



Imports of organic products - Guidance

1 Introduction

All products to be labelled as „organic products“ or with analogous definitions must meet the minimum requirements laid down in the Swiss Federal Ordinance on Organic Farming and the Labelling of Organically Produced Products and Foodstuffs (short: Organic Farming Ordinance)¹.

The legal basis to import such products is the Swiss Organic Farming Ordinance, in particular Articles 22 to 24a and 26.

The Federal Department of Economy (FDE) Ordinance on Organic Farming (short FDE Ordinance on Organic Farming)² lays down more in details the requirements of the Organic Farming Ordinance.

- Switzerland recognises the production rules and inspection systems that exist in a number of countries as being equivalent. These countries, the specifications and the respective products are listed in Annex 4 of the FDE Ordinance on Organic Farming.
- Products from any other country can be brought into Switzerland and labelled as organic, provided prior authorisation according to Article 24 of the Organic Farming Ordinance.

A fee of Fr. 300.—shall be levied for the examination of the initial application, Fr. 200.—for the examination of an application to renew an authorization³. It shall be paid only on notification of the decision.

See also: <http://www.blw.admin.ch/themen/00013/00085/00092/index.html?lang=en>

¹ Ordinance on Organic Farming and the Labelling of Organically Produced Products and Foodstuffs (910.18) of 22 September 1997

² Federal Department of Economy (FDE) Ordinance on Organic Farming (910.181) of 22. September 1997

³ Ordinance on fees of the Federal Office for Agriculture (910.11)

2 Step by step guide

Step 1 Registration and inspection of the importer in Switzerland

Importers in Switzerland need to be registered with an approved Swiss certification/inspection body (a list of these certification/inspection bodies is enclosed) and undergo an inspection procedure in order to demonstrate their compliance with the conditions laid down in the Swiss Organic Farming Ordinance and the FDA Ordinance on Organic Farming.

Please contact the certification/inspection body for further information.

Step 2 Import from (A) a country listed on the list of countries or (B) from a country not listed on the list of countries

A List of countries: Imports from a country recognised by Switzerland for the export of organic produce (Annex 4 of the FDA Ordinance on Organic Farming)

Switzerland has recognised that a number of countries operate production rules and inspection systems which are equivalent to those operating in Switzerland. These countries, the products, their certification/inspection bodies issuing the certificates of inspection are listed in the Annex 4 of the FDE Ordinance on Organic Farming.

Imports of the specified organic products into Switzerland are permitted without prior approval from the Swiss authorities.

However, it is compulsory that each consignment of the imported product is accompanied by an inspection certificate according to Article 24a of the Organic Farming Ordinance. See Step 3.

The importer (you) does not need to complete an „Initial Application to market organic products in Switzerland“.

B Import Permits (= Individual authorisations): Imports from countries which have not been recognised by the Swiss authorities for the export of organic produce

You may market in Switzerland organic products from a country not listed in Annex 4 of the FDE Ordinance on Organic Farming provided they have been authorised by the Swiss authorities. The rules for importing produce from these countries are set out in Article 24 of the Organic Farming Ordinance.

Before authorisation is given, you must demonstrate to the Swiss authorities that the products to be imported:

- were produced and prepared according to rules equivalent to those laid down in Chapters 2 and 3 of the Organic Farming Ordinance;
- were subject to an inspection procedure of equivalent effectiveness to those laid down in Chapter 5 of the Organic Farming Ordinance and that inspection measures will be permanently and effectively applied.

To get an authorisation, you must first complete an “Initial Application to market organic products in Switzerland“. Authorisations will not be backdated or granted retrospectively, so it is important that you apply for authorisation well before goods are to be imported.

Please note that your imported products can be marketed as organic only if you have previously received an authorization of the Federal Office for Agriculture. The authorization will normally be valid for one year.

Step 3 Certificate of inspection for the import of products from organic production

Each consignment must be accompanied by a certificate of inspection.

The certificate of inspection must be drawn up by the inspection body or authority in the country of origin (i.e. country of dispatch):

- In the case of imports from countries included in the list of countries: by the certification body or authority responsible for the country, included in the list of countries.
- In the case of imports from countries not included in the list of countries, the body entered in the application for an individual authorization (normally the exporter's certification/Inspection body) is responsible for issuing the certificate.

See also Article 24a of the Organic Farming Ordinance and Chapter 2a of the FDA Ordinance on Organic Farming.

In the case of fresh products, a single certificate of inspection may be issued for all consignments in a calendar week, based on the delivery note (group certificate). The group certificate must be with the importer within 14 days of the last consignment of the relevant calendar week⁴.

The Certificate of inspection has to accompany the goods.

Guidance on how to complete the certificate is available under:

<http://www.blw.admin.ch/themen/00013/00085/00092/index.html?lang=en>

⁴ Art. 16a (4) of the (FDE) Ordinance on Organic Farming 910.181

3 How to complete the application form to import organic products into Switzerland

3.1 General

- The application form may be completed electronically or by typing.
- All applications must bear an original signature.
- Faxed or emailed applications will not be accepted.
- You may apply for more than one product on an application form, **BUT**
A separate form is needed for each third country from which products are to be imported
A separate form is needed for each exporter not having its place of business in the same country (country of origin/dispatch) and not being subject to the same certification/inspection body.
- Applications will not be processed until all the necessary information has been supplied in writing. Applications must not be submitted until all the supporting documentation has been obtained.
- In the case of applications which require a particularly large amount of work from our office, a work-related charge will be levied.
- It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide all of the details and supporting documentation.
- The importer may submit his application to the Federal Office for Agriculture directly or via his certification body.

3.2 Completing Paragraph A: Details of importer, exporter and certification bodies/authorities Details of products

Question 1

You must give details of the following:

- The company name
- The full postal address including postcode and homepage
- The name of a contact (the person dealing with the application), telephone and fax number as well as e-mail address (where available). Reason: We may need to request more information.

Question 2

In order to import products into Switzerland and market them as organic, you *must* be registered with one of the approved Swiss inspection bodies (a list of the inspection bodies is enclosed to this Guidance).

Question 3

You must give details on the company that is exporting the products:

- the company name
- the full postal address, including postcode
- the name of a contact, the telephone and fax number, including international dialling code of the contact as well as the contact's e-mail address (where available)
- The date of the last inspection of the exporter.

Question 4

You must give the following details:

- the name of the inspection body of the exporter
- the full postal address, including postcode
- the name of a contact, the telephone and fax number, including international dialling code of the contact as well as the contact's email address (where available)
- Proof of ISO65/EN 45011 compliance.

Please enclose to your application a confirmation of a third party that the inspection body is fulfilling the requirements of ISO 65 / EN 45011. Usually this will be an accreditation certificate, but it also might be a certificate issued by a competent authority supervising the inspection body in the exporting country.

Note:

Please also attach to your application an explanation of the exporter's inspection body how equivalence of the production rules and inspection measures is assessed by this body for the prior preparation/processing and agricultural production of the organic product. This point is of particular relevance if different inspection bodies in the third country/countries are involved (see also questions 8 to 20).

Question 5

You must give details on the following:

- the name of the body responsible for issuing the Certificate of inspection.

Completing „Details of product(s)“

Question 6

Give the name of the country from which the organic products are to be imported. A separate form must be used for each country of origin from which organic products are to be exported.

Question 7

In the column marked *Product description* you must list the product(s) to be imported into Switzerland.

- You should not use the name by which the product is to be marketed, but rather the description of the composition of the product. For example, "Grandma's traditional cornflakes" should be described as „toasted flaked corn“.
- **Only for unprocessed agricultural products from plant origin:** you must give the scientific name of the species for non-home-grown plants.
- In the column marked *Estimated quantity imported annually*, you must give an estimate of the quantities of each product that you expect to import each year.
- In the column marked *Description* you must tick four of the nine listed product descriptions (e.g. if the product is a prepared conversion product with only one ingredient you tick *C, P, M, and HC*).
- If the product is from a partially converted holding Annex 2 has to be filled and sent in together with the application.
- If you are importing a product that is composed of more than one ingredient, you must give details of its composition either in a special enclosure or in Annex 3.

Example: If you intend to import „various herbs and spices“, you must list the name of each herb and spice (like basil, dill, parsley, cardmom/*Elettaria cardamomum* (L.) Maton) in a special enclosure or in Annex 3 of this Guidance.

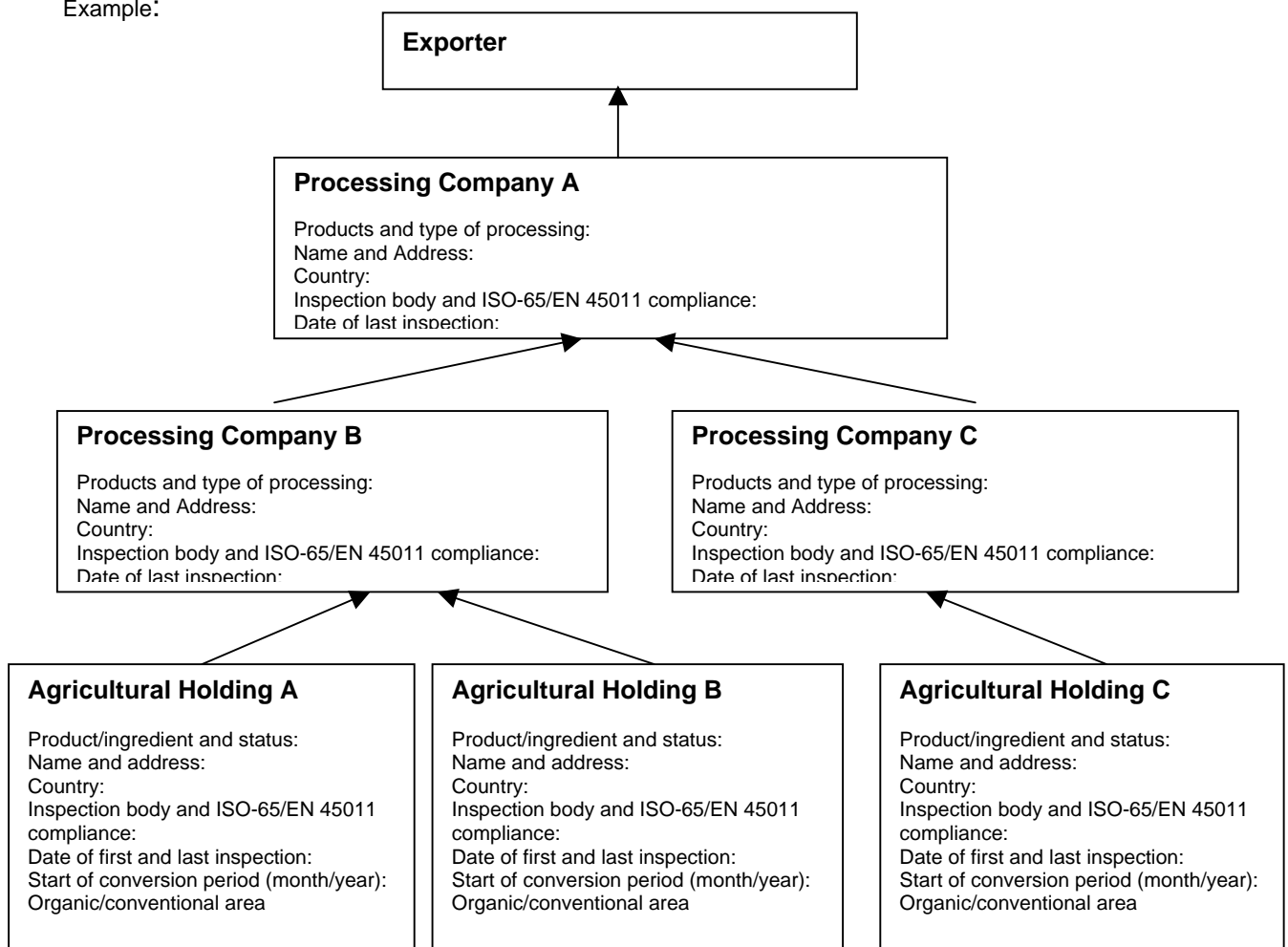
**3.3 Completing Paragraph B:
Details of the preparation/processing and agricultural
production unit(s) Declarations**

If there have been two to three preparation/processing companies involved in the processing of the organic product/s you wish to import into Switzerland, please copy Points 8 to 10 and fill them out accordingly.

If there have been two to five agricultural production holdings involved in the production of the organic product/s you wish to import into Switzerland, please copy Points 11 to 13 and fill them out accordingly.

If there have been more than three preparation/processing companies resp. more than five agricultural production holdings involved, you do not have to answer questions 8 to 10 resp. 11 to 13. In this case, please attach a flowchart containing the necessary information and indicating the product flow from agricultural production to export.

Example:



Details of the (last) preparation/processing unit(s)

You do not have to fill in points 8 to 10 if you have attached a flowchart.

Questions 8

In this section you must give details if the products are going to be processed or prepared in any way (including packing and labelling).

In the column marked *Name and address* you must give details of the plant or unit where the products are to be prepared or processed. In many cases it will be the same place as the holding where it was produced. You must give the full address.

In the column marked *Products and type of processing* you must give the respective products and specify the processing process and the product in this particular plant or unit.

In the column marked *Date of last inspection of the preparation/processing unit(s)*, you must specify when the holding was last inspected its inspection body.

Question 9

You must give details of the inspection body of the preparation/processing unit(s).

Please tick the corresponding box if the inspection body for the processing/preparation unit(s) is the same as for the exporter. In this case you do not need to fill in further information.

In all other cases, please specify the name and address and its proof of ISO 65/EN 45011 compliance. Please also attach the confirmation or accreditation certificates for the body as available.

Question 10

If the production rules (organic standards) and inspection measures applied in the specific country are different to those laid down in the Swiss Organic Farming Ordinances or in Regulation (EEC) 2982/91 as amended, please tick the corresponding box. Please provide a list of the differences with regard to the production rules and inspection measures concerning processing/preparation. This might be done by contacting the inspection body of the exporter.

If you meet other official production/inspection rules for the organic farming, please give the respective names.

Details of agricultural production unit(s)

You do not have to fill in points 11 to 13 if you have attached a flowchart.

Question 11

You must give details of the agricultural production unit.

In the box marked *Name and address* you must give details of the unit where each of the products were grown/produced.

In the box marked *Beginning of conversion*, you must specify the date when the conversion period for land certified for organic production started. All land used for organic production must have undergone a controlled conversion period of at least two years (beginning before sowing for annual crops). Please note that the Swiss Ordinance for Organic Farming does not recognise reduced conversion periods (as e.g. a recognised soil cultivation before the conversion).

In the box marked *Organic and conventional area*, you must give the area of the land on the entire holding which is certified for organic production and the one which is managed conventionally. Please give the area in hectares.

In the columns marked *Date of first inspection of the production unit(s)* and *Date of last inspection of the production unit(s)*, you must specify when the holding was first and when it was last inspected by its inspection body.

In the box *Products produced* you must list the products produced by the specific agricultural production unit. The box must only be filled out if there is more than one production unit and more than one product.

Question 12

You must give details of the inspection body of the particular agricultural production unit.

Please tick the corresponding box if the inspection body for the agricultural production unit is the same as for the exporter. In this case you do not need to fill in further information.

In all other cases, please specify the name and address and ist proof of ISO 65/EN 45011 compliance. Please also attach the confirmation or accreditation certificates for the body as available.

If the first inspection was not carried out by the current inspection body, please give the name and address of the body that carried out the inspection.

Question 13

If the production rules (organic standards) and inspection measures applied in the specific country are different to those laid down in the Swiss Organic Farming Ordinance and in Regulation (EEC) 2092/91 as amended, please tick the corresponding box. Please provide a list of the differences with regard to the production rules and inspection measures concerning agricultural production. This might be done by contacting the inspection body of the exporter.

If you meet other official production/inspection rules for the organic farming, please give the respective names.

If a co-operative, a grower group or contract growers produce the products, you must tick the Yes box and fill in Annex 1.

Details to Enclosures

Question 14

This gives you an overview to the possible enclosures. Please indicate which documents you enclose to the application by ticking the corresponding box.

Details to Declarations

Questions 15 and 16

Once you have read these guidance notes and completed your application form, please send it **unsigned** either via e-mail, fax or mail to the inspection body of the exporter. This inspection body must complete the application form and stamp and sign the declaration (point 15). Afterwards, the inspection body of the exporter returns an original application form (no photocopy) to you.

Finally, please sign and date the declaration in point 16 and send the application form to

Federal Office for Agriculture, Promotion of Quality and Sales Section, CH-3003 Berne (Switzerland).

Please attach all the necessary supporting documentation. We advise you to keep a copy of your application for future reference.

Completing Annex 1 – Grower Groups

This Annex should only be completed if grower groups of smallholder producers are involved in the agricultural production.

We recommend to contact the relevant inspection body to obtain the necessary information.

Question 17

Please specify the type of the grower group. Tick the corresponding box or give a detailed explanation.

The number of small-scale farmers in the group at the date of last inspection must be indicated.

Question 18

Question 18 covers different aspects of a so-called internal control system (ICS), if a grower group is involved. Prerequisite for this is that either all small-scale farmers have been inspected by an inspection body or an internal control system has been introduced and implemented in the grower group. The typical documentation of an internal control system consists of contracts between each farmer and the group, descriptions for all farms, that produce organically within the co-operative, furthermore internal inspection reports and a documentation of the internal sanctions, that are applied to farms which do not (totally) satisfy the requirements. All small scale farms must be internally controlled at least once a year. The external inspection body checks the documentation and effectiveness of this system and selects a spot check of farms for inspection. The quota of the inspected farms depends, among other reasons, on the quality of the internal control.

Please tick the corresponding box. The inspection reports must be made available to our office on request.

Question 19

Please specify the number and the percentage of small scale farmers inspected externally at the date of last inspection.

Please tick the corresponding box. The inspection reports must be made available to our office on request.

4 How to complete an application to renew an authorisation to market organic products in Switzerland

- If the import authorisation is expired since more than one year, a new Initial Application has to be submitted.
- The application form to renew the import authorisation has to be completed analogous to points 1, 4, 15 and 16 of the Initial Application.
- In case of major changes to the Initial Application or to a former Application to renew, the Application to renew as well as the form „In case of major changes: Additional Information to the Initial Application or to the Application to Renew the import authorisation“ have to be completed with the necessary data and submitted.
- Sign and date the declarations and send the application to renew and if necessary the form with the additional information to our office (address mentioned above).

Please also attach all the necessary supporting documentation

5 How to proceed in case major changes have occurred to an initial, not yet expired application

Please complete the necessary data in the form „In case of major changes: Additional information to the initial application or to the application to renew the import authorisation“, sign and date the declarations and send the form to our office (address mentioned above).

Please attach all the necessary supporting documentation.

Enclosure: List of the approved Swiss inspection bodies

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