

An Introduction to Organic Certification for Importers

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

The import of organic products into the EU is controlled by EC Regulations (EC) No. 834/2007 and (EC) No. 1235/2008, which specify the procedures under which importers and processors must operate. This technical leaflet explains what is involved and which operations need to be inspected and certified.

(Further details are given in Section 13 of the OF&G Control Manual.)

Imports from EU Member States

Importers bringing organic goods into the UK from other EU member states do not need to be certified if the products are to be wholesaled in their original packaging.

Certification as an importer and/or processor is however necessary if:-

- Bulk consignments, such as grain, are to be transferred to storage bins;
- Bulk products are to be broken down into smaller lots and/or repackaged;
- Products are to be relabelled;
- Products are packed in their retail packaging at source bearing the logo of a UK inspection body such as Organic Farmers & Growers Ltd.

Imports from outside the EU

The office and processing/storage sites used by Importers bringing organic products into the UK from outside the EU require inspection and organic certification in every case. Anyone contravening this requirement in the UK, could be subject to prosecution by Trading Standards Officers.

An EC Certificate of Inspection must be produced for every consignment by the Organic Inspection Body certifying the Exporter in the country of origin. (A blank copy of the Certificate of Inspection is available on the Defra website www.defra.gov.uk/farm/organic/imports/index.htm or the OF&G Control Manual Section 14 Record Sheet 49)

For imports from 'Non-Approved Third Countries' (see definition below), DEFRA authorisation is also required.

In the organic sector, non-EU countries are referred to as 'Third Countries'. Some Third Countries have been approved by the EU commission as having organic production standards and operating procedures equivalent to those in force in the EU. These are called '**Approved Third Countries**' and are listed below:

- | | | |
|--------------|----------|---------------|
| • Argentina | • India | • New Zealand |
| • Australia | • Israel | • Tunisia |
| • Costa Rica | | |

Note: Only certain organic control bodies in each of these countries are recognised by the EU and these are listed on the Defra website.

Switzerland is now recognised as an EU country and an EC Certificate of Inspection is no longer required.

Imports from EU Approved Third Countries

It is NOT necessary to obtain authorisation from Defra to import organic products from these countries into the UK provided that the product is certified by one of the EU-recognised inspection bodies in the country of origin.

Imports from non-EU Approved Third Countries

For organic products imported directly from any non-EU-approved Third Country, approval must first be obtained from Defra.

Obtaining approval for import of organic goods from DEFRA

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is responsible for authorising organic imports from Non-Approved Third Countries.

Defra requires a OB11 form to be completed by the Importer, for products from each Supplier / Exporter in each country, before authorisation is given. The OB11 application must include organic certificates for all Operators in the supply chain and must be completed and stamped by the Supplier's (or Exporter's) Organic Control Body before it is sent to Defra for authorisation. Defra aims to review all applications within 10-20 working days, but the review may raise further questions. The whole process can take several weeks, so it is important to apply for authorisation well before the goods are shipped from the country of origin. This authorisation must be renewed annually.

Form OB11 and Guidance Notes can be downloaded from the Defra website at:
www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/regulat/forms/organics/ob13.pdf

The information required for the OB11 is indicated in Section 13 of the OF&G Control Manual and includes:

- The name of the UK control body and the date of the inspection of the UK office/storage sites;
- Details of the product/s to be imported (including details of all ingredients for multi-ingredient products) and quantities to be imported annually;
- Details of the overseas exporter;
- Details of the overseas processor if one is involved;
- Details of the overseas producers involved;
- Details of the inspection body/bodies responsible for certifying the products/processing/ exporting;
- A declaration from the control body to the effect that it permanently and effectively applies its standards and operating procedures;
- Independent verification to confirm that the control body's procedures are equivalent to EN 45011 or ISO 65 (EU and International standards for Control Bodies).

Pro-forma EC Certificate of Inspection for the Exporter

The Organic Control Body of the Exporter, in the Third Country issues a 'Certificate of Inspection for the Import of Products from Organic Production into the EC' for each consignment. This needs to be made available to the Port Health Authority (PHA) at the port of entry into the UK (or EU) for verification and endorsement.

The details on the Certificate of Inspection are then compared against details on the Defra secure database of import authorisations issued and also against the consignment's manifest. If they tally, the PHA will endorse the Certificate of Inspection and the goods will be allowed to clear customs and enter free circulation within the EU.

The PHA should be informed, at least 24 hours in advance, of the arrival of a consignment of organic goods and will make a charge for checking the documentation. This charge is currently approx. £45 but is likely to be more if out-of-hours checks are required.

(Note: Organic requirements are in addition to all statutory requirements for imports.)

A photocopy of the Certificate of Inspection for each consignment, endorsed by the PHA and first consignee, (stamped COPY or DUPLICATE) should be sent to the OF&G office and the original kept on file by the Importer, together with accompanying shipping documents, for future audit by OF&G and/or Defra.

Labelling

Organic goods packed and labelled abroad, must carry the identifying mark of the organic certifier in the exporting country. (This mark may be the name and/or logo and/or code as appropriate.)


In addition, the goods may carry the code number (e.g. GB-ORG-02 and/or logo incorporating this statement) of the UK Importer as long as it is clear that the UK control body is certifying the import only (the logo below incorporates the phrase 'Import Certified by'), not the production or processing of the goods.

Details of the Importer's control body may only appear on the label with the written agreement of the Exporter's control body and should not be more prominent

Example:

Produced in Argentina under certification by Argencert. Imported by J.Smith Ltd, under certification by GB-ORG-02
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or

<u>Produced in Argentina under certification by</u> <u>(Argencert logo here)</u>	<u>Imported by J.Smith Ltd</u> <u>Import Certified by</u> ORGANIC FARMERS GROWERS  <u>GB-ORG-02</u>
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Please note if the organic product is packed within the EU the Organic logo of the EU must also be used to comply with EC271/2010.

Organic Farmers and Growers Ltd

Organic Farmers & Growers Ltd (OF&G) was established in 1973 and was the first organic inspection body registered by Defra.

- The company operates several certification programmes for producers, processors and importers. Most operators request OF&G / Defra Certification, which is recognised throughout the EU and most other countries.
- Other certification programmes available include NOP (USDA) and the Soil Association Partnership Programme.

Achieving Organic Farmers & Growers' Organic Certification

- Contact the OF&G office (see details below) for an information pack and application form;
- Return the application form together with the appropriate fee;
- Undergo an organic inspection. (This is a review of the administrative and physical systems in place, to ensure that organic requirements can be complied with.);
- Take action to correct any non-compliances raised by the Inspector or the Certification Officer reviewing the inspection report.

Once the above stages have been completed to the satisfaction of the Certification Officer, the Importer will be registered as a licensee, a Certificate of Compliance will be issued and Defra will be notified

The Certificate lists the types of products that have been approved. Other products cannot be imported until specific approval has been gained and they have been added to the Certificate by OF&G. (Defra approval is also required for changes in products imported from non-approved Third Countries.)

Further Information

Organic Farmers & Growers - Processor Certification

The Old Estate Yard, Shrewsbury Road, Albrighton, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY4 3AG

Tel: 01939 291800 / 0845 330 5122 ext 230 or 235

Fax: 01939 291250 / 0845 330 5123

Email: processors@organicfarmers.org.uk

Website: www.organicfarmers.org.uk

Defra OB11 forms and guidance notes are available on the Defra website or contact
Organic Farming Branch-Imports Section, 8th Floor, 9 Millbank,
c/o Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR

Tel: 020 7238 5777

Email: organic.imports@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/docs/forms/organics/ob11.htm