will be regularly available at the IFOAM booth to hear your opinions and suggestions regarding the documents open for public comments. You can also learn more about the IFOAM Organic Guarantee System by joining the BioFach Congress session on this topic on Friday 18 February, from 17:00 to 18:00 in room Riga. Furthermore, the Common Objectives and Requirements of Organic Standards will be consulted in a small group that will meet in the IFOAM Meeting Room, S.1.111 on Thursday 17, February, from 14:00 to 16:00. If you are interested to join, please contact d.bowen@ifoam.org.



The IFOAM Standard up for Consultation

Your feed-back is needed.



IFOAM and GOMA Present COROS

The Standards Requirements and EquiTool Annex 2 harmonized under COROS.



Accreditation Programs under the IFOAM OGS

What is new?



**IFOAM STANDARD
UP FOR CONSULTATION:**

**VERSION 0.1 UP FOR FIRST
ROUND OF CONSULTATION**

The IFOAM Standard Committee requests input on various specific issues to be further developed in the international standard. This standard will ultimately replace the IBS.

Version 0.1 of the IFOAM Standard can be downloaded [here](#) or on the [IFOAM website](#). The IFOAM Standard is intended to be an internationally applicable organic standard that can be used directly for certification. It will eventually replace the IFOAM Basic Standards (IBS). Certification bodies wishing to keep or obtain IFOAM Accreditation will have to use the IFOAM Standard or ensure compliance of their private standard to it.

The draft IFOAM Standard was developed based on the IBS Version 2005, but has undergone significant changes to turn what was a 'standard for standards' into a certification standard. These changes are explained in the [Introduction and Comment Questions for Members](#). This Standard Draft Version 0.1 has been developed through the joint effort of the IFOAM staff, IFOAM Standard Committee, IOAS staff and other selected experts. The IFOAM Standard Committee will review all comments received and will produce a second version in the

course of 2011, with the objective of presenting a version for approval by the IFOAM General Assembly in September 2011. Developing the IFOAM Standard will nevertheless be work in progress and an on-going duty of IFOAM and its Standard Committee much beyond September 2011, provided that there is interest in the commercial use of this standard.

Based on its discussions and the current draft, the Standard Committee has identified a number of questions to bring to the attention of IFOAM membership and/or on which the committee particularly wishes to receive comments so as to guide its upcoming work. These issues are presented in the [Introduction and Comment Questions for Members](#). Members are invited to provide their input by using this document as a form for comments, as well as by sending comments and desired track changes in the Standard draft itself. All comments should be submitted by e-mail to ogs@ifoam.org by March 31, 2011.

**IFOAM & GOMA LAUNCH JOINT
COMMENT PERIOD ON THE COROS:
YOUR OPINION COUNTS.**

Both IFOAM and its GOMA project have been developing tools for assessing equivalence of organic standards. IFOAM had previously referred to its planned document as 'IFOAM Standards Requirements', the new reference for assessing equivalence of organic standards and regulations for inclusion in the IFOAM Family of Standards.

GOMA has been revising and expanding Annex Two of the EquiTool. EquiTool is a general guide for assessing equivalence and the Annex provides a template for conducting assessments on the basis of common objectives and related requirements for organic standards. The first draft of this template was consulted in late 2010.

IFOAM, FAO and UNCTAD are now pleased to announce that they have agreed to harmonize these two tools and create a single one named 'Common Objectives and Requirements of Organic Standards' (COROS). This single tool will serve both purposes and is expected to become THE international reference to perform bi-lateral or multi-lateral equivalence assessments of organic standards. The tool contains requirements that have been found to be common to many private and government organic standards. Standards can now be compared to this reference in an



equivalence exercise, which will highlight their strengths and weaknesses as compared to the international reference. A spreadsheet is the functional format whereby data is entered following the traditional structure of organic standards and results are automatically fed into a second sheet that provides an overview of how well the standard addresses the Common Objectives. A third sheet is provided to summarize the results of the assessment. The tool is also provided in Word document form for easier reading and comprehension of the common objectives and requirements that relate to them. We hereby provide you with both the [spreadsheet](#) and Word document version with the [GOMA Introduction](#) (to for the Equitool) and with [IFOAM Introduction](#) (for the IFOAM Norms).

Comments should be made in any of the two word documents (in tracked changes) and emailed to j.katto@ifoam.org before the 13th of March. This will be the last comment period on this tool, after which a final version will be prepared for approval by the GOMA Steering Committee, and then for ratification by the IFOAM General Assembly in September.

Note:

- This comment period is slightly shorter than the normal comment period for IFOAM Norms, due to the necessity to harmonize the timeline with the timeline of the GOMA project.
- Comments submitted during the first round of consultation on the GOMA document and responses to these comments, are available via: www.goma-organic.org



THE IOAS EXPLAINS THE NEW OGS-RELATED ACCREDITATION PROGRAMS

Two services in the new IFOAM OGS will be provided by the International Organic Accreditation Service (IOAS). David Crucefix, Assistant Executive Director of the IOAS explains their relevance.

IFOAM Accreditation has been in existence since 1994 as a voluntary scheme and few would challenge its role as the champion of excellence in conformity assessment for the organic sector at international level. This accreditation continues within the new OGS but with a change that will have exciting consequences for equivalence and harmonization on the world stage. The current IFOAM Basic Standard (IBS) is being transformed into a standard that may be used directly for certification. This has the possibility to reduce costs for accreditation as CBs will no longer need to develop and maintain their own standards and the IOAS will not conduct a standards assessment as part of the accreditation process. As the standard is being crafted with equivalence to the major regulations in mind, it will simplify equivalence assessments and should ease import authorizations, a major concern and burden for many. It is envisaged that a strong and respected IFOAM certification standard will play a key role in reducing the current high number of organic standards in use around the world. The new IFOAM Standard is expected to be available later this year.

There are now two routes to IFOAM Accreditation.

Use of this standard for IFOAM accreditation is not obligatory. Certifiers who wish to retain their private standard or that of a related body for IFOAM accreditation may still submit that standard for compliance assessment. Additionally, transition from a private standard to the IFOAM certification standard may be done at any time.

So, there are now two routes to IFOAM Accreditation: the existing approach involving compliance assessment of a private standard and a new one using the IFOAM certification standard. Global Organic System Accreditation is a brand new service for certification bodies that, like IFOAM Accreditation, is based upon the IFOAM Accreditation Requirements (accreditation criteria). The important difference here is that any private or regulatory production standard in the IFOAM Family of Standards may be used. The accreditation process does not include a standards assessment but does consider proper application in practice.

IFOAM already announced that regulations in force for more than 5 years will unilaterally join the Fam-

ily of Standards including the production standards of major regulations such as EC 834/2007, USDA National Organic Program and the Japan Agricultural Standard. All private standards already assessed under the current IFOAM accreditation are also entering automatically in to the family. Other private standards may become part of the family by application. GOSA will be of particular interest to inspection/control bodies working to national regulations as they may now have the added assurance of verification against the highly regarded IFOAM accreditation requirements. Application of these requirements by many certifiers across many programs will make a strong contribution to harmonization and trust.

Both these accreditation programs will provide new impetus to IFOAM's long-term goal of international harmonization and equivalence while also providing a benchmark for credible organic standards and certification requirements and an active role for the private sector. Coupled with the expertise of the IOAS and the potential to link these programs with other IOAS services at minimal cost, we think they are an attractive proposition. For more information on either of these programs, please visit www.ioas.org.