



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF  
ORGANIC AGRICULTURE MOVEMENTS

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

**ELECTRONIC MEMBERSHIP VOTE**

**- 18<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2010 -**

- The present IFOAM Organic Guarantee System (OGS) is based on:
  - a) the **IFOAM Basic Standard (IBS)** (a standard for standards), which provides a basis from which standards can be developed;
  - b) the **IFOAM Accreditation Criteria (IAC)**, which establish requirements for certification bodies seeking IFOAM Accreditation; and
  - c) the **IFOAM Accreditation Program**, implemented by IOAS.
- The environment has changed, thus requiring an adaptation and expansion of OGS services. This is why the General Assembly (GA) mandated the World Board to work out a revision of the OGS after a stakeholder process.
- The World Board evaluated several scenarios, however only the one now proposed - a compromise between many conflicting interests - found broad acceptance in the consultations. A vast majority of members welcomed the new system in the final membership consultation in February/March 2010.
- The World Board suggests a new OGS based on five services with

the aim to unite, assist and lead the organic movement in organic standard setting and verification, while placing the main emphasis on equivalence and advocacy for mutual acceptance of standards and systems in order to lower barriers in organic trade. These five services are:

1. **IFOAM Family of Standards and System Recognition;**
  2. **IFOAM Standard;**
  3. **IFOAM Community of Best Practice Standards;**
  4. **IFOAM Accreditation;**
  5. **System Accreditation.**
- The present vote concerns the political decision regarding OGS, as demanded by the 2008 GA. In this first phase, the approval by IFOAM members of the herein proposed system is sought. In a second phase, dependent on the favorable outcome of this membership vote, the content of the norms will be developed.

<b>Background: The World Board's Motion</b> .....	<b>p. 1</b>
<b>The New Organic Guarantee System (OGS)</b> .....	<b>p. 2</b>
<b>The Five Services of the OGS</b> .....	<b>pp. 3-6</b>
<b>Background Information: Previous Decisions on the OGS</b> .....	<b>p. 7</b>



IFOAM World Board

With this membership vote, the World Board proposes to revise the IFOAM Organic Guarantee System (OGS), thus fulfilling the wish of the 2008 General Assembly (GA) in Modena to take final political (not technical) decisions concerning the OGS. According to the IFOAM statutes, GA decisions may be taken in the physical GAs every three years or by electronic membership vote.

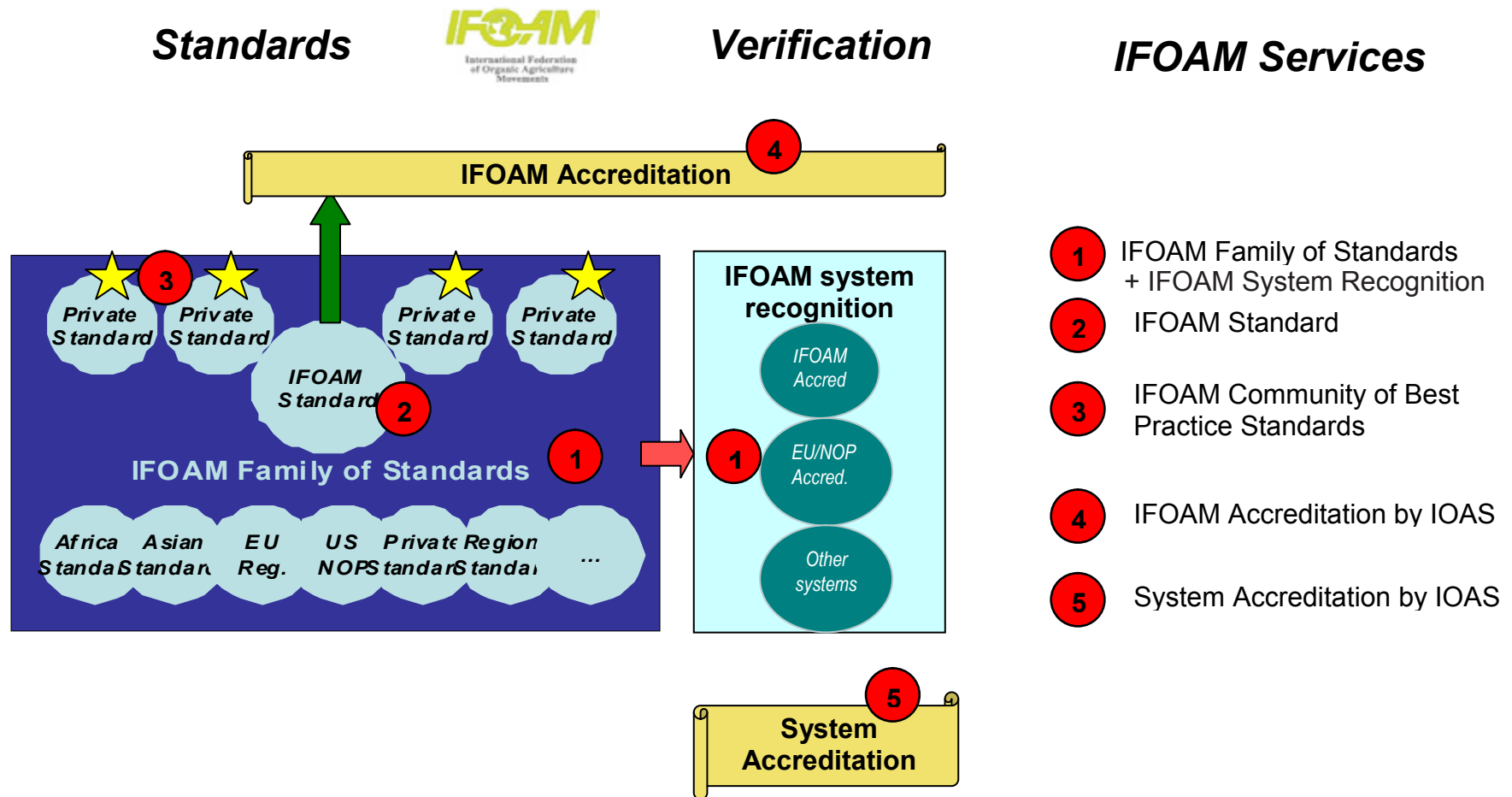
Through the Organic Guarantee System, IFOAM wants to create a framework for mutual recognition and harmonization of standards and verification systems. The framework is open to private standards and government regulations, although it particularly seeks to strengthen stakeholder-owned private standards, 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 find synergies in standard setting (**IFOAM Standard**);
- To showcase best practice in Organic Agriculture and its contribution to the mitigation of global sustainability challenges (**Community of Best Practice Standards**);
- To prove the competency and credibility of certifiers in using standards and verification systems and to differentiate them in the marketplace (**IFOAM Accreditation**);
- To prove the competency and credibility of certifiers' verification systems (**System Accreditation**);

IFOAM will implement the proposed OGS services using as a base its long-term experience in democratic standard setting and the tools developed in the context of the International Task Force on Harmonization and Equivalence.

The World Board proposes the following Organic Guarantee System (OGS):



1. IFOAM FAMILY OF STANDARDS & SYSTEM RECOGNITION

1. IFOAM Unites

The IFOAM Family of Standards already exists in the present IFOAM OGS. Currently, only standards are admitted that are compliant with the IFOAM Basic Standard. In the new system, the Family potentially includes all standards, including government regulations. Standards of Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGSs), may also qualify to be part of the Family. IFOAM will further introduce a 'System Recognition', so that not only standards (i.e. the requirements for operators) but also verification systems (i.e. the control system that confirms that operators fulfill the standard requirements) can be accepted beyond the IFOAM Standard and the IFOAM Accreditation.

*How will it work?*

IFOAM will use the 'IFOAM Standard Requirements' (previously known as IROS) and an equivalence assessment procedure to assess the applicants' standards. The equivalence assessment procedure will be developed based on the Equitool, an instrument developed by the International Task Force on Harmonization and Equivalence, a common initiative of IFOAM, UNCTAD and FAO. With the 'System Recognition', the Organic Movement not only relies on IFOAM Accreditations, but also on Governments or other accreditations. Operators that comply with a Family Standard and that are controlled in a recognized system may, after signing a contract with IFOAM, use a new IFOAM Global Organic Mark on their products.

**Summary:** The Family of Standards is a category of standards, 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 governments regulations are admissible. Upon admission, standard setters receive a certificate and are allowed to use an IFOAM Family of Standards logo in their communication. Optionally, operators are allowed to use an IFOAM Global Organic Mark on their products if IFOAM can recognize their verification system (accreditation and certification). A turnover-based fee is applied to standard setters and users of the Global Organic Mark.

*Rationale of this Service:*

The Family of Standards and the Systems Recognition help to advocate in the name of the Organic Movement for the mutual acceptance of standards. The vision is that the IFOAM Family of Standards evolves into an entry door to qualify a standard as being organic. In future, any organic standard gains its reputation by being accepted in the Family; those not involved will lack credibility. With these instruments, the Organic Movement gains a tool to advocate for multilateral, bilateral or unilateral acceptance of all credible standards, regulations and verification systems based on equivalence and equal reliability. Demand for a Global Organic Mark was identified mainly in new emerging organic markets outside the US and Europe.

## 2. IFOAM Assists

The IFOAM Basic Standard (IBS) today is an openly accessible tool that supports all standard setters. However, it has lost its previous importance due to the changing organic world and it has not been updated since 2005.

In the new OGS, the IBS will be turned into the IFOAM Standard, a certification standard used by a group of certifiers who prefer to not do standard development and maintenance on their own, but who see benefits in sharing the work with like-minded people and in creating synergies.

### *How will it work?*

The content of this IFOAM Standard will be developed by IFOAM in close participation of the users, who will be represented in the 'IFOAM Standard Committee'. Decisions about the content of the IFOAM Standard are taken in a Committee, although the IFOAM General Assembly has the possibility to approve or reject changes in the IFOAM Standard. Users of the IFOAM Standard may be part of the IFOAM Accreditation program, described separately.

It is IFOAM's strategy to keep the IFOAM Standard flexible enough for various environments. IFOAM wants to get the IFOAM Standard and its accreditation recognized as equivalent by regulators, so that import procedures can be simplified.

**Summary:** The current IFOAM Basic Standard, 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 determined 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 applied to users of the IFOAM Standard.

### *Rationale of this Service:*

The 2008 General Assembly decision mandated the World Board to preserve the 'IFOAM Basic Standard (IBS)'. The concept of this service takes the aforementioned mandate into account, while developing the IBS beyond its previous mold.

It assists IFOAM members in being competitive in the market, in lowering their costs and in providing them access to knowledge, that would otherwise need to be obtained through high expenses. The IFOAM Standard will still be openly accessible and may still serve as a source of inspiration and a good example for standard setters who are not using the IFOAM Standard directly.

3. IFOAM  
Leads

This is a new service without precedent, basing itself on the markets' demand for recognizing special efforts made by standard setters to introduce broader and more demanding production requirements that in turn offer consumers products with added value.

Organic standard setters that pay special attention to best practice are covered by this service. This special attention may translate itself into stricter production requirements in traditional organic chapters like soil and plant protection, or animal welfare. New or emerging areas like energy use, fair trade, mitigation or adaptation to climate change in organic production and processing may also be covered.

**How will it work?**

IFOAM will identify pioneering best practices against which applicant standards are assessed.

Once a certain score is attained, the standard setter receives a certificate and are allowed to use the IFOAM

**Summary:** Standard setters wishing to make a name for themselves for having stricter production requirements, may qualify for the 'IFOAM Community of Best Practices'.

To do so, the standard must achieve a certain score when compared to IFOAM determined best practices in environmental, social and economic fields. A turnover fee is applied to standard setters.

seal of recognition and its corresponding logo in its communication.

**Rationale of this Service:**

This new service helps IFOAM to play a leader role in the acknowledgement of visionary standard requirements and allows the standards setters to use a seal of recognition by IFOAM in their communication with their clients.



## THE FIVE SERVICES OF THE OGS: 4. IFOAM ACCREDITATION

### 4. IOAS Service

In the new OGS, the IFOAM Accreditation can be continued as it is. The users can rely on the IFOAM Standard, but may also use their own compliant standards.

#### *How will it work?*

Just as at present, the International Organic Accreditation Services (IOAS), IFOAM's daughter company, operates the service. IFOAM Accreditation equally assesses the certifiers' standards against the IFOAM Standard and analyses the certifiers' verification system against the 'IFOAM Accreditation Requirements' (presently called 'IFOAM Accreditation Criteria'). It is IFOAM's vision to unite the 'IFOAM Accreditation Criteria' with the 'International Requirements Organic Certification Bodies' (IROCB), developed by the International Task Force on Harmonization and Equivalence, a common initiative of IFOAM, UNCTAD and FAO.

#### *Rationale of this Service:*

The accredited certification bodies prove their competency and credibility and differentiate themselves in the marketplace. They continue to be a community of mutual recognition through their existing multilateral agreement.

**Summary:** Certification bodies using the IFOAM Standard or, alternatively, a compliant own private standard, can have their system and their standard accredited by IOAS. This service already exists. A service fee is applied by IFOAM to IOAS for each IFOAM Accredited certifier.



## THE FIVE SERVICES OF THE OGS: 5. SYSTEM ACCREDITATION

### 5. IOAS Service

Previously, only standards compliant with the IFOAM Basic Standard could get an IFOAM Accreditation. With the new service, the System Accreditation, any certification body using an organic standards can have their verification systems accredited.

#### *How will it work?*

Again, IFOAM's daughter company IOAS operates the service. IOAS assesses the certifiers' operations against the 'IFOAM Accreditation Requirements' (presently called 'IFOAM Accreditation Criteria'). IFOAM works towards getting both the IFOAM and the System Accreditation internationally recognized so that users are able to access many markets through one accreditation only.

#### *Rationale of this Service:*

With the System Accreditation IFOAM opens its accreditation program to all organic standards, not only to the ones compliant with the IFOAM Standard. The certification bodies can have their competency verified against criteria (IFOAM Accreditation Requirements) that have been specifically developed for the organic sector.

**Summary:** Certification bodies using any standard or regulation from the Family of Standards can have their verification system accredited by IOAS; this is a new service. A service fee is applied by IFOAM to IOAS for each accredited certifier.

**The General Assembly (GA) in Mar del Plata (1998)** asked the Board to clarify the role of the IFOAM Basic Standards, i.e. *"[t]o resolve the conflict between the role of the standards as being a reflection of the majority and the wishes to "improve" organic agriculture by introduction of requirements that go further than the practices of the majority"*.

The IFOAM Program 2005 as presented to the **GA in Victoria (2002 )** called for a review, as follows: "IFOAM and some of its members have spent considerable resources on the development of the Guarantee System. At the same time many IFOAM members are not participating in the system and/or feel it has no relevance for them."

**The GA in Adelaide (2005)** took the following decisions:

- That the purpose of the Organic Guarantee System is to protect the integrity of, ensure consumer confidence in, and facilitate market access for, organic products;
- That the objectives of the OGS should be:
  - to draw a distinct line between organic and not organic;
  - to safeguard the integrity of organic production and certification (in its various forms);
  - to provide sufficient oversight mechanism to maintain trust between the parties involved;
  - to facilitate global acceptance of organic products certified under different systems;
  - to be a platform for cooperation between the affected parties.

In order to accomplish this, the OGS should work together with other existing systems, including governmental systems, to be accessible for all serious

*GA in Adelaide (2005), cont.*

producers and certification systems. The system should work to improve guarantee systems build certification capacity and allow for different solutions in different contexts, i.e. realize that organic production and certification need to be adapted to the local conditions and the stage of development. In addition, the OGS should utilize simple and transparent procedures of operation, include service and problem solving approaches and seek to add value.

The WB is mandated to make the necessary adaptations of the current system to increase the ability of the OGS to fulfil the above objectives.

The WB is mandated to establish positions and programs, to support Organic Best Practices in order to stimulate continuous improvement in all areas including farming, processing, certification, standard setting and trade.

**The GA in Modena (2008)** recommended to *"[c]ontinually improve the IFOAM Organic Guarantee System as an international harmonization tool, develop mechanisms to maintain organic integrity, and provide support for the IFOAM accreditation program."* It further decided that:

1. the World Board [shall] balance and augment its focus on harmonization as its principle pursuit and re-establish IFOAM as a leader in technical standards setting and recapture IFOAM's important role in shaping the nature of Organic Agriculture.
2. the IFOAM Basic Standards [shall] be maintained, developed and regularly revised as they are IFOAM's identity and protection of its integrity.
3. final political (not technical) decisions on final proposals concerning the Organic Guarantee System [shall] be taken by the General Assembly.