



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF  
ORGANIC AGRICULTURE MOVEMENTS

**ORGANIC GUARANTEE SYSTEM (OGS) REVISION**  
**STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION 2010**

Dear IFOAM Affiliate,

In 2005, the General Assembly (GA) requested that the World Board should propose changes to the current Organic Guarantee Systems (OGS). The 2008 GA, mandated the World Board to continue the development of the OGS and at the same time revise the IFOAM Basic Standard (IBS).

The IFOAM Basic Standard, the cornerstone of the OGS, has a long history (first published in 1980). It has served worldwide as the main reference for private organic standards, many national organic regulations and for Codex Alimentarius.

However, in order to guarantee IFOAM's continued leadership role in this field and ensure that the OGS remains relevant in our ever-changing world, it is necessary to carefully revise the OGS.

We are pleased to inform you that after a thorough analysis by the OGS Task Force, intensive consultation of stakeholders from all over the world, and the active participation of the World Board, we are now able to share the results with you. These results will be the basis for a new OGS proposal to be put up to vote later in 2010.

Three IFOAM services and two services from International Organic Accreditation Services (IOAS is IFOAM's daughter organization, responsible for the implementation of IFOAM Accreditation) are being proposed.

Each of the proposed services respects both IFOAM's mission ('unite, lead and assist the organic movement in its full diversity') and IFOAM's strategic priority to provide services that are relevant to the organic movement and financially viable (see last consultation). These services are designed to allow IFOAM to build a framework of organic standards and verification, while drawing the line between organic and non-organic.

This new system further supports national/regional organic initiatives in their quest for leadership and offers the IFOAM Basic Standard as a tool for all those who want to outsource the maintenance of their standards. More information on how IFOAM aims to unite, lead and assist organic standard setting and verification can be found in the following pages.

Organically Yours,



Markus Arbenz – Executive Director



Katherine DiMatteo - President

## OBJECTIVES OF THE OGS REVISION

Through the Organic Guarantee System, IFOAM wants to create a framework for mutual recognition and harmonization of standards and verification systems. The framework is open to private standards and government regulations, although it particularly seeks to strengthen stakeholder-owned private standards, giving them one common voice.

The different services have different sub-objectives, namely:

- To draw, on behalf of the organic movement, a clear line between organic and non-organic (**Family of Standards**);
- To showcase best practice in Organic Agriculture and its contribution to the mitigation of global sustainability challenges (**Community of Best Practice Standards**);

- To find synergies in the standard setting for good practices (**IFOAM Standard**);
- To prove the competency and credibility of certifiers in use of standards and verification systems and to differentiate them in the marketplace (**IFOAM Accreditation**);
- To prove the competency and credibility of certifiers bodies' verification systems (**System Accreditation**);

IFOAM will implement the proposed OGS services using as a base its long-lasting experience in democratic standard-setting and the tools developed in the context of GOMA (Global Organic Market Access Project).



## SERVICES OF THE ORGANIC GUARANTEE SYSTEM

### IFOAM FAMILY OF STANDARDS: FOR STANDARD SETTERS AND CERTIFIERS

#### 1. IFOAM Unites

Standards are admitted into the IFOAM Family of Standards if they are considered 'organic' according to the definition of organic by the organic movement. In order to unite the organic movement through inclusiveness, both private standards and government regulations are admissible. Upon admission, standard setters receive a certificate and are allowed to use an IFOAM Family of Standard logo in their communication. Optionally, certifiers can get additional recognition of their verification system (accreditation) by being allowed to use an IFOAM Global Organic Mark on their operators' products. A turnover-based fee is applied to standard setters and for users of the Global Organic Mark.

## **IFOAM STANDARD:** FOR STANDARD SETTERS AND CERTIFIERS

### **2. IFOAM Assists**

The current IFOAM Basic Standard, currently a 'standard for standards', is developed into what will be known as the IFOAM Standard, a certification standard. The IFOAM Standard can be used as an off-the-shelf-standard by those wanting to outsource standard setting and maintenance. Although clients will closely participate in defining the IFOAM Standard, its content will be democratically decided on by the IFOAM membership. The IFOAM Standard should be a convenient good practice, but not a gold standard as such. A turnover-based fee is included in the IFOAM Accreditation.

## **IFOAM COMMUNITY OF BEST PRACTICE STANDARDS:** For Standard Setters

### **3. IFOAM Leads**

Examples of special attention paid by organic standards to best practice in environmental, social and economic fields are identified by IFOAM. These may include new or emerging areas like energy use, fair trade, mitigation of or adaptation to climate change in organic production and processing. Standards that wish to gain a reputation for their competency and credibility in these fields may qualify for the Community of Best Practice Standards. To do so the standard must achieve a certain score when compared to IFOAM-determined best practices. A turnover-based fee is applied to standard setters.

## **IFOAM ACCREDITATION:** FOR CERTIFIERS

### **4. IOAS Service**

Certification bodies using the IFOAM Standard or, alternatively, a compliant own private standard can get system and standard accredited by IOAS. This service already exists. A service fee is applied to IOAS for IFOAM Accredited certifiers.

## **SYSTEM ACCREDITATION:** FOR CERTIFIERS

### **5. IOAS Service**

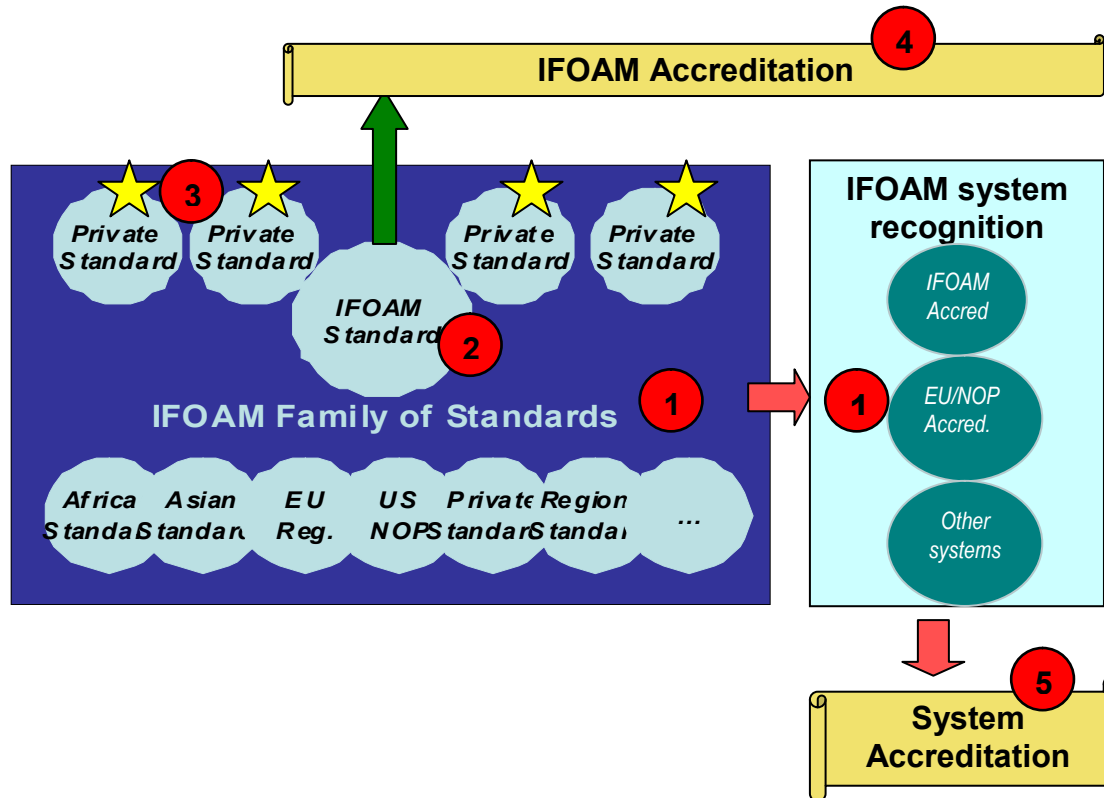
Certification bodies using any standard or regulation from the Family of Standards can have their verification system accredited by IOAS. This would be a new service. A service fee is applied to IOAS for certifiers.

## Standards



## Verification

## IFOAM Services



- 1 IFOAM Family of Standards
- 2 IFOAM Standard
- 3 IFOAM Community of Best Practice Standards
- 4 IFOAM Accreditation by IOAS
- 5 System Accreditation by IOAS

## INTERESTED IN KNOWING MORE?

Should you wish to obtain more information, please join us for the **'BioFach Nürnberg Workshop on the new IFOAM OGS', on Saturday the 20th of February 2010 from 10:00 to 11:00 p.m. in Room Prag.** The workshop will be conducted by the Chair of the OGS Task Force, Beate Huber, and IFOAM ED, Markus Arbenz.

Alternatively, you can participate in one of the two webinars on the **24th of February 2010 at 16:00 pm** Greenwich (London) time (convenient for UK, North and Latin America) or on the **25th at 08:00 a.m.** Greenwich time (convenient for Europe, East Africa, Asia and Australia) and ask us questions. All you need to participate is stable internet access, a head-set and an e-mail address. Please communicate your interest by sending an e-mail to [membership@ifoam.org](mailto:membership@ifoam.org). You will be sent a link to your e-mail address, giving you access to the webinar.

The working language will be English, although participants are welcome to express their questions and opinions also in Spanish, French or German.

The IFOAM World Board and the IOAS Board will receive a report on this OGS Consultation during their next meeting, in April 2010. Shortly after, all IFOAM Members will be informed of the outcome in order to prepare for the e-mail membership vote for the approval of the new Organic Guarantee System for the Organic Movement, planned for June 2010.

We look forward to receiving your feedback on the four questions in the e-questionnaire that you can access by using the link provided in the e-mail until the **10th of March 2010**. If more convenient, you can also print the attached questionnaire and return it filled out by fax or e-mail.