

An Introduction to Organic Certification for Suppliers of Seeds, Seedlings, Transplants and Vegetative Reproductive Materials

Organic requirements are in addition to other statutory requirements
Statutory information is for guidance only and is correct at time of going to print

The Organic Regulations

The labelling and marketing of Organic products is controlled by an EC Regulation (2092/91 EEC), which defines how organic food must be produced and processed. It also lists the materials that are permitted as farm inputs, including the use of:

- Non-organic seeds, transplants and reproductive vegetative plant materials
- Soil conditioners and fertilising materials
- Propagating composts
- Pest control materials.

In the UK, Defra (The Department of the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs) acts as the control authority under the Regulation and has established UK organic standards based on Regulation 2092/91.

The information given in this leaflet is given in more detail in the OF&G Control Manual (Revised October 2006). The suppliers of organic seeds and transplant materials must obtain this Manual and familiarise themselves with the OF&G organic standards if they wish to apply for certification with OF&G.

Genetically Modified Organisms

Genetically modified organisms or materials derived from them are NOT permitted on a registered holding from the date of start of conversion. Consequently no inputs may be produced or derived from genetically modified organisms. The operator must obtain declarations from the suppliers of inputs, confirming that the products are non-GM.

OF&G provides pro-forma non-GM declaration forms for completion by suppliers.

Seeds and Transplants

A company producing organic seeds, seedlings, trees and fruit bushes or growing any transplants for use by an organic grower must be registered with an approved organic inspection body and be subject to the same inspection and operating procedures as would any organic farmer.

For further information refer to Technical Leaflet 101 – A Guide to Certification for Farmers and Growers.

Organic Propagating Materials

All the propagating materials, including seeds, transplants and vegetative reproductive materials sown or planted on an organic holding must be produced organically. (Ref. OF&G Control Manual Section 7.7)

Such materials can only be labelled and marketed as organically produced where:

- The mother plant in the case of seeds and the parent plant in the case of vegetative reproductive material, has been produced in accordance with the standards for at least one generation or, in the case of perennial plants, two growing seasons;
- The land has undergone an approved period of monitored conversion under organic management (this is normally 24 months);
- The production unit, where the seed is grown and the processing unit, where the seed is cleaned, graded and packed are registered with an approved organic certification body.

Non-organic Propagating Materials

It is recognised that it may take some years before there are sufficient organically produced seeds and vegetative reproductive materials available within the EU. For this reason, operators can, in certain circumstances, obtain derogation from their certification body to sow non-organic seeds or plant non-organic trees and bushes. However, they must always provide evidence that the organic equivalents were not available.

In order to help source organic seed, a database, funded by Defra, has been set up on the Internet. **www.organicxseeds.co.uk** This database should be consulted when trying to source organic seeds.

The seeds must not be treated with any chemical dressings unless the operator can show to the satisfaction of the certification body, that he/she was unable to obtain on the market non-treated seeds of the appropriate variety.

OF&G must supply Defra with lists of the derogations given and justify these when asked.

There is no requirement to register the production of non-organic seeds, trees and fruit bushes, which may be brought on to an organic holding by derogation.

Labelling Non-organic Seeds and Part Organic Seed Mixes

Such seeds must not carry any reference to organic production, with the exception of grass and clover seed mixes that can do so, as long as they contain a minimum percentage of organic seed. (This is currently 60% but is likely to be increased on 1/1/07.):

- The supplier must be registered with one of the approved organic certification bodies;
- The label must state the percentage of organic seed in the mix and clearly identify the organic variety;
- The statement 'Organic Certification UK2' must be on the label (where OF&G is the certification body);
- Alternatively, the OF&G logo, which incorporates this statement, may be used

Non-organic Transplants

Due to the absence of reliable organically produced propagating composts, the standards permit the production of transplants in propagating materials derived from the limited list of conventionally produced soil conditioners and fertilising materials permitted in the standards (section 7.14 and 7.16 of the OF&G Control Manual).

The holding that produces transplants must be registered with an approved organic certification body. It is not necessary for the holding to be dedicated to organic production. A greenhouse or part of a greenhouse must be dedicated to producing the transplants.

Transplants intended for organic producers can only be treated with pest control materials and treatments listed as permitted in sections 7.11 and 7.12 of the control Manual.

Labelling Transplants

Seedlings, transplants or potted plants can only be labelled as organically produced where a minimum of 51% of the volume of the propagating compost is made up of materials produced on an organic holding (but excluding soil). The balance must be made up of permitted conventional soil conditioning and fertilising materials.

Transplants and pot plants not meeting the above requirement but solely grown in permitted conventional soil conditioning and fertilising materials must be labelled as 'Transplants approved for use in organic farming'.

The OF&G logo can only be used on transplants or pot plants which are grown in compost which contain more than 51% materials produced on an organic holding.

All transplants and pot plants must carry the code 'Organic Certification UK2' to identify OF&G as the responsible certification body.

Processing Organic Seeds

A company processing organic seeds must be registered with an approved organic inspection body and be subject to the same inspection and operating procedures as would a processor of organic food products for human consumption.

For further information refer to Processors Technical Leaflet 201 for further information. (This can be requested from the OF&G Certification Office or downloaded from the OF&G website: www.organicfarmers.org.uk)

Importing Organic Seeds

For a company wishing to import organic seed from a third (non EU) country must be registered with an approved organic inspection body and be subject to the same inspection and operating procedures as would a processor of organic food products for human consumption.

For further information refer to Importers Technical Leaflet 202 for further information. (Source as for TL201 above)

An Introduction to Organic Farmers & Growers Ltd

Organic Farmers & Growers Ltd (OF&G) is a registered company, limited by shares, that was originally established in 1973. The company operates an Inspection and Certification Scheme to carry out the work required under the EC Regulation 2092/91. The Scheme is accredited with Defra and operates to the requirements of EN45011.

How do I become registered with Organic Farmers & Growers Ltd?

For further information or an application pack, please contact OF&G.

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