



**CONSEIL DES  
APPELLATIONS**  
RÉSERVÉES ET DES TERMES VALORISANTS

## **Manual of specifications for organic agriculture in Québec**

### Appendix 1:

#### Transition of a crop farm to the organic production method

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**Version: 4.2.**

**Last version of the requirements: December 12, 2018**

**Last editorial update: August 5, 2021**

**Date of entry into force: October 1, 2021**

## Introduction

Transition of a crop farm to organic production involves a series of steps undertaken by the operator of a non-organic production system to implement management practices that comply with the requirements of the CARTV-approved certification reference manual for the designation “organic.”

The manual of specifications governing the use of the designation “organic” in Québec constitutes a framework for certification based on the Canadian national standards for organic agriculture published by the Canadian General Standards Board<sup>1</sup>. When these standards are referred to in this document, the term “Canadian Organic Standard” is used.

Transition of an agricultural operation to organic production is subject to a minimum period during which the resulting products must not be labelled as organic or bear an organic compliance logo.

This appendix to the manual of specifications for the designation “organic” provides details about the length of the transition period to organic production for agricultural operations. Specific rules that apply to waiting periods cover the following points:

- Fields to be used to grow organic plant products;
- Operations (farms) that administer an organic management system;
- Processing of an application for organic certification by an accredited certification body.

## Definitions of terms used in this document

*Fallow:* An area of land left unseeded, uncultivated and unharvested for at least three years.

*Field:* An area of land used for cultivation.

*Initial application for certification:* An application for certification from an operation that holds no valid or suspended organic certification and is not registered with an accredited certification body, regardless of whether or not it was in the past.

*Land:* An area made up of cultivable fields.

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<sup>1</sup> The Canadian standards on organic agriculture are the following : CAN/CGSB-32.310, CAN/CGSB-32.311 and CAN/CGSB-32.312.

## **1. Agricultural land used for organic agriculture**

In order for a field to qualify for organic production, no prohibited substances must have been applied to it for at least 36 months before the harvest of any product to be certified compliant with Canadian Organic Standard.

Prohibited substances are those listed in Section 1.4 of *General Principles and Management Standards - CAN/CGSB-32.310*, and substances not listed in CAN/CGSB-32.311, *Organic Production Systems - Permitted Substances Lists*.

## **2. Minimum period during which an agricultural operation (farm) must carry out its operations in accordance with the standard**

All the requirements of the Canadian Organic Standard must be fully implemented in production unit(s) belonging to a farm for at least 12 months before the first harvest of products to be certified compliant with the Canadian Organic Standard. Full implementation of the requirements requires actively managing a production system, and not simply avoiding the use of prohibited substances and keeping certain records.

Only products grown in fields that qualify for organic production in accordance with Section 1 of this document are eligible for organic certification at the end of the transition period to which the operation is subject.

A business that operates a site alongside fields that qualify for organic production and fields that do not qualify for organic production must aim at a complete transition to organic production following the granting of initial certification. Therefore, the operator can “temporarily” maintain, at the same time as its organic production system, a non-organic production system (split operation), which must be entirely separate and specifically identified pending its incorporation into the overall transition process. Maintaining the production of organic and non-organic varieties of plants or identical species is prohibited in the same production unit.

Parallel production is allowed only in the following cases: perennial crops (already planted), agricultural research facilities, production of seed, vegetative propagating materials and transplants. In such cases, the operator must demonstrate that the identity of the crops can be maintained from the production stage through to the marketing stage.

This parallel production exception must meet the requirements of Section 5.1.5 of the *CAN/CGSB 32.310* standard.

### **3. Processing of an application for organic certification by an accredited certification body**

#### **3.1. Period required before certification is granted by a certification body**

Initial applications for organic certification for unprocessed plant products must be submitted to an accredited certification body within the time limits indicated in the appendix table.

During that period of time, full compliance with this standard will be assessed by the certification body.

#### **3.2. Registration of a field as an organic production area**

When a certification body receives an application for certification, its responsibility is to verify that the area to be used for organic crops by the applicant operator complies with requirements, and to register the fields to be used for organic production. These steps must be documented.

All operators must be able to prove to the certification body that, for a minimum of 36 months before the first harvest, no prohibited substance listed in Section 1.4 *General Principles and Management Standards - CAN/CGSB-32.310*, or any substance not listed in CAN/CGSB-32.311, *Organic Production Systems - Permitted Substances Lists*, has been applied to the fields that it intends to use for organic crops.

Fields that are left fallow and intended to be replanted are exempt from this proof if they had been lying fallow for at least 36 months.

Note that a field cannot be certified organic by a certification body. Only the products that are harvested there can be certified, provided that all production requirements are met. The compliance certificate must therefore indicate the products but may include an appendix that identifies each field registered as an organic production area associated with the products grown there.

### 3.3. Certification of products from fields added to operations registered with a certification body

Pursuant to Section 63 of the Act Respecting Reserved Designations and Added-Value Claims, in order for its agricultural products to be certified organic, an operator must be registered with an accredited certification body.

An operator already registered with an accredited certification body may expand its operation by adding new fields either by means of acquisition or lease.

- **A. Operator having organic certification**

When an operator that already has organic certification for products it grows adds new fields to its operation, the products harvested in these added fields are eligible for certification if either of the conditions numbered (i) or (ii) below is met.

- **B. Operator whose operation is in transition and has no organic certification**

When an operator registered with an accredited certification body adds fields to an operation that is in transition to organic production, products harvested in these fields are eligible for certification at the end of the period required for the products from the entire operation to be certified organic, provided that either of the following conditions is met.

- i. If these fields were already cultivated, the operator transferring the right to use them holds organic certification granted by an accredited certification body and these fields were included in the area of organic production recognized by the said body.
- ii. The operator adding these fields can prove to the certification body that, for a minimum of 36 months **prior to the expected date of the next harvest**, no prohibited substance listed in Section 1.4. *General Principles and Management Standards - CAN/CGSB-32.310*, and no substance not listed in CAN/CGSB-32.311, *Organic Production Systems - Permitted Substances Lists*, has been applied to the fields that it is adding to its operation.

### **3.4. Certification of products from operations acquired by companies based on their respective statuses**

An operation registered with an accredited certification body may change ownership following its sale to another business or transfer to one or several members of its staff or family.

Regardless of whether or not the new owner (the entity that obtains control over the business) has other agricultural operations that have organic certification, products from the operation that has undergone a change of ownership are not eligible for organic certification a) unless the operation already had organic certification or b) if the operation is in a transition period, until the end of the period required for products from the entire operation to be certified organic.

Products resulting from harvests from an operation that has undergone a change of ownership cannot be certified organic unless a) the production system (organic management practices, operating procedures, production methods and type) of the operation has been maintained by the new owner (in accordance with the organic compliance management plan submitted by the previous owner) and b) the accredited certification body with which the operation is registered finds, after reassessment, that the production system remains compliant with the manual of specifications for organic production.

If an operator that already manages an agricultural operation without organic certification takes control over an operation whose products are organic, it cannot sell these products as organic unless it maintains the organic production system implemented by the previous owner. If, on the other hand, this new owner merely makes the cultivated fields it has acquired part of its own operation without maintaining the organic production system, it must submit an initial application for organic certification to an accredited certification body within the time limits indicated in Section 3.1 of this document and wait until the end of the mandatory waiting period before selling products from these fields as organic.

**Appendix: Periods required before a certification is granted**

	<b>Crop or harvest type</b>	<b>Deadline for filing the application for certification</b>	<b>Number of inspections required before granting certification</b>
<b>Agricultural operation that holds no organic certification</b>	Field crops or crops that are grown in greenhouses with an in-ground permanent soil system (Regulation 344(3))	At least 15 months before the date on which the product is expected to be marketed	At least two inspections during two consecutive growing seasons
	Maple products (Regulation 344(3))		
	Wild crops within the meaning of CAN/CGSB-32.312	At least 15 months before the date on which the product is expected to be marketed	At least two inspections during two consecutive years of production
	Aquaculture products with a production cycle of more than 12 months (32.312)		
	Aquaculture products with a production cycle of 12 months or less (32.312)	At least 12 months before the date on which the product is expected to be marketed	At least one inspection before the date on which the product is expected to be marketed
	Any other food product (Regulation 344(3))	At least 12 months before the date on which the product is expected to be marketed	At least one inspection before the date on which the product is expected to be marketed