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		Issue no.	01
	PROCEDURE FOR GROWER GROUP CERTIFICATION PROCESS	Issue date	15.03.2021
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About MS Agroland Services Private Limited (MS 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) . MS ASPL is offering certification based on the COR (Canadian Organic regime). For more details visit our website www.agrolandgroup.com or mail to info@agrolandgroup.com

Grower Group inspection & Certification

Grower Groups are organized groups of farmers /producers who intend to produce organic products by the organic processes as per the - COR (Canadian Organic regime)

Organic grower group will be based on the Internal Control System (ICS) and will apply to grower groups, farmers' cooperatives, and structured group of producers affiliated to a processor. To avail of this service, under the -COR the producer group must have satisfied the criteria as mentioned in - C.12 & SFCR of COR requirements, CAN/CGSB-32.310-2020 and CAN/CGSB-32.311-2020 -has to be followed

Grower group may organized on itself (co-operative etc.) and as a structured group of producers affiliated to a processor.

- All members of the grower group will apply similar production systems and should be in geographical proximity to each other.
- Only small farmers can be members of the group covered by group certification. Large farms can also belong to the group but each large farms of the group shall be inspected annually by the MS ASPL.
- As per the COR, a small farm (With the reference of the grower group) should have the following:
 - a. farm where the cost of external certification is 2% or more of their annual gross revenue.
 - b. less than 50 acres.

The member of grower group participate in the ICS, who market their organic production only through the grower group except the member which is individually certified. A member of a grower group shall register to only one grower group. Maximum size of a grower group shall be 2000 members.

- MS ASPL must sign a legally enforceable agreement with the management of the grower group specifying the responsibilities of both MS ASPL and the management of the grower group. Refer MS ASPL-CD-FR-25.

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- Management of the grower group will obtain signed obligations from all grower group members to comply with the Canada Organic Standards and to permit inspection by the MS ASPL, the CVB or the CFIA.

Establishment of the ICS

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

- 1- The grower group shall document and implement an internal control system (ICS) with or supervision and documentation of production practices and inputs used at each sub-unit, and collected at each production unit, site, or facility to ensure. An identified person or body is responsible for verifying compliance with the Canada Organic Regime. of each member of the group.
- 2- The internal control system of the grower group will include a contractual arrangement with each member of the grower group and MS ASPL will verify during the audit.
- 3- The internal control system shall be implemented by competent personnel. Internal including ICS manager and ICS inspectors. ICS inspectors designated by the grower group shall carry out internal controls.
- 4- The grower group needs to identify and appoint an adequate number of internal inspectors within the group based on the type, structure, size, products, and the activities of the group. The ICS inspectors shall be trained and annually and their knowledge shall be assessed and documented at the end of the training..
- 5- The ICS inspectors will carry out at least 1 annual onsite inspection visit to each individual member including visits to fields and facilities. Any additional risk-based inspections shall be conducted in accordance with the schedule and the procedures provided by the ICS manager.
- 6- The ICS inspectors shall draft internal inspection reports and submit it within a timeframe specified in the ICS to the ICS manager.
- 7- The internal control system will contain appropriate records as follows
 - Production description, production and/or preparation specifications for products to which the application applies
 - Maps, description of the farms and the facilities of all members
 - List of inputs (ingredients and agricultural substances)
 - A copy of organic production and/or preparation plans.

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- Traceability records, including information on the quantities, on the following activities, where relevant:
 - a) Purchase and distribution of farm inputs including plant reproductive material by the group.
 - b) Production including harvest.
 - c) Storing
 - d) Preparation
 - e) Delivery of products from each member to the joint marketing system.
 - f) Placing on the market of products by the grower group.

- 8- The internal control system will have a mechanism to remove non-compliant group members from the list. corrective actions required by the MSASPL during the previous certification cycle, as well as any corrective measures implemented by members concerning these requests.
 - A complete list of registered group members.
 - Continuous verification of implementation of the internal inspections.
 - Summary of the internal inspection reports including the date of the last internal inspection with the name of the ICS inspector.
 - The training of members of the group on the ICS procedures and the requirements of COR .
 - The approval of new members in an existing group or, where appropriate, the approval of new production units or new activities of existing members upon the approval by the ICS manager on the basis of the internal inspection report

8- The internal control system will record all nonconformities. The ICS will require from the member to respond to the NC report issued by the ICS within 30 working days of its receipt. The response will 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 will include a completion date not exceeding 90 working days from receipt of the NCs. The ICS will accept times greater than those stated for the closure of a NC as long as they are justified and documented.

MS ASPL will evaluate by checking the ICS, staff qualifications and auditing the farms on the basis of the risk assessment. The internal control system will 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.

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- 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 the implementation of the internal inspections and approval committee.
- h) summary of the internal inspection report

Initial certification

- MS ASPL will evaluate the effectiveness of the internal control system to assess the compliance of all members with the COR requirements.
- The certification inspection of the grower group by the MS ASPL will include an assessment of the risks to organic integrity within the grower group and the geographical location in which it functions. A sample of all sites under the grower group's responsibility will be subject to inspection visits by the MS ASPL to assess the effectiveness of the ICS.
- The MS ASPL may justify exceptions to this rule based on risk assessment.
- The percentage of number of group members subject to the initial certification inspection will be based on the results of a risk assessment and the following calculations: Factors to define the risk as normal, medium, and high will include:
 - Factors related to the magnitude of the grower group
 - Organisation size and sites' size
 - Value of the products
 - Numbers of years the grower group has functioned
 - Number of new members registered yearly
 - volume and value of the production
 - The type of non-compliances
 - Staff turnover
 - The management structure of the internal control system
 - Factors related to the characteristics of the organization.
 - Variations in the product systems
 - Risks for intermingling and/or contamination
 - Geographical dispersion of the sites
 - Degree of uniformity among the production units, sites or facilities

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- For normal risk situation, the percentage of group members subject to the initial certification inspection will not be lower than the **square root of the total number of units** under the responsibility of the group.
- If the risk is medium, the resulting number will be **multiplied by 1.2**.
- If the risk is high, the resulting number will be **multiplied by 1.4**.
- All calculation totals ending with decimals are to be rounded up.
- MS ASPL will assign auditors/ inspectors who have appropriate training on inspection of internal control systems.
- During the certification inspection the auditors/ inspectors will determine whether:
 - all internal control documentation is in place
 - internal inspections of all group members have been carried out annually
 - new group members are only included after successful resolution of any NCs found during the internal inspection, according to the procedures agreed with the MS ASPL.
 - All noncompliance has been dealt with appropriately by the internal control system.
 - Inspection records have been maintained up to date by the internal control system.
 - The auditors/ inspectors will carry out a witness audit to determine whether the inspections of the internal control system are conducted as written by ICS manager.

Maintenance of certification

- Each year the MS ASPL will define and justify a risk-based sample of members subject to annual inspection to assess the effectiveness of the ICS. The minimum number of members subject to annual CB inspection shall be square root of the total number of members multiplied by 1.5.
- In cases of high risk members the MSASPL may increase the number of group members subject to annual inspection to at least 2 times the square root of the number of the members in the grower group (for example, ICS has issued a lot of internal sanctions, or a lot of new members).
- The members visited by the MS ASPL will be predominantly different from 1 year to another. In addition to the risk factors defined as above, the MS ASPLs may consider the following selection criteria when selecting the sites being subject to visits:
 - ✓ results from internal control system inspection
 - ✓ complaint files
 - ✓ significant variations of the sites' size
 - ✓ modifications since the last certification

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- The MS ASPL will ensure that the grower group maintains an updated list of all members and informs the MS ASPL in a timely manner anytime there are changes to the status of the members and changes to the group as a whole.
- The MS ASPL will ensure that the grower group has established procedures for adding new members to the grower group.

Records

- The MS ASPL will ensure that the grower group has record-keeping protocols for the individual production units, sites, or facilities within a grower group.
- The MS ASPL will maintain records of sample inspection to ensure that over time, the inspections are representative of the grower group as a whole and take into account any previously identified risk.

Certification documents

- The MS ASPL will provide certification documents to the grower group as a whole. Members within a grower group that have had its operations or product certified cannot possess individual certificates unless that member has obtained its own certification independent from the grower group for a different product.

Certification Application

The first step for getting MS Agroland Services Pvt. Ltd (MS ASPL) certification is that the operator contacts the MS ASPL office. As per the request MS ASPL sends a detailed application package including the application form, OMP, MS ASPL certification procedure, and copy of COR Organic Standards etc to the operator. To apply for certification the operator needs to complete the application form along with the associated documents to the MS ASPL office.

Application review procedure

After receiving the filled-in application form, OMP, and all the associated documents, MS ASPL reviews the documents i.e., Application, OMP, etc. If any clarification needs then revert back to the operator for the correction. MS ASPL received the updated application, OMP, etc. from the operator and reviewed by the MS ASPL. MS ASPL conforms to the operator for the reviewed application and OMP. -


Certification Agreement with MS ASPL.

MS ASPL sent a quotation, proposal, and certification agreement to the operator. The operator sends a signed quotation, proposal, and certification agreement to MS ASPL. Operator needs to pay the proposal fee to the MS ASPL.

Audit Process.

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MS ASPL in consultation with the operator, fixes the date and time for audit. MS ASPL staff will depute the auditor. The operator has to co-operate with the auditor as declared in the inspection and certification agreement.

The audit process is as follows:

A- Opening Meeting

Upon arrival at the Operator’s site-auditor will chair the opening meeting. In the opening meeting, Auditor will demonstrate the audit process as per the Audit Plan share with the operator before the Audit.

B- Collecting and verifying information

During the audit, the auditor will collect and record objective evidence to demonstrate that the operator’s system is both implemented and effective. Information relevant to the audit objectives, scope, and criteria (including information relating to interfaces between functions, activities, and processes) will be collected by appropriate sampling and verified to become audit evidence. Such evidence will be obtained from interviews, review of documentation and records, observation of processes and activities and conditions in the processes audited. Records will identify personnel interviewed.

MS Agroland Services Pvt. Ltd. Will ensure that during the Annual/ Unannounced/ Surveillance audit etc., the auditor verifies on-site that previously submitted corrective actions have been, and remain, fully implemented, auditor is also verified that any changes in organic standards and MS ASPL requirements have been effectively implemented by the operators.

C- Preparing the Finding Report

The finding report will be prepared and issued by Auditors during the closing meeting.

1. Audit Plan – As executed

As deemed necessary, as auditor amend the original version of the audit plan to reflect the real timing and sequence of the audit events

2. Nonconformities

There are two types of nonconformities – Major and Minor. Non-conformity will be substantiated by objective evidence or absence of objective evidence such

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as witnessed, recordable, verifiable, and quantitative collection of facts. Auditor, will review the findings and record them.

- **Major nonconformity.**

Failure to fulfil one or more requirements of the management system raises doubt about the capability of the management system to achieve the expected outcomes or to effectively control the process for which it was intended.

- **Minor nonconformity**

Failure which does not impact the capability of the management system to achieve the expected outcomes. A minor nonconformity usually does not represent a material risk to product quality, human health, and safety, or impact on the environment, and does not raise doubt about the capability of the management system to achieve its policy and objectives. A number of minor nonconformities associated with the same requirement or issue could demonstrate a systematic failure and thus constitute major nonconformity.

- **Opportunities for Improvement (OFI)**

An opportunity to enhance the existing work process/practice/method that conforms to the requirement of the audit criteria and/or of the organization, but may not represent the current state-of-the-art approach, or best practice, but may represent a potential for a nonconformity.

3. Timelines for submission of corrective action plans & implementation of corrective actions

- Corrective Action Plans

All corrective action plans, including evidence of correction, will be submitted within 30 calendar days from the last day of the activity unless the client’s certificate expires prior to that date; in such case, the corrective action plan will be submitted prior to the certificate expiring.

- Minor Nonconformities

For minor nonconformities, all corrective actions will be implemented (including verification of effectiveness) within 90 calendar days from the last day of the activity. Effective implementation of corrections and corrective actions will take place at the next visit.

- Major nonconformities

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For major nonconformities, all corrective actions will be implemented (including verification of effectiveness) within 30 calendar days from the last day of the activity unless the client’s certificate expires prior.

4- Closing Meeting

The auditor will summarize the finding in front of the operator and provide a copy of the findings to the operator and seal and signed.

Certification

- The Assessor will review the Audit report and the file will be submitted to the certification committee. If additional documents are required, a communication will be sent to the operator.

Certification decision

The certification committee of the MS ASPL will take a decision on the basis of the assessor’s recommendation, and corrective action against the raised noncompliance’s, available test reports and operator file review. Certification decision will communicate to the operator and generate the scope certificate.

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

Label approval


The operator may make the label incorporating the logo (MS ASPL & - COR -) and other relevant details and will send to MS ASPL for approval. The label approval committee of MS 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 MS ASPL appeal process, operator can submit a complaint against MS ASPL to the accreditation body

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Handling complaints

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

Standards

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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