

	AGROLAND SERVICES PRIVATE LIMITED (ASPL)	Doc no.	ASPL-CD-PR-30
		Issue no.	01
	PROCEDURE FOR GROWER GROUP CERTIFICATION PROCESS	Issue date	15.03.2021
		Revision no.	00
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About MS Agroland Services Private Limited (ASPL)

Under the Trade mark AGRO-CERT of MS Agroland Services Pvt. Ltd. having registered office at Delhi and operating / corporate office at Meerut (Uttar Pradesh) . ASPL is offering certification based on the National Standards for Organic Production, USDA NOP, COR (Canadian Organic regime) & (EC) No.834/2007 & 889/2008). For more details visit our website www.agrolandgroup.com or mail to info@agrolandgroup.com

Grower Group inspection & Certification

Grower Groups are organized group of farmers /producers who intend to produce organic products by the organic processes as per the National Standards of Organic Production (NSOP), USDA NOP, COR (Canadian Organic regime) & based on (EC) No.834/2007 & 889/2008).

Organic grower group shall be based on the Internal Control System (ICS) and shall apply to grower groups, farmers’ cooperatives, contract production and small scale processing units. To avail this service, under the NPOP and COR the producer group must have satisfied the criteria as mentioned in Chapter 5 of NPOP and C.12 of COR requirements, and (EC) No.834/2007 & 889/2008) has to be followed

The producers in the group must apply similar production systems and the farms should be in geographical proximity. Individual farms with land holding of 4 ha and above can also be a part of the group but will have to be inspected separately every year by ASPL. The total area of such farms shall be less than 50% of the total area of the group. The grower group shall consist of minimum 25 and maximum 500 farmers and will have to be inspected annually by ASPL and Scope and Transaction Certificates are required to be issued for the ICS to processors and traders to maintain the traceability of the product flow.

ASPL will not do inspection if ICS not conducted 100% internal inspections. The internal inspectors shall carry out at least 1 annual inspection visit to each individual operator including visits to field and facilities. In case the farmer group does not maintain an Internal control system as described in this chapter 5 of the NPOP and C12 of the COR, USDA –NOP and (EC) No.834/2007 & 889/2008) the ASPL shall inspect all the individual farms.

Establishment of the ICS

The ICS will have a registered legal identity and have a constitution of the organization and shall be presented by an organizational chart. The organic grower group shall be established formally, based on written agreements with its members. It shall have central management, established decision procedures and be a legal entity.

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QUALITY MANAGER	COO

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For implementation of the procedures to maintain the internal control system, responsibilities shall be deputized to individual members / committees for carrying out specific activities. Participation in the grower group shall be limited to those members who market their organic production only through the grower group, unless the member is individually certified

Group certification is based on the concept of an Internal Control System comprising of the following

- a) Implementation of the internal control system as per the Organic Standards.
- b) Internal standards developed in local languages.
- c) Risk assessment of the ICS and Farms

ASPL will evaluate by checking the ICS, staff qualifications and inspecting the farms on the basis of the risk assessment. The internal control system shall contain appropriate records including:

- a) Farmer application, agreement with the ICS and land records.
- b) Farm maps , crop maps and overview map (Village or community map) with the description of the farms and the facilities of all members.
- c) production description, production and/or preparation specifications for products to which the application applies.
- d) list of inputs (ingredients and agricultural substances).
- e) A copy of organic management production and/or preparation plans
- f) A complete list of group members (Approved farmer list) .
- g) continuous verification of implementation of the internal inspections and approval committee.
- h) summary of the internal inspection report

NSOP specific requirements:

The ICS application form with farmers is at Annex-1 of chapter 5 of NPOP. In case the farmers cannot run the ICS, they may enter into a contract with an external service provider/ mandatory /trader to facilitate the maintenance of internal control system, training, co-ordination and marketing of certified produce and to facilitate the certification from an ASPL. The ICS contract form is at Annex 2 of chapter 5 of NPOP. The farm of each group member must have been already inspected and approved by the ICS. If needed, a pre-assessment visit will be conducted by ASPL before actual inspection. During external inspection, ASPL evaluates the functioning of the ICS including documentation, personnel and the policies and conducts random inspections (sampling as per section 5.13.2, 5.13.3 of NPOP) of individual farms to check whether they are in accordance with relevant standards or not. The subcontracted units, if any, (e.g., for processing, storage, transport etc.) will also be inspected by ASPL.

COR specific requirements:

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In case of COR the internal control system shall record all nonconformities. The ICS shall require from the operator to respond to the NC report issued by the ICS within 30 working days of its receipt. The response shall either provide evidence of completion of corrective action taken to address each NC or present a plan with milestones as to how each NC will be addressed. This plan shall include a completion date not exceeding 90 working days from receipt of the NCs. The ICS shall accept times greater than those stated for the closure of a NC as long as they are justified and documented. The internal control system shall include a contractual arrangement with each member of the grower group. Adequate number of internal inspectors shall be identified from within the group. The internal inspectors shall be trained and, ensure that potential conflicts of interest are limited.

The management of the grower group shall sign a legally enforceable agreement with ASPL. The management shall obtain signed obligations from all grower group members to comply with the Canada Organic Standards and to permit inspection by ASPL.

The grower group shall have in place an effective and documented internal control system. The grower group shall document and implement an Internal Control System (ICS), with supervision and documentation of production practices and inputs used at each sub-unit, and collected at each production unit, site, or facility to insure compliance with the Canada Organic Regime.

Initial Application

The first step for getting ASPL certification is that the operator (the person responsible for the grower group to be certified) contacts the ASPL office. Upon request ASPL sends a detailed application package including the application form, ASPL procedure for grower group certification and copy of Organic Standards. To apply for certification the operator needs to complete the application form, Grower group operating manual (ICS manual), Documentary proof to show legal status (eg. Registration documents) and submit to ASPL.

Pre-inspection certification procedure

After receiving the filled in application form along with ICS operating manual, documentary proof to show legal status (eg. Registration documents), approved farmer list and OMP, ASPL sends an offer for inspection and certification along with the scale of fees. On accepting the offer, the operator needs the offer fees as advance to ASPL. After receiving initial advance ASPL will perform the application review and informs ICS if any changes, additional requirements needed.

Requirements of NPOP

Once all the additional requirements or changes (if any) are fulfilled ASPL register the ICS in the **Trace net** software of APEDA (Agriculture & Processed food products export development authority, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Govt. of INDIA). After registration the **Trace net** will automatically

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generate user login name and password and sent it to the email ID provided by the ICS in their application form.

After receiving the **Trace net** user login name and password, the ICS should enter the farmer details, crop details and sent it to ASPL through the trace net. The ICS should also conduct two internal inspections as per NSOP and at least 1 inspection in case of COR and enter those details into the trace net .Only after conducting the internal inspection the external inspection by ASPL will be conducted. New operators are included in the group after the internal inspections are completed.

Inspection

Once the Pre inspection procedures as mentioned above are completed ASPL in consultation with the operator, fixes the date and time for inspection. Prior to the inspection the person responsible for the ICS must sign the inspection and certification contract. During the inspection, the ASPL staff will abide to the principles laid out for the inspector. The operator has to co-operate with the inspector as declared in the inspection and certification contract.

Inspection procedure:

The inspections will be carried out in two stages

Office assessment:

Office assessment –to asses the effectiveness of the internal control system

Field inspection:

Inspecting some farms in the grower group to asses the compliance of the internal control system as per the standard requirements. For field assessment samples will be drawn as per respective standards requirements.

Report writing:

Based on the objective evidence obtained from office assessment and individual farm inspection the inspector completes the inspection report. (if the detailed inspection report writing is not possible at the time of inspection visit the inspector will provide a short description of NC observed, later on a detailed inspection report will be sent to the operator).The operator acknowledges the inspection report with his/her signature and receives a copy of the same. The original inspection report will be forwarded to ASPL office for further certification process

Balance Payment:

After inspection, the total inspection and certification costs are finalised and an invoice is sent to the operator. The operator must send the remaining amount of the final invoice to ASPL.

Closure of Non conformities:

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After inspections the ICS should submit corrective action taken report with supporting documents for the entire NC mentioned in the inspection report within the stipulated time period

Certification:

Upon receipt of the full payment and NC closure letter with supporting documents, the reviewer will review inspection report & effectiveness of action taken against NCs raised in the inspection report the file will be submitted to the certification committee. If any further clarifications, additional documents are required, a communication will be sent to the operator.

Note: If the ICS fail to send the Corrective action taken report, any clarifications, additional documents as required by ASPL and final invoice amount within six months from the date of inspection, the ICS is informed that a fresh inspection is required for certification.

Certification decision:

The certification committee will take the certification decision based on the available documentation. Certification decisions will be intimated within 15 days after the inspection report, payment and relevant documents (if any) has been received at ASPL.

Certificates & Renewal:

Once the certification decision is taken, the certificate will be sent to the operator. Validity of this certificate will be for one year from the date of certification. The inspections of farm must be carried out annually for renewing certification status. Therefore, ASPL will send renewal application form in the beginning of the calendar year or six month before the expiry date of certificate to all operators and upon receipt of the completed application form with information on changes from last year and the advance payment, ASPL will conduct the annual inspection and send the invoice. The ICS maintains an updated list of all members and informs ASPL in a timely manner anytime there are changes to the status of the members and changes to the group as a whole. ASPL will suspend or cancel the certification granted to the grower group as a whole, in accordance, in cases where the grower group's internal control system fails to act on these noncompliance's. The sanction will be based on ASPL sanction catalogue.

After receiving the full payment, the certification committee will take the decision and the same will be informed to the operator. The fees for annual inspections will be more or less same as that of the initial year, unless there is a change in the operator's unit (e.g.: increase in area, number of plots, addition or deletion of products, change in number of farmers in the ICS etc.) and ASPL Scale of Fees. The certificate will be issued in the name of the group only and not in the individual farmer's name.

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Note: Those who fail to renew their certification status annually in the stipulated time period leads to the closure of operator file.

ORGANIC logo:

If the operator wants to use INDIA ORGANIC logo, he/she may send a request for the same to ASPL after receiving the certificate. Then ASPL will be sent to operator application for grant of licence to use the certification mark under the Organic Products Certification. The operator should submit the filled application form to ASPL along with applicable fees. ASPL reviews the application and approve the same before use.

ASPL logo:

If the operator wants to use ASPL logo, he/she may send a request for the same to ASPL after receiving the certificate. Then ASPL logo will be sent to operator as soft copy.

Label approval

The operator shall make the label incorporating the logo (ASPL & INDIA ORGANIC,USDA NOP, COR and EU logo) and other relevant details and shall send to ASPL for approval. The label approval committee of ASPL approves the label as per standards and sends the approval decision to the operator. Operator may use the label for marketing only after the label approval.

Appeals

If the operator does not accept the certification decision, he/she can request for reconsideration of the decision in writing. Then the file will be submitted to the certification committee for re-consideration. If the operator still does not agree with the revised decision, he/she can appeal to the appeals committee in writing within 14 days of the notification of certification decision. The file will then be submitted to the appeals committee, which takes final decision on the case. In case the operator is not is not satisfied with the ASPL appeal process, operator can submit a complaint against ASPL to the accreditation body

Handling complaints

Operators are free to approach ASPL for any type of complaints against the ASPL staff, the ASPL certification system or other operators certified by ASPL . Any complaints may be verbally directed to ASPL staff and/or through e-mail or post to the ASPL office. Complaints will be handled confidentially.

Export

For export, our certification services cover the following countries:

- EU: rules equivalent to Regulation EC No. 834/2007 & 889/2008
- US: USDA National Organic Program
- Canada: Canada Organic Regime
- Other countries upon request

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Standards

The up to date version of the standards under the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) is available from **APEDA, Tea Board, Coffee Board, Spices Board** or from **ASPL** . An electronic version of NPOP standards can be downloaded from www.apeda.com. Reg. EC No.834/2007 , 889/2008) .The copy of the standard is published in ASPL website : www.agrolandgroup.com

The latest version of NOP Program standards can be downloaded from: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/NOP/standards.html>

The latest version of COR standards can be downloaded from:

<https://www.inspection.gc.ca/organic-products/standards/eng/1300368619837/1300368673172>

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