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Introduction

What is the Australian Certified Organic Standard?

The Australian Certified Organic Standard (ACOS) 2010 outlines the requirements for marketing produce as certified organic in Australia. The ACOS covers the basic requirements outlined in the Standards Australia Standard for Organic and BioDynamic Products (AS6000-2010), while being a linking document to key international Organic Standards. This creates a uniquely Australian Standard owned and controlled by the Australian organic industry and movement, including mandatory certification – a hallmark of the self-regulated international organic community.

The ACOS is continually being updated and developed via the Biological Farmers of Australia Ltd (BFA) Standards Advisory Group. This Group is made up of industry members from across all main sectors and links in the food chain and technical experts in specific fields, while drawing directly on consumer and grass-roots member input on key decisions made regarding the Standard.

BFA's certification subsidiary Australian Certified Organic (ACO), along with other approved and accredited certification agencies, carry out audits on businesses including producers through to retailers and all links in the chain in-between to ensure that they maintain conformance with this Standard. Businesses in compliance are licensed to display the "Bud" logo on packaging and marketing material which is the purchaser's guarantee that what they are buying is truly organic.

Directing the Standard

Existing Standards from across the world from North America, the EU and Asia, as well as the guidelines of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) and the Codex Alimentarius have been relied upon to ensure that the ACOS remains in step with national and international requirements for trade in organic produce, wherever feasible in the Australian context, or with references to additional requirements for these markets.

The international trading scene for organic products has only grown more complex, and whilst BFA's certification subsidiary, ACO, is one of few certifiers in the world maintaining a high number of accreditations across the continents of the Americas, Europe and Asia, this does not shield exporters from the whims and exacting nuances of those regulations. Those with

an interest in the export market are strongly advised to obtain additional advice on regulatory requirements at both the production and the certification level prior to going down that track.

The ACOS also integrates food safety (Codex, HACCP) and Environmental Management Systems (EMS) requirements. These specifications continue to place operators certified to the internationally compliant ACO certification system clearly in a position of commercial advantage. These latest tools further enhance the ACO certification program in its core aims to deliver produce verified to be produced organically to one of the most stringent ecological, food safe and organic guidelines in the world.

Most importantly the ACOS also contains "regionalised" or regionally appropriate regulatory options for producers where the Australian domestic market is the only marketing requirement. This has been an ongoing feedback from members: to have a practical, regionally appropriate Standard that Australia can call its own. The ACOS is nonetheless still solidly based upon the internationally accepted standards of the organic community, ensuring consumer confidence and producer protection.

This breadth of consultation, and the referencing of regulations affecting organic production across the world, ensures that this standard is a leading international standard, owned by Australians for the Australian context, which can be relied upon with confidence by producers, preparers, handlers, marketers and consumers of certified organic products.

BFA is continually developing the standards with input from you, the stakeholders. In order to keep informed of Standards updates, reports from the BFA Standards Advisory Group may be accessed through BFA's member magazine Australian Organic Producer, and online at www.bfa.com.au

Dr Andrew Monk
Convenor Standards
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Director BFA Ltd

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Background on BFA

Biological Farmers of Australia Ltd (BFA) is Australia's largest representative member based organisation for organic agriculture in Australasia and the South Pacific region. The BFA maintains this status by being the industry's innovator and leader in organic standards issues, employing skilled professionals and proficient technical review and standards personnel, whilst maintaining strong alliances and representation for regional, producer, processor, retailer, consumer and related groupings.

Active in trade promotion and standards setting since the inception of the formalised organic industry in Australia in the 1980s, the BFA is supported by a diverse membership of producers, input manufacturers, processors, wholesalers, retailers, consumers and others with a stake and interest in organic and biodynamic produce from production to consumption.

The BFA is administered by a Board of Directors who are individually elected from and by the membership. Subcommittees or Advisory Groups represent sector interests and report to the GM and Board of the BFA. See www.bfa.com.au for more detail and a history of the BFA and the organic industry.

Australian Certified Organic Pty Ltd (ACO) is a certification subsidiary of BFA. ACO is independently accredited to audit, certify and licence operators for use of the BFA member owned Bud logo, while independently accredited certification programs such

as the small producer scheme of Organic Growers of Australia (OGA) also certify operators for use of the OGA logo, in accord with this standard.

The BFA has access to a list of publications, multi-media resources and information facilities, while facilitating conferences and farm field days to encourage and assist in the conversion of production practices to organic. A register of independent advisers can also be obtained from the national offices.

Douglas Haas
Chairman BFA Ltd



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Scope
 Definitions

1. Scope

- 1.1 This Standard outlines the minimum requirements for certification of organic produce under the ACOS and therefore use of the BFA Bud logo. This Standard outlines the basic requirements for Codex HACCP for safe food production, whilst also listing basic requirements for managing an organic Environmental Management System (EMS) and biodynamic production. This Standard also outlines specifications for allowed inputs and approved products registered under the Bud logo, in Section 9.
- 1.2 This Standard applies to the following products that carry, or are intended to carry, descriptive labelling referring to organic production methods or organic certification:
- unprocessed products from plants, animals, cultured organisms and approved naturally occurring materials; and
 - processed products derived mainly from (a) above.
- 1.3 Products are not compatible with the principles of organic agriculture and are not permitted under this Standard where they are derived from genetic engineering (GE) practices or products, or are treated with ionising radiation for post harvest purposes, or are from nanotechnology products and processes.
- 1.4 Requirements in this Standard are complementary and additional to other health, agricultural, environmental, food and production related regulatory requirements at Commonwealth, State, Territory and other relevant levels. This includes adherence to the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Code Act 1994 and the Agricultural Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Association (APVMA), which prescribes registration and exemption requirements.
- 1.5 This Standard should be read in conjunction with other relevant Standards for those planning to export, and additional auditing and certificates may be required for these markets. Note that for those planning to export, minimum requirements of the importing country also need to be met. Such requirements may be in addition, and sometimes contrary, to those outlined in this Standard. Onus is on the certified operator to ensure that these additional criteria are met for access to those markets.
- 1.6 This Standard is also based upon the guidelines set out by the Codex Alimentarius Commission for the Production, Processing, Labelling and Marketing of Organically Produced Foods (1999) while covering the basic requirements outlined in the AS6000-2010.
- 1.7 This Standard is current from 1st December 2010 until such time as a new edition, or amendments, is released under the authority of the Biological Farmers of Australia. All changes to this Standard which differ from the Australian Organic Standard 2006 and subsequent amendments of the Standard shall be implemented no later than 1st March 2011 without prior request and acceptance from the certification office.
- 1.8 **Disclaimer:** Note should be taken at all times of amendments to this Standard which may occur from time to time. Such amendments will supersede existing respective clauses outlined in this Standard, with time frames for implementation outlined by the Certification Office (CO), and may occur where there are changes to regulatory requirements, technologies or techniques. This is a living Standard; hence the onus is on the operator to ensure that their practices at all times comply with the latest requirements outlined. The BFA and the CO reserve the right to amend this Standard at any time in order to remain compliant with such requirements, whilst also being required to regulate to specific markets which the client may wish to have access – which may entail requirements above or different from the exact details of this Standard.

2. Definitions

ACO: Australian Certified Organic Pty Ltd. This organisation carries out independently accredited auditing, review and certification work which enables the licensing of the Bud logo and reference to certified organic or biodynamic status.

Agricultural Product: Any product or commodity (excluding water, salt and additives), raw or processed, derived from primary production activities, that is marketed for human consumption or animal feed.

Agricultural Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Association: APVMA. Federal organisation regulating the use of agricultural pesticides and livestock treatments for disease and pest control applications.

Allowed (A): Input which may be used within an organically certified system without affecting certification. BFA maintains a formal register of Allowed Inputs (AIs) and Approved Products (APs) which are registered products having been assessed to comply with requirements outlined in this standard for use in organic production systems.

AQIS: Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service – Organic Program. AQIS has an organic program arm which administers the National Standard for Organic and Biodynamic Produce and which accredits certifiers such as ACO to this program.

Audit: A systematic and functionally independent examination, and reporting to a designated review committee, to determine whether activities comply with planned objectives and requirements of relevant Standards. This may include unscheduled audits and gap audits. This is also referred to within the organic industry internationally as an inspection.

Auditor: A person deemed by the certification office to have the expertise and authority to inspect and audit operators in regard to compliance to this Standard for certification purposes.

BFA: Biological Farmers of Australia Ltd. This organisation manages the Australian Certified Organic Standard, being a not for profit group, owned by industry members and those with an interest in the organic sector.

Biodynamic (BD): Production system based upon principles and preparations established by Rudolf Steiner.

Bud logo: The logo owned and registered with IP Australia as a Certification Trade Mark by the BFA which is used on organic and biodynamic products produced in accord with this Standard and licensed by the ACO for use. The Bud logo is Australia's main and most popular organic certification logo and mark.

Catalyst: A substance used in small quantities to accelerate chemical reactions without itself being affected.

Certified: To have been audited and subsequently licensed by an approved and recognised certifier in accordance with the Australian Certified Organic Standard.

Certification Office (CO): Official office of an approved certifier (eg Australian Certified Organic Pty Ltd (ACO)) which maintains licence agreements, coordinates audits and assesses ongoing conformance with the Standard.

Certification Review Committee (CRC): Committee of Australian Certified Organic Pty Ltd (ACO), or equivalent, which uses audit reports and other means to make decisions regarding certification of operations and properties.

Certification Transference: Arrangement between certification bodies regarding recognition of another certification system and certified products as equivalent for handling and marketing as certified organic. See Section 3.8

Competent Authority: A recognised government agency in a given country charged with managing an organic compliance program.

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ANNEXES

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Definitions

Compliance: Actions or outcomes which relate to meeting requirements of this Standard or of the operator's OMP. Non compliance is where such actions or outcomes do not meet specifications of this Standard or the OMP.

Conventional: Primary production or food preparation which does not conform to the Australian Certified Organic Standard.

Conversion: See Organic in Conversion.

Corrective Action Request (CAR): Action required by an operator following a non compliance or systems deviation to ensure ongoing certification and compliance to the Australian Certified Organic Standard. Such actions may be requested by the certifier following noted non conformance to the Australian Certified Organic Standard.

Direct Source Organism: The specific plant, animal or microbe that produces a given input or ingredient, or that gives rise to a secondary or indirect organism that produces an input or ingredient.

Environmental Management System (EMS): A system which aims to manage environmental aspects of the operation. See section 4.7.

Farm Unit: Sections of land fully under the management control of one party or person. There may be more than one farm unit owned and managed by a single party or operator.

FSANZ (Food Standards Australia and New Zealand): Food Authority, which lists Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) for agrichemicals in or on food and fibre and sets food standards. The Australian Certified Organic Standard is in addition to these requirements.

Gap Audit: An audit which assesses areas where the operator may require modification to plans or practices prior to certification or prior to addition of areas or products for certification. Also referred to as a desk audit, such audits may either occur by document review and/or on site assessment.

Genetic Engineering (GE): A set of techniques from molecular biology by which the genetic material of plants, animals, micro-organisms, cells and other biological units may be altered in ways or with results that could not be obtained by methods of natural mating and reproduction or natural recombination. Techniques of genetic modification include, but are not limited to: recombinant DNA, cell fusion, and micro and macro injection. Genetically engineered organisms will not include organisms resulting from techniques such as conjugation, transduction and hybridisation.

Genetically Modified Organism (GMO): A plant, animal, or microbe that is transformed by genetic engineering.

Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP): Management system oriented towards minimising or eliminating hazards posed as part of the production process through means of monitoring and verification. For organic operators, HACCP management implies a system of identification of all significant hazards which may compromise an ability to conform to the Standard for organic production, identifying control points, putting in place management practices which help eliminate or reduce risks associated with those hazards, and then maintaining verification processes to ensure that management practices are effective.

A hazard for some organic producers may be the potential for chemical over-spray from neighbouring farming activities or cross pollination potential from GMO crops. Other hazards may include old dip sites or other potentially contaminated areas which may require fencing off, or management of stock to ensure restriction of access. All significant food safety risks shall also require HACCP based management to be implemented in organic operations.

IFOAM: International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements. IFOAM is the international representative organisation for organic agriculture, whilst also setting the IFOAM Basic Standard (IBS) or IFOAM Norms. In addition IFOAM maintains an accreditation program via the International Organic Accreditation Service (IOAS) which accredits certifiers such as ACO. IFOAM requirements may be driven by market or buyer demands or requirements (in addition to government regulations). Operators need to remain aware of what these requirements are and monitor their own marketing needs.

Ingredients: All products and aids which constitute or are used in the production of a processed or prepared product.

Inputs: Materials which are brought onto the farm unit to assist with production.

Inspection: See Audit.

JAS: The regulatory system applying in Japan and regulated by the Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) called the Japanese Agriculture System – Organic (JAS). Note that the regulatory requirements for this standard and certification program are specified in a separate text which the certified operator must obtain, maintain and ensure compliance to, in order to maintain certification to this regulation,

Labelling: Any words, particulars, trademarks, brand names, names of certifying organisations, pictorial matter or symbols appearing on any packaging, document, notice, label or collar accompanying or referring to a certified organic product.

Land Unit: Section or portion of land as compared with entire farm unit, made up of all land units within the farm.

Level of Reporting (LOR): For pesticide and heavy metal residue tests. <LOR = less than level of reporting.

Licence Agreement: Legally binding contract between the CO and operator pertaining to organic certification.

Licensee: Operator and/or owner of operations covered under the licence for organic certification.

Logo: ACO/BFA distinguishing mark registered with IP Australia.

Manufactured Inputs (MI): Physically compounded inputs allowed by CO under this Standard.

Marketing: Holding or displaying for sale, offering for sale, selling, or placing on the market.

Maximum Permissible Concentration (MPC): Maximum concentrations of given substances (heavy metals) allowed in foods as set out by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), Australia.

Maximum Residue Limit (MRL): Maximum residues of given substances, such as agrichemicals allowed on foods as set by Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ).

Mineral/Mined mineral: A naturally occurring substance formed through geological processes that has a characteristic chemical composition.

Nanotechnology: Nanotechnology includes the intentional manufacture of particles with a size of less than 300 nm in at least one dimension. This does not include the presence in certified organic products of naturally occurring nanoparticles, for example from nanoparticles in volcanic soils, or incidentally produced (non-manufactured) nanoparticles, for example occurring in flour as a by-product of the traditional milling process.

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ANNEXES

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Definitions

Natural: Any material, not otherwise expressly prohibited in this Standard, which has been harvested, mined, or collected, which may be processed without chemical reaction (allowing washing, distilling, grinding/milling, separation and/or concentration of the material by physical (including steam) or biological means) to yield a material that is identifiable in the original source material.

Organic Management Plan (OMP): Management plan which outlines production plans to achieve ongoing conformance with this Standard. This may include identification of key management personnel, fertility, pest and disease management plans, documented recording systems and future on site plans (increasing stock numbers, new crop types, longer term reduction of inputs, etc). Such a plan may include a section based upon HACCP principles (see above) where there are identified potential hazards to the production unit's organic certification.

For primary production this is known as an **Organic Farm Plan (OFP)**. The OFP may outline buffer zone establishment in relation to containing neighbouring chemical over spray risk or potential contamination from GMO crops. Other identified risks may be brought-in manures or other materials which may require residue testing or composting, which would be outlined in such a plan. Such a plan forms the basis of certification and auditing.

For processing, preparation or other handling operations this is known as an **Organic Handling Plan (OHP)**. The OHP would outline management control, audit trail recording systems and related management systems to be implemented or currently practiced to ensure maintenance of certified product authenticity and full conformance with this Standard.

Organochlorines (OCs): Class of conventional agricultural chemicals, typically DDT and Dieldrin, prohibited for use under this Standard and restricted as allowed historic residues on organic farms. See Section 4.8.

Organophosphates (OPs): Class of conventional agricultural chemicals, based upon phosphorus esters, prohibited under this Standard and prohibited as residues on certified organic products. See Section 4.8.7.

Operator: Licensee of organic certification licence responsible for management or for delegation of management for the production unit or units and products listed in the licence agreement.

Organic: Production practices which conform to this Standard for production.

Organic in Conversion: Period of time prior to full "organic" status being given to an operator and farm unit.

Precautionary Principle: Principle which states that where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation. Decisions should be guided by: (i) careful evaluation to avoid wherever practicable, serious or irreversible damage to the environment; and, (ii) an assessment of the risk-weighted consequences of various options.

Pre Certification : Period of time – generally a minimum of 12 months – prior to a certification level being obtained by the operator – for land based primary production systems within Australia. Produce cannot be sold with any reference the wording 'certified organic' in this period.

Preparation: See processing

Preventative Actions: Actions taken to ensure that procedures are in conformance with the Australian Certified Organic Standard.

Primary Ecosystem: Environments that are pristine and have not been disturbed by human activities.

Processing: Operations which may consist of handling, altering, preserving, packaging and labelling of agricultural products.

Production Unit: Farm, processing or other commercial entity operated or managed for the purposes of food, fibre or cosmetics production, preparation or handling.

Prohibited (P): Substances or practices disallowed under this Standard. This standard is a positive list, meaning only those substances listed are allowed for use on certified facilities or farm units.

Quarantine: The isolation of livestock from the certified area of the farm for a given period.

Quarantine Area: A dedicated area of the farm which is used for the purposes of quarantine and/or withholding practices.

Reagent: A substance used to start a chemical reaction.

Restricted (R): Input which may be used on a limited basis with verification required by the user as to its need value.

Standard: In this publication refers to this Australian Certified Organic Standard (ACOS) 2010 and subsequent amendments for organic production preparation and marketing. The Standard defines criteria for assessment for certification.

Sustainable Agriculture: Production system exhibiting resilient ecological and economic characteristics.

Transaction Certificate: Document which accompanies certified goods outlining type of goods, batch number or identification, certification status, etc. See 3.4.3.

Transport Declaration: As for Transaction Certificate - applicable for bulk commodities (e.g. wheat) and livestock. See 3.5.3

USDA NOP: The regulatory system applying in the United States and regulated by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) called the National Organic Program (NOP). Note that the regulatory requirements for this standard and certification program are specified in a separate text which the certified operator must obtain, maintain and ensure compliance to, in order to maintain certification to this regulation. Certification to USDA NOP is available via ACO, being a USDA accredited certifier.

Verification: System of assessment used by the CO for attainment or maintenance of certification. This includes, but is not limited to, the audit system, statutory declarations, testing and records and documents maintained by the operator.

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ANNEXES

HOW TO
USE THE
STANDARD



How to use this standard

Section

3 **General Certification Requirements**

All sectors (from farming to retailing) need to ensure they have followed the procedures for certification outlined in Section 3. Section 3 relates to documentation required, records and management systems, including allowances for labelling and marketing claims for organic.

Section 3 also outlines the requirements for an Organic Management Plan (OMP) for certified operations. See also www.bfa.com.au for templates of OMPs as well as templates for record keeping (which are guides and not mandatory). It is strongly recommended that you conduct an internal audit of your own operation to assure yourself that you are complying with the requirements of prior to your first audit.

4 **Primary Production**

In addition to section 3, all land based primary production operations need to comply with Section 4. This outlines land management requirements, water management, other potential contamination risk management and inputs for farming (see also Annex I which lists products allowed). Please pay attention particularly to section 4.8 – contamination, and to 4.7 – environment. Depending on your type of operation you may need to include some additional aspects in your OMP based upon specifications in these sections.

The BFA also maintains a register of Allowed Inputs which are listed on the BFA website. If your products are likely to be exported you may need to do additional investigation in regard to the specific requirements of the market your product is bound for particularly which inputs are allowed by those countries.

If you wish to be certified to biodynamic (BD) specifications, Annex V outlines the additional requirements for this.

5 **Livestock Operations**

Section 5 outlines requirements for the organic management of livestock, from poultry, dairy, sheep to beef cattle. Also Annex II outlines allowed livestock inputs. There is also a BFA register of livestock treatments which have been approved for use, listed on the BFA website.

Livestock producers must also ensure that the land on which livestock are managed is compliant with Section 4.

If livestock are sent to an abattoir off site, then the abattoir must also be certified and comply with the requirements outlined in Section 6 – Processing.

6 **Processors**

In addition to Section 3 on records, documents and labelling, all processors, from abattoirs to packhouses need to comply with the requirements in Section 6 as well as the Annexes III and IV for allowed ingredients, processing aids and sanitisers.

7 **Non Land Based Production Systems**

There are additional specific requirements in Section 7 for miscellaneous production systems including aquaculture, mushroom production, honey, forestry, seed and seedling production. In some cases, other sections of the Standard are also required to be conformed with such as Section 3 and also Section 4 where referenced, in addition to the Annexes.

8 **Wholesalers and Marketers Including Importers**

Operations which deal in the wholesaling and/or marketing of certified organic products, including retailers and restaurants, need to comply with Section 8 as well as Section 3 and in some cases Section 6 (Processing and Handling).

9 **Input Manufacturers and Approved Products and Services Registration**

The BFA, separately from ACO, maintains a register of (non agricultural) approved products and allowed inputs for agriculture as well as recognised services such as research and development. This is outlined in Section 9. The list of currently registered products can be found at www.bfa.com.au

Certification Requirements: General

