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# Certification Manual

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Box 3429

618 Main Street

Humboldt, SK S0K 2A0

P: (306) 800-5210

F: (306) 800-5211

E: [info@tcocert.ca](mailto:info@tcocert.ca)

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## Introduction

TCO Cert is a non-profit, member-owned, organic Certification Body. The Company's head office is located in Humboldt, Saskatchewan. TCO Cert handles the entire application, inspection assignment, and certification process. TCO Cert has Chapters located across Canada, one in Mexico and a Certification Coordinator located in Quebec.

TCO Cert provides organic certification services to any applicant that has the ability to comply with TCO Cert's organic certification programs without discrimination. Applicants to TCO Cert typically apply as chapter operators through one of the chapter offices. Most of TCO Cert's forms and documents necessary for certification are maintained on the TCO Cert website, [www.tcocert.ca](http://www.tcocert.ca), and are available for download under the "Forms and Documents" section of the website. If you do not have access to the Internet or would simply prefer to receive the forms by mail, please contact the office at (306) 800-5210 and we will assist you or direct you to a Chapter Office near you.

## Purpose

This document outlines important information about TCO Cert's certification services and processes for new and returning applicants.

## TCO Cert Operational Authority

TCO Cert maintains the following organic accreditations:

1. *Canadian Organic Regime (COR)* under the authority of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) on the recommendation of the Committee on Accreditation for Evaluation of Quality (CAEQ).. The applicable standards are the "Canada Organic Production System Standards" and the "Canada Organic Production System Permitted Substances List". These are the governing regulations for organic products in Canada. Operations requesting COR certification may also request:

- US-CAN Organic Equivalency Arrangement (between the US and Canada): Allows COR-certified products to be exported to the United States.
- CAN-EU Organic Equivalency Arrangement (between Canada and the EU): Allows COR-certified products to be exported to the European Union and is automatically granted with certification to the COR program.

1a. *Conseil des appellations réservées et des termes valorisants (CARTV)* The applicable standard is the "Act Respecting Reserved Designations and Value-Added Claims which contains the governing regulations for organic products in Quebec, Canada.

2. *ISO/IEC Guide 17065* with the scope of the European Union Equivalency Program under the authority of the International Organic Accreditation Service (IOAS) and the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). The applicable standard is the "Equivalent European Union Organic Production & Processing Standard for Third Countries", which contains the regulations necessary for exporting organic products to the European Union.

Additionally, TCO Cert assists in facilitation of the certification process for BIO SUISSE in Switzerland.

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## Certification System

TCO Cert's product certification system is based upon the process of application, inspection, review, and continual oversight to ensure compliance to the organic program(s). TCO Cert certified operators are inspected annually and evaluated by TCO Cert to determine compliance and identify any non-compliances or points of information.

The following scopes of organic certification are offered by TCO Cert\*:

1. Crops
2. Livestock
3. Processed products intended for human consumption
4. Wild Harvest crops, mushrooms, and sprouts
5. Gardens and Greenhouses
6. Maple Syrup

TCO Cert does not delegate authority to any outside bodies for granting, maintaining, extending, suspending, or revoking certification.

TCO Cert accepts full responsibility for sub-contractors used to provide services such as lab analysis.

## Certification Evaluation Procedures and Certification Process

TCO Cert offers organic certification services to COR. The minimum requirements for certification are the completion of an application/organic system plan, signing of an Operator Licensing Agreement, maintenance of a full audit trail that allows the organic product to be traced through the entire system, and inspection.

### *Application and Inspection*

Organic certification is an inspection and documentation based system. Upon submission of an application/organic system plan, TCO Cert will ensure that you are capable of complying with the applicable standards. If your operation is capable of complying, TCO Cert will assign a Verification Officer to inspect your operation to ensure that your organic system plan is accurate to the management of your operation and to assess any potential threats to the organic integrity of your products.

- **Crop/Livestock Production:** The Verification Officer will inspect your organic fields and your conventional fields as necessary. The Verification Officer will also review your entire audit trail, including seed documentation, planting/harvesting dates, storage records, sales records, buffer disposition records, equipment cleaning records, livestock records/health records, and feeding documentation.
- **Processing/Handling:** The Verification Officer will inspect your entire processing plant, including all organic and conventional lines. The Verification Officer will also review your entire audit trail, including purchase records, storage records, equipment cleaning records, pest control methods/records and sales records.

Upon completion of the inspection, TCO Cert will review the organic system plan, inspection report and all supporting documentation. A qualified Certification Specialist will conduct the review. The Certification Specialist will determine if your operation is compliant with the applicable standards.

## ***Conversion***

Operations applying for the first time or members returning who have had a gap in certification/surveillance will go through a full one-year “conversion” period prior to granting certification.

New applicants for certification will be inspected prior to the issuance of a certificate of compliance. Currently certified operations will be inspected at least annually based upon the date of their most recent annual inspection. Additionally, operations may be required to have additional inspections throughout the year, either announced or unannounced. TCO Cert will pay for any additional inspections outside of the annual inspection unless it is discovered that the operation has a major non-compliance for any of their certification programs. The operation will then be required to cover the costs of the additional inspection.

TCO Cert reserves the right to take soil, tissue and/or product samples for analytical testing.

Operations that experience a change in ownership or wish to add new fields or facilities to their organic operations outside of the annual organic inspection cycle may request changes or additions to their existing certification. The request requires approval by TCO Cert prior to sale or processing.

## ***Suspension & Cancellation***

TCO Cert shall suspend an organic certification only after the following:

- The Operator has been notified that there are grounds for suspension;
- The Operator has been provided with a copy of a report that specifies the grounds for suspension, the required corrective measures and the period within which those measures must be implemented to avoid suspension;
- The Operator has been notified of the suspension, and the Operator has failed or is unable to implement the required corrective measures within the period specified in the report;
- If the Operator has not implemented the required corrective measures or their implementation is not possible within the period specified in the report, the Operator may obtain from TCO Cert an extension of the period;
- The suspension remains in effect until the required corrective measures are implemented by the Operator and verified by TCO Cert or until cancellation of the certification.
- TCO Cert shall cancel the certification if:
  - a) the application made contains false or misleading information, or
  - b) the Operator has not implemented the corrective measures within 30 days following the day on which the certification was suspended or within any longer period allowed (prior approval);
- No certification can be cancelled unless TCO Cert has taken the following steps:
  - a) Advised the Operator of an opportunity to be heard, either orally or in writing, in respect of the cancellation, and has given the Operator that opportunity and has rendered a decision that was unfavorable to the Operator; and
  - b) TCO Cert has sent notice of the cancellation to the Operator of the certification.

## ***Causes for maintaining or extending certification***

A certified Operator demonstrates substantial compliance with applicable certification standards and requirements upon evaluation of updated information submitted and gathered through re-inspection (annual or verification inspection). Evaluation of an Operator's compliance with standards and requirements takes into consideration, without limitation:

- a) Changes significantly affecting the production or processing of organic crops or products, including but not limited to changes in scopes, processes and/or programs;
- b) Changes in standards;
- c) Changes in ownership, structure, or management of the operation, and
- d) Any other information indicating that the product may no longer comply with certification standards or requirements.

## ***Refusal of Certification***

If TCO Cert refuses certification to an Operator a letter will be sent to the Operator by registered mail, stating the reason(s) for the decision and advising the Operator of their right to appeal within 30 days of receipt of notice.

## ***Denial of Certification***

If an operation has been denied certification, TCO Cert will issue a written Notice of Denial, which will include:

- a) The reason for the denial;
- b) The effective date of the denial;
- c) The right to request mediation or to file an appeal;
- d) The right to reapply for certification with TCO Cert or another accredited certification agency

All TCO Cert Verification Officers are approved, managed, and evaluated by TCO Cert on an on-going basis. TCO Cert does not subcontract the certification decision.

## **Financial Support and Fees**

TCO Cert is a non-profit organization. All of TCO Cert's financial support comes from fees associated with the organic certification process. TCO Cert does not manufacture products or provide other services outside of the certification process. For TCO Cert's current fee structure, please refer to the documents:

*TCO Cert Fee Schedule\**

Certification and inspection fees are due at the time of application. Please contact the TCO Cert office or Chapter office for assistance in determining certification and inspection fees.

\*Each Chapter bills the Operators for the inspection fee. Additionally, Chapters may charge a fee to be a member of the chapter.

## **Rights and Duties of Applicants**

Each TCO Cert certified Operator has defined rights and duties with TCO Cert. Each Operator is required to sign the TCO Cert *Operator Licensing Agreement (OLA)* prior to the issuance of an organic certificate. The OLA contractually defines the rights and duties of the Operator as well as the rights and duties of TCO Cert.

Only operations that have submitted an application and have been inspected, reviewed, and approved by TCO Cert may use the TCO Cert name or logo on their certified organic products or advertisements.

## **Complaints, Appeals, and Disputes**

Each certified operation has the right to appeal any certification decision, noncompliance, or requirement issued by TCO Cert or appeal any decision based upon the finding of a complaint filed against your operation.

1. Canadian Organic Regime (including US-CAN equivalency arrangement): Operators may appeal a certification decision and/or a notice of noncompliance to TCO Cert. If the appeal is unsuccessful, the Operation has the right to appeal to the TCO Cert Internal Review Committee.
2. CARTV Program: Operations may appeal a certification decision or notice of noncompliance to TCO Cert. If the appeal is unsuccessful, the Operation has the right to appeal to the TCO Cert Internal Review Committee.
3. Bio-Suisse: TCO Cert facilitates the certification of this program, but the final decision is rendered by Bio-Suisse. All appeals to certification decisions must be directed to Bio-Suisse according to the Bio-Suisse appeals process.

## **Addendum**

The following forms and documents are used for the certification process. Many of these are available from the TCO Cert website for use when certifying with TCO Cert. You can also request the forms and documents from TCO Cert or a Chapter Office:

### ***Farm and Livestock Documentation***

#### **Basic Application (Required):**

Organic System Plans (only complete the Plan(s) that is/are applicable to your operation)<sup>1</sup>:

1. Farm Organic System Plan (OSP)
  - Farm Organic System Plan (OSP) Annual Update – Both OSP forms must be completed by new applicants. Returning applicants only need to complete the Farm OSP Annual Update form.
2. Livestock Organic System Plan (OSP)
  - Livestock Organic System Plan (OSP) Annual Update – Both OSP forms must be completed by new applicants. Returning applicants only need to complete the Livestock OSP Annual Update form and Appendix L.
3. Wild Harvest Organic System Plan (OSP)
4. Maple Syrup Organic System Plan (OSP)
5. Garden/Greenhouse Organic System Plan (OSP)
  - Garden/Greenhouse Organic System Plan (OSP) Annual Update – Both OSP forms must be completed by new applicants. Returning applicants only need to complete the Garden/Greenhouse OSP Annual Update form and Appendix G.
6. Mushroom/Sprout Organic System Plan (OSP)
7. Aquaculture: Wild Harvest Plan (OSP)

## **Supporting documentation:**

1. Operator Licensing Agreement (OLA)
2. Other supporting documentation as indicated on the OSP forms.

## **Required Records:**

All records must be available for inspection and be able to be submitted to TCO Cert.

### **Producer**

- Field History Records
- Field Maps (with field buffers and adjacent land to organic fields clearly labeled)
- Seed Documentation (seed tags, invoices, seed source records, non-GMO statements, inoculant labels, etc.)
- Bin/Storage Records
- Input Labels
- Field Activity Logs
- Equipment Cleanout Logs (if used for non-organic)
- Soil Tests (if taken)
- Parallel Production and Buffer Harvest Records (if applicable)
- Water Tests (if washing product)
- Clean Transportation Documentation
- Sales Records
- Complaint Log

### **Livestock**

- Feed Records and Rations and Feed Source Documentation (harvested and purchased)
- Herd Health Records
- Herd Identification Records
- Pasture Records and Information
- Living Condition Records
- Breeding Records
- Hatchery Purchase Receipts (for poultry)
- Milk Production Records (for dairy)
- Sanitizer Information (for dairy)
- Egg Production Records (for egg production)
- Slaughter Facility Records (for meat production)
- Sales Records
- Complaint Log

## **Optional Programs**

### **Bio Suisse Application**

These documents are also available on the TCO Cert web site at [www.tcocert.ca](http://www.tcocert.ca)

- Regulations on Implementation of Bio Suisse Standards
- Bio Suisse Checklist for Individual Producers
- Bio Suisse Checklist for Processing and Trade



## **Supplemental Forms and Information:**

The following forms are available from the TCO Cert website or can be obtained by contacting the TCO Cert office or a Chapter Administrator.

- Transaction Certificate Authorization (TCA) form
- Request for Transaction Certificate Correction
- Log for Complaints Against the Certified Operator
- Bill of Lading (BOL)
- Buffer Strip Record
- Yearly Field Activity Log
- Farm Input Record
- Bin Register
- Farm Sales Record Summary
- Farm Equipment Clean-Out Record
- Combine Clean-Out Affidavit
- Prior Land Use Affidavit (PLUA)
- Non-GMO Affidavit
- Organic Seed Search and/or Purchase Record
- Off-Farm Transportation Cleaning Affidavit
- Application for Document Review
- Notification of Change of Key Information Form
- Additional Product-Program Affidavit
- Adjoining Land Use Affidavit

## ***Processor/Handler Documentation***

### **Basic Application (required):**

1. Processing Organic System Plan (OSP) – for any alteration of the product from its original state including repackaging or labeling.
  - Processing Organic System Plan (OSP) Annual Update - Both OSP forms must be completed by new applicants. Returning applicants only need to complete the Processing OSP Annual Update form.
2. Organic Product Ingredients Form (for Processing operations)
3. Operator Licensing Agreement
4. Invoice/Payment for Certification Fees

### **Required Records:**

All records must be available for inspection and be able to be submitted to TCO Cert.

- Pest Management Map of traps and monitors (if applicable)
- Water Test (if applicable)
- Product Flow Chart
- Facility Map
- MSDS (if applicable)
- Organic Product Labels (retail and bulk)
- Labels for minor ingredients (if applicable)

- Non-GMO, Non- GE Affidavit and Off Farm Manure Affidavit- Documentation for Non-Organic Ingredients
- Certificates/Letters from Other Certifiers for Organic Ingredients (if applicable)
- Supplier List
- Pest Management Plan/Pest Control Map
- Equipment Cleaning Records
- Production Records
- Storage Records
- Employee Training Records
- Parallel Production Plan (if applicable)
- Flavor Documentation (if applicable)
- Clean Transport Documentation
- Labels for other substances used (boiler additives, cleansers, or pesticides) (if applicable)
- Documents from previous (if other than TCO Cert) or dual certification application (if applicable)
- Sales Records
- Complaint Log