

ORGANIC CERTIFICATION

Organic certification means having the farm and the farmer's methods inspected by an organic certifying group to ensure that they comply with the guidelines on organic farming. Organic certification improves the image of organic agriculture and provides transparency in certification. For gaining consumer's confidence, valid organic certification is an essential pre-requisite for marketing especially in the export market. Generally organic certification involves many standards, inspection and certification.

Certification is a procedure by which a third party gives a written assurance that a product, causes or service is in conformity with certain standards. Organic standards are defined as a minimum production practices including storage, transportation, processing, handling, packing and labeling requirements which must be followed for certifying the products as organic.

It is to be recognized that animals are a part of organic farming system since they contribute to nutrient cycles, soil fertility and higher yields. Draught purpose is achieved and the by products are utilized well. Forage crops improve crop rotation and allow for diversification in farming. There are many organic standards on national as well as international levels. Generally standards vary with the country and to sell the products in a particular country, the standards of the importing country are to be followed. Certification is the key to the national organic program. In US since 21st October 2002 it is a federal offence to label any food product as organic unless it has been certified. Certification process focuses on the methods and materials used in production. There are two main requirements.

1. The methods and materials used in production must meet organic standards.
2. There must be clear and ongoing documentation of these methods and materials.

The concept of organic certification is that a third party –an organic certifying agent evaluates producers, processors and handlers to determine whether confirm to an established set of operating guideline called organic standards. Those which confirm are certified by the agent and allowed to use a logo, product statement or certificate to document their product as certified organic. In other words, the certifier vouches for the producer and assures buyers of the organic product's integrity.

CERTIFICATION IN INDIA

The Ministry of Commerce launched NPOP(National Programme for Organic Production) in March 2000, designed to establish national standards for organic products, which could then be sold under the logo "India organic". For the proper implementation of NPOP, NAPP(National Accreditation Policy and Programme) has been formulated with Accreditation Regulations announced in May 2001. These make it mandatory that all certification bodies whether international or foreign operating in the country must be accredited by an Accreditation Agency. There are 6 accreditation agencies in India :-

1. Agriculture Processed Food Products Exports Development Authority (APEDA).
2. Coffee Board.
3. Spices Board.
4. Coconut Development Board.

5. Tea Board.
6. Directorate of Cashew and Cocoa Development.

APEDA has recognized the following Inspections Certification bodies, all of these are able to certify based on the NPOP :

1. BVQ1(India) Pvt. Ltd (Mumbai)
2. E cocert (Aurangabad)
3. IMO control Pvt. Ltd (Bangalore)
4. Indian organic certification agency (Indocert, Aluva)
5. International Resources for farmer trade members
6. Lacon quality certification Pvt. Ltd (Theepany, Kerala)
7. National organic certification Association Pvt. Ltd (Pune)
8. One Cert Asia Agri Certification Pvt. Ltd (Jaipur)
9. SGS India Pvt. Ltd (Guragon)
10. Skal International (Bangalore)
11. Uttaranchal State Organic Certification Agency (Uttaranchal)

Many of the Indian farmers are small scale, poor farmers who may not be able to afford the cost of certification. Private certification bodies are creating International control systems and participatory guarantee system as alternative means of certification to reduce the cost of certification.

Source:- Farm Guide 2009, Farm information Bureau, Government of Kerala