



Specification Manual Related to Products Carrying Descriptive Labelling Referring to Organic Production Method

Part 2 - Transition of a crop farm to the organic production method

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Introduction

The transition of a crop farm to the organic production method is the result of 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 organic designation.

The CARTV-approved organic certification reference manual corresponds to the National Standard of Canada on Organic Production Systems: *General Principles and Management Standards CAN/CGSB 32.310* and *Permitted Substances Lists CAN/CGSB 32.311*. When this standard is referred to in this document, the term “Canadian Organic Standards” is used.

The transition of an agricultural operation to the organic production method is subject to a minimum period during which the resulting products cannot be labelled as organic or bear an organic compliance logo.

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

- Fields used to grow organic plant products;
- Operation (farm) that manages an organic management system;
- Processing of an organic certification application by an accredited certification body.

The definitions of certain terms used in this document are as follows:

- *Agricultural Operation*: Farm, company or organization that produces or prepares an organic product; an operation may have multiple production units.
- *Audit*: Systematic, independent and documented process for objectively assess that certification requirements are met. The audit of an organic production system shall include desk audit of the documentation (including the organic compliance management plan submitted by the operator) and an inspection of the operation site.
- *Fallow*: An area of land left unseeded and uncultivated for at least three years.
- *Field*: An area of land used for farming.
- *Initial certification application*: A certification application from an operation that does not hold any valid or suspended organic certification and that is not registered with an accredited certification body, regardless of whether or not it was in the past.
- *Land*: An area made up of cultivated fields.
- *Operation site*: Specific geographical location where an operator’s activities are concentrated and where it uses land, facilities and equipment to carry out a category of operations producing organic products.
- *Production unit*: Identifiable portion of an operation in which production or preparation of an organic product occurs. A field is a type of production unit.

1 Agricultural land used for organic agriculture

In order for a field to qualify for organic production, it must not have received prohibited substances for at least 36 months before the harvest of any product to be certified compliant with the Canadian Organic Standards.

Prohibited substances are those listed in Section 1.4., *General Principles and Management Standards - CAN/CGSB-32.310*, as well as the 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 Standards must be fully applied on the production unit(s) that belong to a farm for at least 12 months before the first harvest of products to be certified compliant with the Canadian Organic Standards. Full implementation of the requirements involves actively managing a production system and not just avoiding the use of prohibited substances and filing certain records by the operator.

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.

An enterprise that operates a site alongside fields that qualify for organic production and fields that do not qualify for organic production shall aim at a complete transition of its production to the organic production method following the granting of initial certification. In order for the field to be qualified for organic production, the transition time cannot exceed three years. Therefore, the operator can “temporarily” maintain, at the same time as its organic production system, a non-organic production system (split operation) that shall 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 on the same production unit.

Parallel production is only allowed in the following cases: perennial crops (already planted), agricultural research facilities, production of seed, vegetative propagating materials and transplants.

In such cases, the operator shall 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 organic certification application by an accredited certification body

3.1 Period required before certification is granted by a certification body

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

During that period of time, the full compliance of this standard will be assessed by the certification body. When the application must be submitted at least 15 months before marketing products, this assessment must at least include one inspection of the production system during production in the year before plant products are eligible for certification and one inspection during production in the year plant products are eligible for certification.

3.1.1 Registration of a field as an organic production area

It is the certification body's responsibility to confirm that the area that will be used for organic crops on a given operation site is compliant with requirements and register the fields used for organic production associated with the operation registered in the certification application. This proof must be in the form of documentation.

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 and that must be registered by the certification body.

Agricultural products grown in any field for which proof cannot be provided by the operator using appropriate documentation will be eligible for certification only when they have been harvested at least 36 months following the initial date of the certification application. Fields belonging to fallow land and intended to be replanted are exempt from this proof if the length of time they were lying fallow is equivalent to at least 36 months before the marketing of products grown there.

Note that a field cannot be certified organic by a certification body. Only the products that are harvested there can be certified if all of the 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.

3.1.2 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 agricultural products to be certified organic, an operator must be previously 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, lease or otherwise.

- **Operator that holds 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 one of the following conditions is met:

- a) If these fields are already cultivated, the operator that releases the usage right holds valid organic certification granted by an accredited certification body and these fields were included in the area of organic production recognized by the said body.
- b) The operator that adds these fields can 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 is has added to its operation.

- **Operator whose operation is in the process of transition and that does not hold any organic certification**

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

- a) If these fields are already cultivated, the operator that releases the usage right 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.
- b) The operator that adds these fields can 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 is adding to its operation.

3.1.3 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 company or transfer to one or several members of its staff or family.

Regardless whether or not the new acquiring company - namely, the entity that obtains control over the acquired company - has other agricultural operations that have organic certification, products from the operation subject to a change of ownership are only eligible for organic certification if the said operation already has organic certification or at the end of the period required for products from the entire operation to be certified organic, if the operation is currently in a transition period.

It should be noted that products resulting from harvests from an operation that is subject to a transfer of ownership may only be certified organic if the production system (labour, organic management practices, operation procedures, methods and equipment, harvested products) of the operation has been maintained the same (according to the organic compliance management plan submitted by the previous owner) or improved by the new owner, while continuing to be considered compliant with the requirements of the organic certification reference manual following the revaluation of the accredited certification body with which the operation is registered.

On the other hand, an entity that already manages an operation without organic certification but takes control over an operation whose products are organic cannot sell such products as organic, if it only annexes to its own operation the cultivated fields included in the land that is part of the acquired assets, without maintaining the organic production system implemented by the previous operator active. In this case, the new acquiring company shall submit an initial organic certification application to an accredited certification body within the time limits indicated in Section 3.1 of this document and wait until the end of the required waiting period before selling products from these fields as organic.

Appendix: Periods required before a certification is granted

	Type of harvest	Deadline for filing the certification application	Number of audits required before granting certification
Agricultural operation that does not hold any organic certification	Plant crops in soil (greenhouse or field) on land that is already cultivated or lying fallow. (OPR. Art.12(3))	15 months before the day on which the product is expected to be marketed	At least two audits on two consecutive growing seasons
	Maple (or birch) products (OPR. Art.12(3))		
	Seeds and/or vegetative propagating materials on land that is already cultivated or lying fallow (OPR. Art.12(3))		
	Mushrooms cultivated in soil (OPR. Art.12(3))		
	Seaweed and non-cultivated aquatic plants harvested in wild areas (32.312)	At least 15 months before the day on which the product is expected to be marketed	At least two audits on two consecutive growing seasons
	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)	Within 12 months before the date on which the product is expected to be marketed	One inspection in the year aquaculture products are eligible for certification
	Plant crops in containers (OPR. Art.12(1))	Within 12 months before the day on which the product is expected to be marketed	At least one audit before the day on which the product is expected to be marketed
	Shoots and sprouts (OPR. Art.12(1))		
	Mushrooms (OPR. Art.12(1))		
	Wild crops harvesting (OPR. Art.12(1))		

