

POLICY 28 on the Interpretation of IFOAM Norms

REVISED DATE: November 2016

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define the procedures for interpretations of the IFOAM Standard and the IFOAM Accreditation Requirements in relation to the IFOAM Accreditation process.

Scope limitation

This procedure applies to requests for interpretations submitted by clients of the OGS services, more precisely clients of IFOAM Accreditation and the IFOAM Standard. IFOAM may not have resources to handle requests for interpretation from other parties, therefore such requests are outside the scope of this policy and IFOAM may decide to handle them or not on a case by case basis.

Policy

1. Norm interpretations are made at two basic levels.
 - a. IFOAM Accredited Certifying Bodies (IACB) and users of the IFOAM Standard make their own interpretations of IFOAM Norms in cases where the Norm has no specific requirements and/or principles.
 - b. In the cases where the Norms identify specific requirements and/or principles to be implemented by the certification body, there may be a need for interpretation on the global level. Such cases include, but are not limited to, situations in which the norms are ambiguous or are causing problems in the accreditation process. Interpretations shall be requested and given before final accreditation decisions are made on the respective issue. Interpretations of IFOAM Norms shall be made according to transparent, fair, functional and competent procedures. The procedures below apply to this level of interpretation.
2. Decisions on interpretations are made by the responsible committee (Standard Committee in case of the IFOAM Standard, Accreditation Requirements Committee in case of the IFOAM Accreditation Requirements).
3. The IFOAM Executive director is responsible to define detailed procedures based on the general procedures given below.

Procedure

1. The IOAS, the IFOAM-Organics International staff, or an IFOAM Accredited or Applicant Certification Body may identify the need for interpretation and request an interpretation.
2. The request is registered with the OGS Manager and communicated to the responsible committee. All interpretation requests are considered urgent and the OGS Manager establishes a timeframe

- for the process of each request accordingly.
3. The responsible committee formulates an opinion on the interpretation. The basis for the opinion shall be clearly recorded. A copy shall be sent to relevant parties, including the body making the request. These parties shall give any comments to the OGS Manager within a given timeframe.
 4. After the end of the timeframe for comments, the OGS Manager will channel all comments to the responsible committee, who will make produce a final interpretation taking into account all inputs. The OGS Manager will compile all interpretations in the form of a register or manuals available to the public.
 5. Notification of interpretations: the OGS Manager shall notify all relevant bodies (including IOAS) of the result, including the rationale and will publish interpretations on the IFOAM-Organics International website (possibly in the form of manuals).

Incorporation in IFOAM norms

In the next revision of the IFOAM Norms, the interpretations shall be incorporated and/ or clarified to the extent possible, according to Policy 20 for the revision of IFOAM Norms.

Register of interpretations

A transparent register of all interpretations shall be established and administered by the OGS Manager and made available on the IFOAM website. Once an interpretation is incorporated in the norms or made redundant, it shall be taken off the register, upon the discretion of the OGS Manager.

Approved by the World Board on the 13th of December 2010, amended on the Executive Director in November 2016.