



AUG 23 2002

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Agricultural
Marketing
Service

STOP 0201 – Room 3071-S
1400 Independence Avenue, SW.
Washington, D.C. 20250-0201

Mr. Peter Croft
United Kingdom Register of
Organic Food Standards
Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Area 5F, Ergon House, Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London, ENGLAND SW1P 3JR

Dear Mr. Croft:

The Department of Agriculture (USDA) has recently learned that the United Kingdom Register of Organic Food Standards (UKROFS) is considering revoking, as soon as August 29, 2002, certain import authorizations held by British importers who purchase United States organic agricultural products. I am informed this action is being contemplated by UKROFS based on its understanding that, upon accreditation by USDA's National Organic Program (NOP), USDA accredited certifying agents may not certify organic agricultural products to standards other than those of the USDA's, NOP.

This is not the case. NOP allows production and certification of products to other standards, including European Union (EU) standard, for export (7 C.F.R. 205.307 (c)). USDA accredited certifiers may continue to certify to the private standards which were the basis for the current import authorizations granted by UKROFS.

In addition, U.S. organic certification agents continue to be assessed under USDA's International Organization for Standardization Guide 65 (ISO Guide 65) program. The ISO Guide 65 program is overseen by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). AMS is the competent authority responsible for accrediting all U. S. organic certifiers under the AMS ISO Guide 65 Program. This responsibility includes verifying that all U.S. organic certifiers who participate in ISO Guide 65 can certify to organic standards required by importing countries including those of the EU.

AMS can attest that all AMS-assessed U.S. organic certifiers who certify product exported to the EU Member States comply with the requirements of ISO Guide 65, and that these companies have the expertise and ability to verify that their clients produce in accordance with EEC 2092/91. Qualified AMS auditors conduct all assessments according to ISO Guide 10011-1, Guidelines for auditing quality systems.

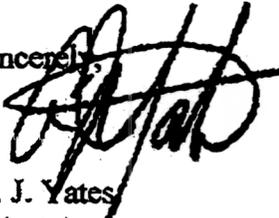
Prior to initial AMS audits, program participants specify to USDA the relevant standards or requirements they will use in the certification of organic agricultural products. These specified standards along with field audits and document reviews form the basis for AMS verification of:

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certification activities by U.S. organic certifiers. The ISO-Guide 65 assessments must be renewed annually and field audits are again performed as a part of the renewal process

We hope this information clarifies the relationship between NOP and ISO-65 accreditation program. If any other information is needed or questions arise concerning AMS accreditation of organic certifiers, please do not hesitate to contact me. We look forward to continuing cooperation with UK authorities on organic trade issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. J. Yates', written over the word 'Sincerely,'.

A. J. Yates
Administrator