



AQIS NOTICE

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| Issue Organic certification and National Standard. | | |
| AQIS Notice Number: 2007/4 | | AQIS File Number: AFFA01/7727 |
| Date of Effect: Immediate | Date of Expiry: Until further notice | AQIS contact: Julie Crockett ☎ 02 6271 6638 ✉ organic@aqis.gov.au |
| Distribution Category | | Last Notice in the category |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approved Certifying Organisations cc <input type="checkbox"/> AQIS Horticultural Export Program <input type="checkbox"/> AQIS Grain Export Program <input type="checkbox"/> AQIS Export Meat Program <input type="checkbox"/> AQIS Dairy Export Program <input type="checkbox"/> AQIS Fish Export Program | | |
| Instruction issued under: <i>Export Control (Organic Produce Certification) Orders 1997</i> | | |

PURPOSE

1. To list a potential issue and clarify the requirements under section 3.2 of the National Standard for Organic and Biodynamic Produce.

BACKGROUND

2. Approved certifying organisations must comply with the National Standard for Organic and Biodynamic Produce (National Standard) except where “conformity assessment” rules apply.
3. With respect to *conversion of land*, section 3.2 of the National Standard [in part] states:
Standards
 - 3.2.1 During the first year under the inspection system, labelling of the produce must not make reference to the production method, or that the produce is under an organic inspection system.
 - 3.2.2 From the second year under the inspection system, produce from such units may only be labelled as in-conversion.
 - 3.2.3 Systems certified as in-conversion shall progress to organic status within a timeframe determined by the approved certifying organisation, but this cannot be less than three years from commencing organic management practices.

Derogation

The approved certifying organisation may allow exceptions to 3.2.3 where there is:

- i) a transfer of a property between certified operators; or
- ii) clear evidence of existing, prior compliance with this Standard by the applicant/operator; or
- iii) occupation of certified lands by a new operator; or
- iv) landless production systems, bees or aquaculture as detailed under this Standard.

ISSUE

4. There are concerns that misinterpretation of Section 3.2 may be leading to some operators being certified by their certifying organisation as “organic” in a timeframe which does not comply with the National Standard or some importing country requirements.

CONSIDERATION

5. The National Standard Sub Committee have provided advice to help clarify section 3.2 in the National Standard:
 - a. Section 3.2.1 of the National Standard refers to the first year under inspection - known by some as “pre-certification” – and this timeframe includes from the initial inspection date to 12 months later;
 - b. Section 3.2.2 of the National Standard refers to the second year under inspection, the first year *in-conversion*; and this timeframe is from 12 months to 24 months later;
 - c. Section 3.2.3 of the National Standard refers to the third year under inspection, the second year *in-conversion*; and this timeframe is from 24 months to 36 months later;
 - d. Certifying organisation can approve a reduction of the *in conversion* time from 36 months to not less than 24 months [minium] from the initial inspection date provided that the specific conditions of this *derogation* (listed above) are met.
6. In circumstances where a certified operator is specifically producing to importing country requirements (i.e. conformity assessment) and these requirements differ from the National Standard, importing country requirements will prevail over this Notice.
7. In any instance where an operator is provided full certification not in accordance with the National Standard, AQIS will impose an immediate sanction where produce has the potential to enter the export chain.

INSTRUCTION

AQIS approved certifying organisations are to:

8. **NOTE** the above information; and
9. **ENSURE** operators who produce for the export market are certified strictly in accordance with the National Standard or importing country requirements.