



# Building Trust in Organics

A guide to setting up organic certification programmes



*Compiled by*

**GUNNAR RUNDGREN**

*for*

the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements and  
the International Organic Accreditation Services (IOAS)  
with the support of  
the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)

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The responsibility for the opinions expressed in this guide remains with the editor and do not necessarily reflect in all details those of the International Organic Accreditation Service or the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements.

The examples provided from existing certification programmes are there to show how things may be done in practice. The examples are chosen to cover various areas and types of programmes. They are not necessarily fully in line with views of the editor or the IFOAM Accreditation Programme.

The mentioning of a certification programme in this book should not be understood as any endorsement or approval of that programme or its activities by the IFOAM, the IOAS or the IFOAM Accreditation Programme. The only such endorsement is expressed through the accreditation process of the IFOAM Accreditation Programme.

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**Foreword**  
IFOAM President

# Introduction

The purpose of this publication is to provide guidance on how to set up an effective organic certification programme, with respect to local conditions, and conform to IFOAM criteria and international norms. The purpose is also to ensure that certification programmes act as service providers to the public and support the development of organic agriculture. The focus of the guide is to assist in regions where organic agriculture is in the early stages of development, but it may also be of value for already established certification programmes.

The background is the growing domestic and international trade in products from organic agriculture. This expansion, particularly in international exchange, creates a need for harmonisation and standardisation of organic production standards and certification all around the world. IFOAM has accepted this challenge, first through developing the IFOAM Basic Standards, later through establishing the IFOAM Accreditation Programme, and increasingly by providing practical assistance, for instance publishing this handbook.

My first contact with IFOAM was in 1987 when I joined a workshop on inspection in Germany. I learned a lot and made many good friends. IFOAM then (1987) also published an "Inspectors Handbook" by Gabriel Guet. At that time organic certification was very much an issue of "inspection" and not so much of "certification". Inspection is fundamental for certification. However, if inspectors do not work within a proper framework, they can't do very much. It is like a producer without any marketing mechanisms.

Most of the well known certifiers in the industrialised world began operation more than 10 years ago. At that time the requirements were not very high. You could easily get "recognition" by publishing standards, registering a mark, becoming a member of IFOAM and making yourself known. Today, the situation is much more complex. The requirements are ever increasing due to internal development within the movement (as reflected in the IFOAM accreditation criteria), state and international regulations and increased knowledge in the market place. This means that it is much more difficult to start up today. New certifiers should call upon experience from others as well as take international norms into consideration.

In this guide we have put together information, with the focus of setting up of a certification programme in developing countries. The guide does not describe the highest possible level of performance but rather a level that is considered to be achievable without incurring huge budgets and employing expensive consultants. It should be satisfactory for getting the recognition that is desperately needed for a new programme.

There is a certain resistance against the principles of certification from various groups. In the beginning of this guide some of the arguments against certification are reflected. The intention of this guide, however, is not to resolve this conflict but to assist in the establishment of reputable certification programmes.

*Dec. 1997, Gunnar Rundgren*

# The guide

## Production

The guide is produced in the following way:

Main editor and writer is Gunnar Rundgren. Gunnar Rundgren<sup>1</sup> has been involved in the organic industry since 1977, when he together with friends began organic farming at the Torfolk farm in Sweden, where he still is living. He has been an initiator and founder of several organisations for organic farming in Sweden, most important the certification programme KRAV. Currently he is the Chief Executive Officer of GroLink AB, a subsidiary of KRAV, organising international inspection and certification development. Gunnar served as the President of the IFOAM Accreditation Programme Board and the International Organic Accreditation Services until 1997.

A reference group within the International Organic Accreditation Services has given continuous input to the document, and provided some of the texts:

Bo van Elzakker<sup>2</sup> started working in organics in the early eighties as an international inspector. Gradually he became consultant in organic agriculture, working mainly in Eastern Europe and the tropics. He has assisted various local groups in setting up certification programme. He works with Agro Eco Consultancy in the Netherlands. Bo is the President of the International Organic Accreditation Services.

Jim Riddle<sup>3</sup> is founding president and current Coordinator of the Independent Organic Inspectors Association (IOIA) and has been an organic inspector for 11 years. Jim has been instrumental in developing curriculum materials for organic inspector training and has co-ordinated inspector trainings world-wide since 1991. Jim is the vice-president of the International Organic Accreditation Services.

Ong Kung Wai<sup>4</sup> is the Sustainable Agriculture Programme Officer for Pesticide Action Network (PAN) Asia and the Pacific, based in Penang, Malaysia. His work includes documentation, training and market development support for organic agriculture. He is active in advising local and national organisations in Asia on organic standards and certification.

Roberto Ugas<sup>5</sup>, is professor at La Molina Agricultural University of Lima, with a long involvement in the organic movement and in the development programme IFOAM 1999.

The presentations of the certification programmes in part 4 have been written by representatives of the programmes, but have been edited and amended.

The final draft was circulated in a larger group and valuable input was received from

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### **How to read the guide**

The first part offers theoretical background on certification, regulations, norms and accreditation. It also tries to put the function of certification in its proper context. The second part offers "hands-on" instructions and practical examples. For many of the recommendations in the second part, the rationale for those particular recommendations will be found in the first part. The third part contains a format for an Operating Manual and the fourth part contains four examples of certification programmes in developing countries. The last part contains references and addresses.

There are large boxes with examples or a more advanced discussion. Here and there are also smaller boxes with questions. These could be typical things to discuss in a study group.

### **Some terms used**

Most of the terms used are defined or explained when they are introduced. It should be noted that the term *certification body* refers to the organisation performing certification. This body may sometimes be referred to as the *certification agency*, or the *certifier*. *Certification programme* is used for the service of the certification body (in this case the service of certification of organic production). One certification body may actually execute several different certification programmes.

The term inspection body should actually be used for bodies only performing the inspection part of the certification, but within the framework of the EU regulation, an inspection body virtually has the role of a certification body.

*Operator* is used in this guide for anybody who has some activities that are covered by the certification programme, be it a farmer, a handler or a processor.

### **An important note:**

There are often several ways to do one thing, and it is not always easy to say what is right and wrong or what is best, especially not in an international context. The practical part of this guide tries to balance the need for clear instructions with the necessity to be open-minded about how things could be done.