

1
2 **Section 3: Principles of Organic Production and Handling**
3

4
5 **3. Principles of Organic Production and Handling**

6 3.1. Organic agriculture is based on holistic production management systems which
7 promote and enhance agro-ecosystem health, including biodiversity, biological
8 cycles, and soil biological activity. Organic agriculture emphasizes the use of
9 management practices in preference to the use of off-farm inputs, taking into
10 account that regional conditions require locally adapted systems. These goals are
11 met, where possible, through the use of cultural, biological, and mechanical
12 methods, as opposed to using synthetic materials, to fulfill specific functions
13 within the system.

14 3.2. Organically produced products are identified under specific and precise
15 standards of production based on the use of ecologically sound production
16 practices, which are intrinsic to the identification and labeling of organic
17 products.

18 3.3. Organic certification is a system of institutionalized trust which allows
19 consumers to identify and reward those who meet organic standards. This
20 requires an informed effort on the part of the producer or handler, and careful
21 vigilance with consistent, transparent decision making on the part of the
22 certification agent.

23 3.4. Organic production systems strive to achieve agro-ecosystems that are
24 ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable.

25 3.5. Organic standards require that each certified organic operator must complete,
26 and submit for approval by a certification agent, an Organic Plan detailing the
27 management of an organic crop, livestock, wild harvest, processing, or handling
28 operation. The Organic Plan outlines the management system that will be used
29 by the operation to comply with the organic standards.

30 3.6. An organic production system is designed to:

31 3.6.1. Maximize biological activity in the soil;

32 3.6.2. Maintain long-term soil fertility;

33 3.6.3. Minimize soil erosion;

34 3.6.4. Maintain or enhance the genetic and biological diversity of the production
35 system and its surroundings;

36 3.6.5. Provide livestock with optimal living conditions for health and well being;

37 3.6.6. Utilize renewable resources in bioregionally based agricultural systems;

38 3.6.7. Recycle materials of plant and animal origin in order to return nutrients to
39 the land, thus minimizing the use of non-renewable resources;

- 40 3.6.8. Promote the environmentally responsible use of soil, water, and air, and
41 minimize agricultural pollution; and
- 42 3.6.9. Become established on an existing farm or field through a period of
43 conversion, designed to allow the agricultural system to adapt to organic
44 production methods and materials.
- 45 3.7. Organic handling practices are based on the following principles:
- 46 3.7.1. Organic processors and handlers must implement organic good
47 manufacturing and handling practices in order to maintain the integrity of
48 organic products through all stages of processing, transport, and storage;
- 49 3.7.2. Organic products must not be commingled with non-organic products,
50 except when combining organic and non-organic ingredients in a finished
51 product containing less than 100% organic ingredients;
- 52 3.7.3. Organic products must not come in contact with prohibited materials;
- 53 3.7.4. Proper records must be kept to verify that the integrity of organic products
54 is protected;
- 55 3.7.5. Organic products should be handled with emphasis on careful processing
56 methods with a goal of maintaining the integrity and quality of the products;
57 and
- 58 3.7.6. Ecologically sound management practices should be a goal of organic
59 handling operations. Efforts should be made to reduce packaging, use
60 recycled materials, and reduce solid, liquid, and airborne emissions
61 produced by handling operations.
- 62 3.8. Organic production and handling operations must comply with all applicable
63 local, state, and federal laws and address food safety concerns adequately.
- 64 3.9. Organic certification, production, and handling systems serve to educate
65 consumers regarding the source, quality, and content of organic foods and
66 products. Product labels must be truthful regarding product name and contents.
- 67 3.10. Genetically engineered/modified organisms (GEO/GMO's), or products
68 produced by or through the use of such organisms, are not compatible with the
69 principles of organic production (either the growing, manufacturing, or
70 processing) and are not permitted under these standards.
- 71 3.11. Organic standards do not allow the use of prohibited materials such as synthetic
72 fertilizers, pesticides, and genetically engineered organisms, but cannot ensure
73 that organic products are completely free of such residues or contaminants, due
74 to background levels of environmental pollutants.
75
76

**GUIDELINES FOR THE PRODUCTION, PROCESSING,
LABELLING AND MARKETING OF ORGANICALLY
PRODUCED FOODS**

(GL 32 – 1999, Rev. 1 – 2001)

FOREWORD

1. These guidelines have been prepared for the purpose of providing an agreed approach to the requirements which underpin production of, and the labelling and claims for, organically produced foods.
2. The aims of these guidelines are:
 - to protect consumers against deception and fraud in the market place and unsubstantiated product claims;
 - to protect producers of organic produce against misrepresentation of other agricultural produce as being organic;
 - to ensure that all stages of production, preparation, storage, transport and marketing are subject to inspection and comply with these guidelines;
 - to harmonize provisions for the production, certification, identification and labelling have organically grown produce;
 - to provide international guidelines for organic food control systems in order to facilitate recognition of national systems as equivalent for the purposes of imports; and
 - to maintain and enhance organic agricultural systems in each country so as to contribute to local and global preservation.
3. These guidelines are at this stage a first step into official international harmonization of the requirements for organic products in terms of production and marketing standards, inspection arrangements and labelling requirements. In this area the experience with the development of such requirements and their implementation is still very limited. Moreover, consumer perception on the organic production

**ORGANICALLY PRODUCED
FOODS**

For further information on the activities of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, please contact:

Secretariat of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
00100 Rome, Italy

Telephone: (+39) 06 57051
Fax: (+39) 06 570 53152/570 54593
Telex: 625852 or 625853 FAO I
E-mail: Codex@fao.org
Web site: www.codexalimentarius.net

Codex publications may be obtained through the worldwide Sales Agents of FAO or by writing to:

Sales and Marketing Group
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
00100 Rome, Italy

E-mail: publications-sales@fao.org



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
Rome, 2001



method may, in certain detailed but important provisions, differ from region to region in the world. Therefore, the following is recognized at this stage:

- the guidelines are a useful instrument in assisting countries to develop national regimes regulating production, marketing and labelling of organic foods;
 - the guidelines need regular improvement and updating in order to take into account technical progress and the experience with their implementation;
 - the guidelines do not prejudice the implementation of more restrictive arrangements and more detailed rules by member countries in order to maintain consumer credibility and prevent fraudulent practices, and to apply such rules to products from other countries on the basis of equivalency to such more restrictive provisions.
4. These guidelines set out the principles of organic production at farm, preparation, storage, transport, labelling and marketing stages, and provides an indication of accepted permitted inputs for soil fertilizing and conditioning, plant pest and disease control and, food additives and processing aids. For labelling purposes, the use of terms inferring that organic production methods have been used are restricted to products derived from operators under the supervision of an certification body or authority.
5. Organic agriculture is one among the broad spectrum of methodologies which are supportive of the environment. Organic production systems are based on specific and precise standards of production which aim at achieving optimal agroecosystems which are socially, ecologically and economically sustainable. Terms such as “biological” and “ecological” are also used in an effort to describe the organic system more clearly. Requirements for organically produced foods differ from those for other agricultural products in that production procedures are an intrinsic part of the identification and labelling of, and claim for, such products.

6. “Organic” is a labelling term that denotes products that have been produced in accordance with organic production standards and certified by a duly constituted certification body or authority. Organic agriculture is based on minimizing the use of external inputs, avoiding the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. Organic agriculture practices cannot ensure that products are completely free of residues, due to general environmental pollution. However, methods are used to minimize pollution of air, soil and water. Organic food handlers, processors and retailers adhere to standards to maintain the integrity of organic agriculture products. The primary goal of organic agriculture is to optimize the health and productivity of interdependent communities of soil life, plants, animals and people.

7. Organic agriculture is holistic production management systems which promotes and enhances agroecosystem health, including biodiversity, biological cycles, and soil biological activity. It emphasizes the use of management practices in preference to the use of off-farm inputs, taking into account that regional conditions require locally adapted systems. This is accomplished by using, where possible, cultural, biological and mechanical methods, as opposed to using synthetic materials, to fulfil any specific function within the system. An organic production system is designed to:

- a) enhance biological diversity within the whole system;
- b) increase soil biological activity;
- c) maintain long-term soil fertility;
- d) recycle wastes of plant and animal origin in order to return nutrients to the land, thus minimizing the use of non-renewable resources;
- e) rely on renewable resources in locally organized agricultural systems;
- f) promote the healthy use of soil, water and air as well as minimize all forms of pollution thereto that may result from agricultural practices;

- g) handle agricultural products with emphasis on careful processing methods in order to maintain the organic integrity and vital qualities of the product at all stages;
- h) become established on any existing farm through a period of conversion, the appropriate length of which is determined by site-specific factors such as the history of the land, and type of crops and livestock to be produced.
8. The concept of close contact between the consumer and the producer is a long established practice. Greater market demand, the increasing economic interests in production, and the increasing distance between producer and consumer has stimulated the introduction of external control and certification procedures.
9. An integral component of certification is the inspection of the organic management system. Procedures for operator certification are based primarily on a yearly description of the agricultural enterprise as prepared by the operator in cooperation with the inspection body. Likewise, at the processing level, standards are also developed against which the processing operations and plant conditions can be inspected and verified. Where the inspection process is undertaken by the certification body or authority, there must be clear separation of the inspection and certification function. In order to maintain their integrity, certification bodies or authorities which certify the procedures of the operator should be independent of economic interests with regard to the certification of operators.
10. Apart from a small portion of agricultural commodities marketed directly from the farm to consumers, most products find their way to consumers via established trade channels. To minimize deceptive practices in the market place, specific measures are necessary to ensure that trade and processing enterprises can be audited effectively. Therefore, the regulation of a process, rather than a final product, demands responsible action by all involved parties.
11. Import requirements should be based on the principles of equivalency and transparency as set out in the Principles for Food Import

and Export Inspection and Certification'. In accepting imports of organic products, countries would usually assess the inspection and certification procedures and the standards applied in the exporting country.

12. Recognizing that organic production systems continue to evolve and that organic principles and standards will continue to be developed under these guidelines, the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL) shall review these guidelines on a regular basis. The CCFL shall initiate this review process by inviting member governments and international organizations to make proposals to the CCFL regarding amendments to these guidelines prior to each CCFL meeting.

SECTION 1: SCOPE

- 1.1 These guidelines apply to the following products which carry, or are intended to carry, descriptive labelling referring to organic production methods:
- a) unprocessed plants and plant products, livestock and livestock products to the extent that the principles of production and specific inspection rules for them are introduced in Annexes 1 and 3; and
 - b) processed agricultural crop and livestock products¹ intended for human consumption derived mainly from (a) above.

¹ CAC/GL 20-1995

² Until lists of ingredients of non agricultural origin and processing aids permitted in the preparation of products of livestock origin are elaborated, competent authorities should develop their own lists.

- 1.2 A product will be regarded as bearing indications referring to organic production methods where, in the labelling or claims, including advertising material or commercial documents, the product, or its ingredients, is described by the terms "organic", "biodynamic", "biological", "ecological", or words of similar intent including diminutives which, in the country where the product is placed on the market, suggests to the purchaser that the product or its ingredients were obtained according to organic production methods.
- 1.3 Paragraph 1.2 does not apply where these terms clearly have no connection with the method of production.
- 1.4 These guidelines apply without prejudice to other Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) provisions governing the production, preparation, marketing, labelling and inspection of the products specified in paragraph 1.1.
- 1.5 All materials and/or the products produced from genetically engineered/modified organisms (GEO/GMO) are not compatible with the principles of organic production (either the growing, manufacturing, or processing) and therefore are not accepted under these guidelines.

SECTION 2: DESCRIPTION AND DEFINITIONS

2.1 DESCRIPTION

Foods should only refer to organic production methods if they come from an organic farm system employing management practices which seek to nurture ecosystems which achieve sustainable productivity, and provide weed, pest and disease control through a diverse mix of mutually dependent life forms, recycling plant and animal residues, crop selection and rotation, water management, tillage and cultivation. Soil fertility is maintained and enhanced by a system which optimises soil biological activity and the physical and mineral nature of the soil as the means to provide a balanced nutrient supply for plant and animal life as well as to conserve soil resources. Production should be sustainable with the recycling of plant nutrients as an essential part of the fertilizing strategy. Pest and disease management is attained by means of the encouragement of a balanced host/predator relationship, augmentation of beneficial

insect populations, biological and cultural control and mechanical removal of pests and affected plant parts. The basis for organic livestock husbandry is the development of a harmonious relationship between land, plants and livestock, and respect for the physiological and behavioural needs of livestock. This is achieved by a combination of providing good quality organically grown feedstuffs, appropriate stocking rates, livestock husbandry systems appropriate to behavioural needs, and animal management practices that minimize stress and seek to promote animal health and welfare, prevent disease and avoid the use of chemical allopathic veterinary drugs (including antibiotics).

10/23/03
T. Hutchinson