

Extract from the Bio Suisse Standards

## Producer groups

Producer groups have joint, regional structures (e.g., for advisory services and marketing) and are inspected and certified by their certification body as a group. Bio Suisse distinguishes between different types of producer groups:

### 1. Producer groups with an internal control system (ICS)

#### 1.1 Definition

These producer groups are inspected and certified by means of an internal control system (ICS).

#### 1.2 Requirements

- The producer group is inspected and certified in accordance with the IFOAM standards ([https://www.ifoam.bio/sites/default/files/ifoam\\_norms\\_july\\_2014\\_t.pdf](https://www.ifoam.bio/sites/default/files/ifoam_norms_july_2014_t.pdf)). Producer group members that cannot be inspected by an internal control system in accordance with these specifications must be inspected by an external body on an annual basis.
- All farmers applying for certification according to Bio Suisse Standards must fully meet the Bio Suisse standards; in particular, they must have been converted in their entirety (whole-farm approach).

Requirements for ICS-inspections according to IFOAM (these apply also for simplified certification of smallholder groups, see chapter 3):

- Inspectors who inspect ICS must be specially trained for this.
- The correct functioning of the ICS must be inspected and the following criteria must be checked:
  - The ICS is operated by competent personnel and the internal inspectors are trained regularly
  - The group has a mechanism to address potential and actual conflicts of interests of ICS personnel
  - The ICS has a description of the product flow and full records at each step, including any non-compliant products
  - The conversion period is monitored and documented by the ICS
  - A mechanism to enforce corrective actions by group members and remove non-compliant group members from the list as well as non-conforming products from the supply stream is in place and is executed by the ICS
  - All internal control documentation is in place: appropriate maps/sketches, a complete list of group members, farm/field and processing records, signed member agreements, yield estimates
  - Annually execution and documentation by the ICS of internal inspections of all members
  - New group members are only included after inspections by the ICS
  - Appropriate handling of non-compliances according to a documented system of sanctions
  - Adequate records of the internal inspections have been maintained by the ICS
  - Understanding of the group members with regard to the Bio Suisse Standards
  - Excerpted, translated, or otherwise interpreted versions by the ICS of the Bio Suisse Standards cover adequately all relevant aspects of production
- The external inspection includes an assessment of risks to organic integrity within the group and the environment in which it functions.
- External inspection of a sample of group members to assess the effectiveness of the ICS. The sample shall be selected based on a combination of risk-based and random selection.

If only part of the group applies for BIOSUISSE ORGANIC, the share of BIOSUISSE ORGANIC farmers to be inspected externally is calculated as follows: The same percentage of BIOSUISSE

ORGANIC farmers from the whole group has to be used to determine the percentage of BIOSUISSE ORGANIC farmers to be inspected externally.

**All large farms (> 25 hectares of cultivated area) must be inspected annually by the external inspection body.**

- To conduct the external inspection with the relevant ICS documents to hand.
- To compare the results of the internal control with the results of the external inspection.
- To perform and evaluate witness audits of internal control inspections.
- The entire group shall be held responsible for the compliance of all farmers.
- The external inspection body needs to have a clear sanctions policy in case of non-compliance by the group and/or its members. Failure by the ICS to detect and act upon non-compliances shall result in sanctions being imposed on the group as a whole.
- Certification shall not be granted or shall be revoked if the ICS is not functioning properly or is systematically failing.

## 2. Producer groups without an internal control system

### 2.1 Definition

These producer groups are not inspected and certified by means of an internal control system.

### 2.2 Requirements

- Members of a producer group without an internal control system who are put forward for certification according to Bio Suisse standards must fully meet the Bio Suisse requirements.
- Members of a producer group without an internal control system must all be individually inspected by the certification body on an annual basis. The ICB 'Checklist for producer groups' (excel-file) may thereby be filled out and submitted.

## 3. Simplified certification of smallholder groups

### 3.1 Definition

Bio Suisse aims to ease market access for smallholder groups and to give them an advantage over large farming operations. Smallholder groups in developing countries within and outside of Europe (according to the OECD/DAC list) or subgroups of the same can therefore apply for simplified certification. The advantage of simplified certification is that Bio Suisse conditions need not be completely met. Smallholder groups with or without ICS can benefit from simplified certification.

**Smallholder groups are producer groups that meet the following criteria:**

- At least 50% of the farmers have 0 to 5 ha of utilised agricultural area (UAA).
- At least 70% of the farmers have 0 to 10 ha of utilised agricultural area.
- At least 95% of the farmers have less than 25 ha of utilised agricultural area (whereby the yield obtained by farmers who have more than 25 ha of utilised agricultural area does not comprise more than 25% of the producer group's total yield).

Dividing operations into smaller operating units for the purpose of meeting the Bio Suisse definition of smallholder groups is not permissible.

At the request of the inspection body, the acreage of the crop to be certified can be used as a basis for calculating the composition of the smallholder group rather than the utilised agricultural area.

At the request of the certification body and in justified cases, exemptions may be granted from the requirements regarding the sizes of the operations in the group as specified above.

### 3.2 Requirements

**Smallholder groups may apply for simplified certification if the following requirements are met:**

- The group is a smallholder group as defined by Bio Suisse.
- They must produce raw products that are approved for simplified certification according to the following list. The group may apply to Bio Suisse for a derogation for products that are not included on the list.
  - Fruits that cannot be cultivated or cannot be cultivated in sufficient quantities in Europe or Mediterranean countries due to the climate (as per “Priority for fresh products from Europe and Mediterranean countries” Bio Suisse Standards Part V, Art. 2.1.3, Page 298”)
  - dates, figs
  - nuts
  - spices, medicinal plants, herbs
  - coffee, cocoa
  - quinoa, amaranth, sesame, rice, chia
  - sugarcane
- All cash crops grown by the group must be grown organically. The production area for the products for which certification according to Bio Suisse standards is sought must be inspected and certified in accordance with EU organic regulations (or equivalent). At a minimum, animal husbandry corresponds with Bio Suisse’s minimum requirements for animal husbandry for farms outside of Europe. Cash crops are crops that are mainly grown in order to be sold. If more than 50% of the harvest is destined for personal use, then it is a self-sufficiency crop.
- Members of the group for which an application for simplified certification is made must not cultivate high conservation value areas that were cleared after 1994 (e.g., primary or secondary forest older than 15 years).
- The segregation of the products during harvesting, processing and trading as well as the complete traceability of products produced by members of the group for which an application for simplified certification is made must be ensured.
- **The requirements for ICS-inspections under point 1.2 also apply for simplified certification!**
- Smallholder groups are not obligated to satisfy the biodiversity quality requirements (in accordance with “Requirements regarding the quality of areas dedicated to the enhancement of biodiversity” in the Bio Suisse Standards Part V, Art. 4.2.3.2, Page 329).
- Smallholder groups are not obligated to satisfy the requirement that 5% of the utilised agricultural area planted with oil palms must be used for innovative, diversified cultivation systems (in accordance with “Cultivation of oil palms (*Elaeis guineensis*) and primary processing of oil palm fruit” in the Bio Suisse Standards Part V, Art. 4.3.4, Page 333).