

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

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

1.2 Requirements

- Such producer groups are inspected and certified according to the specifications set out in the 'Guidelines on imports of organic products into the European Union'. 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.
- Dividing farming operations into smaller management units with a view to meeting the specifications of the 'Guidelines on imports of organic products into the European Union' is not permissible.
- 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).
- **New requirements for ICS-inspections:** Farmer groups with ICS have higher risks, which is the result of a FiBL study from 2019 (Group Certification - Internal Control Systems in Organic Agriculture: Significance, Opportunities and Challenges. Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), Frick). **ICB AG has therefore decided to use the more comprehensive IFOAM guidelines as a basis for ICS inspections** (https://www.ifoam.bio/sites/default/files/ifoam_norms_july_2014_t.pdf).

Requirements for ICS-inspections as of 2020 (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:
 - Presence and correct filing of internal documentation by the ICS
 - Annually execution and documentation of all internal inspections
 - New group members are only included after inspections by the ICS
 - Appropriate handling of non-compliances
 - Understanding of the group members with regard to the Bio Suisse Standards
 - Compliance of any internal version of the Bio Suisse Standards with the official version
- The 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.
- 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

Such producer groups are not inspected and certified by means of an internal control system and cannot be classified as smallholder groups according to the Bio Suisse definition.

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' 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 own 0 – 5 ha of agricultural land.
- At least 70% of the farmers own 0 – 10 ha of agricultural land.
- At least 95% of the farmers own less than 25 ha of agricultural land (whereby the yield obtained by farmers who own more than 25 ha of agricultural land does not comprise more than 25% of the producer group's total yield).

At the request of the certification 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 total acreage of the agricultural land.

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

Smallholder groups may be inspected and certified by means of an internal control system, but this is not a mandatory requirement.

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 listed in the positive list of 'Fresh products from overseas'
 - 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. Animal husbandry must at least meet the Bio Suisse minimum requirements for animal husbandry on operations outside of Europe. Cash crops are those 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).
- 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 new requirements for ICS-inspections under point 1.2 also apply for simplified certification!**