

Namibian  
Organic  
Association



# STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

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Organic  
Certification in  
Namibia



## About this booklet: Standard Operating Procedures for Organic Certification in Namibia

The Namibian Organic Association is an in-country partner of the Knowledge Hub for Organic Agriculture (KHSa). KHSa is part of the Knowledge Centre for Organic Agriculture in Africa (KCOA), a collaborative country-led partnership funded by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and non-governmental organisations across Africa. The KCOA aims to scale up the adoption of agroecological and organic farming practices through five knowledge hubs in Africa. The other hubs are implemented by GIZ with in-country partners in North, West, East and Central Africa. The South African-based Sustainability Institute supports project implementation in southern Africa.

Activities are focused in Zambia, led by Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM) Zambia and the Kasisi Agricultural Training Centre; in Namibia led by the Namibia Nature Foundation in collaboration with the Namibian Organic Association; and in South Africa led by the South African Organic Sector Organisation and Participatory Guarantee System South Africa; and in Malawi by Soils, Food and Healthy Communities and KIAE.

The Namibian Organic Association (NOA) is a membership-based association established by a group of dynamic farmers, consumers, and traders with the common interest of developing the organic sector in Namibia.

This booklet serves as a guide for organic farmers and processors to NOA's certification scheme for organic produce for the local Namibian market.

Please be aware that this is only a selection of essential requirements of the organic standards, meant as an introduction. The operator, of course, has to learn about and meet all requirements of the respective standard.



@Namibian Organic Association, 2024

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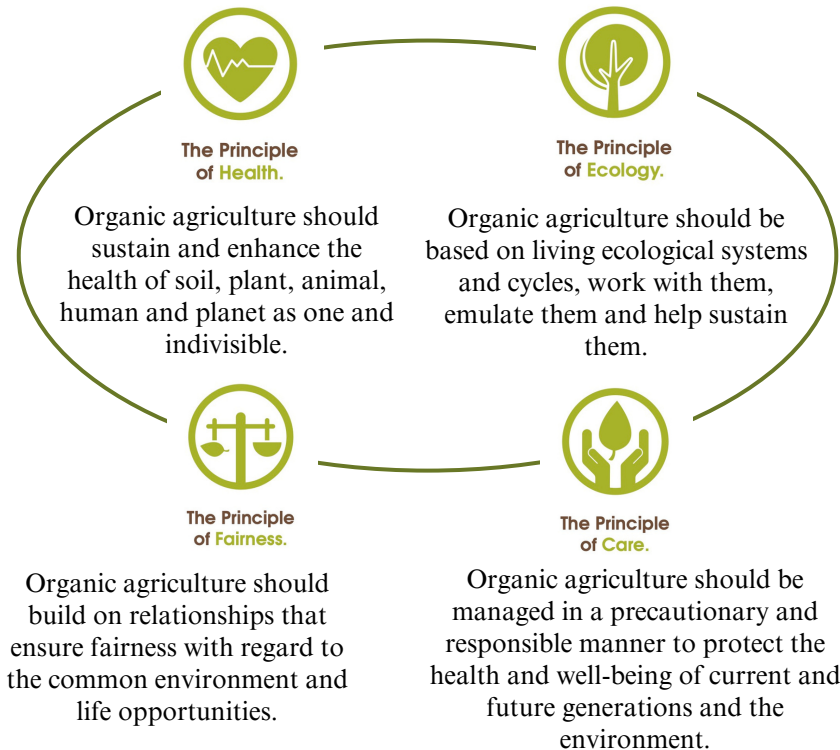
### Explanatory Terms

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Applicant</b>                            | <i>Farmer/Producer/Processor</i>   |
| <b>Assessors</b>                            | <i>Appointed NOA representatives that conduct PGS assessments</i>  |
| <b>NOA PGS</b>                              | <i>Namibian Organic Association's Participatory Guarantee System which is a locally focused organic assurance system</i>                       |
| <b>IFOAM - Organics International Norms</b> | <i>The standards that describe the organic production and processing requirements which need to be followed by producers and/or processors</i> |

## WHAT IS ORGANIC AGRICULTURE?

‘Organic agriculture is a production system that sustains the health of the soil, ecosystem, animals, and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity, and cycles adapted to local conditions to sustain production, rather than on the use of costly external inputs with adverse effects. Organic agriculture combines tradition, innovation, and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and good quality of life for all involved.’ [International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements - Organics International, 2008]

**Organic agriculture is guided by four principles:**



*Organic farming returns microbial, plant or animal material to the soil to increase its fertility and biological activity. Soil health and quality are the basis of soil management practices and are critical to successful pest, disease, and weed management.*

## PARTICIPATORY GUARANTEE SYSTEMS

'Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) are locally focused quality assurance systems. They certify producers based on active participation of stakeholders and are built on a foundation of trust, social networks and knowledge exchange.' [IFOAM - Organics International, 2008]

**The PGS is based on 6 core elements:**

### Trust

Trust and integrity from all members form the basis of the system.

### Participation

The members participate in the development and management of the process and procedures of the PGS which is "owned" and controlled by the collective.

### Transparency

The system is open to public and peer scrutiny at all levels.

### Learning Process

The assessments and the process focus on skills and knowledge exchange.

### Shared Vision

The members of the PGS share a common goal and collectively embrace the principles of organic agriculture.

### Horizontality

The group has a flat organisational structure, it is developed and managed by peers and not by a top-heavy management. All are responsible, all are accountable.

To find out more about these elements, follow this link: [IFOAM PGS Toolkit](#)

## ORGANIC CERTIFICATION IN NAMIBIA

NOA oversees the country's Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) which is a second-party assurance guarantee of organic production. Farms that use the NOA organic labels belong to the NOA PGS and are inspected on an annual basis. The PGS is based on complete transparency so NOA members are always welcome to join farm assessments.

The only way to be sure that a product is truly organic is to look for the organic certification mark. Organic certification ensures that the production complies with organic standards. This provides the consumer with the guarantee that the product is truly organic.



## CONVERTING TO ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Since most farming operations have been under conventional management systems with use of chemicals often for several decades, farms undergo a **conversion period** during which the operation transitions to organic practices. During the conversion period, all requirements laid down in the IFOAM - Organics International Standards have to be followed, including regular inspections.

If the assessment outcome under NOA's PGS for organic certification is positive, first-time applicants will proceed to complete a two-to-three year conversion period.

Producers or processors can sell their products under the "Namibian Organic in Conversion" label after the first year of conversion is complete. Full organic status is achieved after the conversion period, when products can be sold under the "Namibian Organic" label.

Retrospective recognition of organic management is possible. It is possible for the conversion period to be shortened or waived for virgin land or for land that can be proven to have been under organic production for a minimum of three years.

Conversion to organic agriculture involves learning and implementing sustainable farming practices. Familiarity with organic concepts and practices simplifies the conversion process, even though it may require more effort on depleted soils.

Analysing farm characteristics, soil quality, climate, organic matter sources, and limiting factors is crucial before initiating conversion. This assessment helps in making informed decisions throughout the conversion process.

Understanding Organic Principles

Farm Analysis

KEY CONSIDERATIONS for Converting to Organic

Adapting to Local Conditions

Continuous Learning & Improvement

Avoiding Contamination

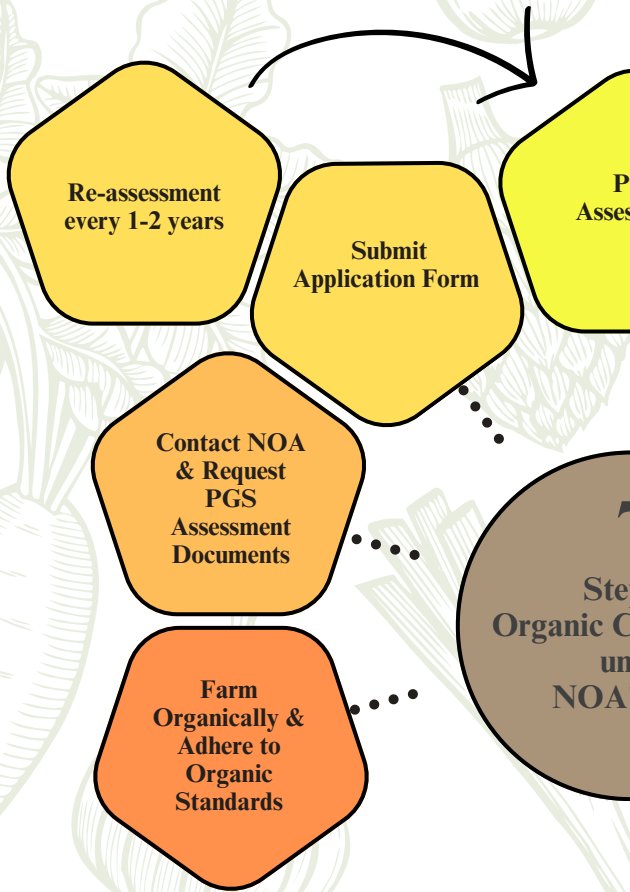
The conversion process varies based on local climate, soil, and environmental conditions. Organic practices offer solutions tailored to different climates, including arid regions where water conservation and soil protection are paramount.

Organic farming is an ongoing learning process, requiring observation, adaptation, and innovation. Sharing experiences and adopting new information ensure continuous improvement towards sustainable agricultural practices.

All relevant measures have to be taken to ensure that organic soil and organic products are protected from **contamination**.

- The operator must take appropriate measures including **barriers and buffer zones** to avoid potential contamination and limit contaminants in organic products.
- (Potential) contamination of products, soils and water must be monitored adequately.

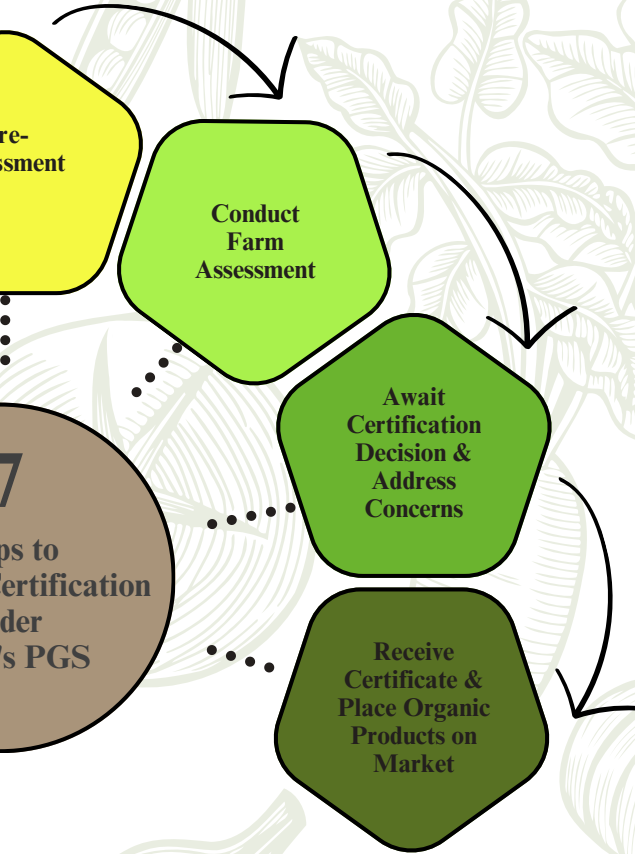
# STEPS TO CE



Namibian Organic – producers with full organic status may use this mark on their products. They achieve this after 2-3 years of organic farming and assessment according to the NOA standards.



# CERTIFICATION

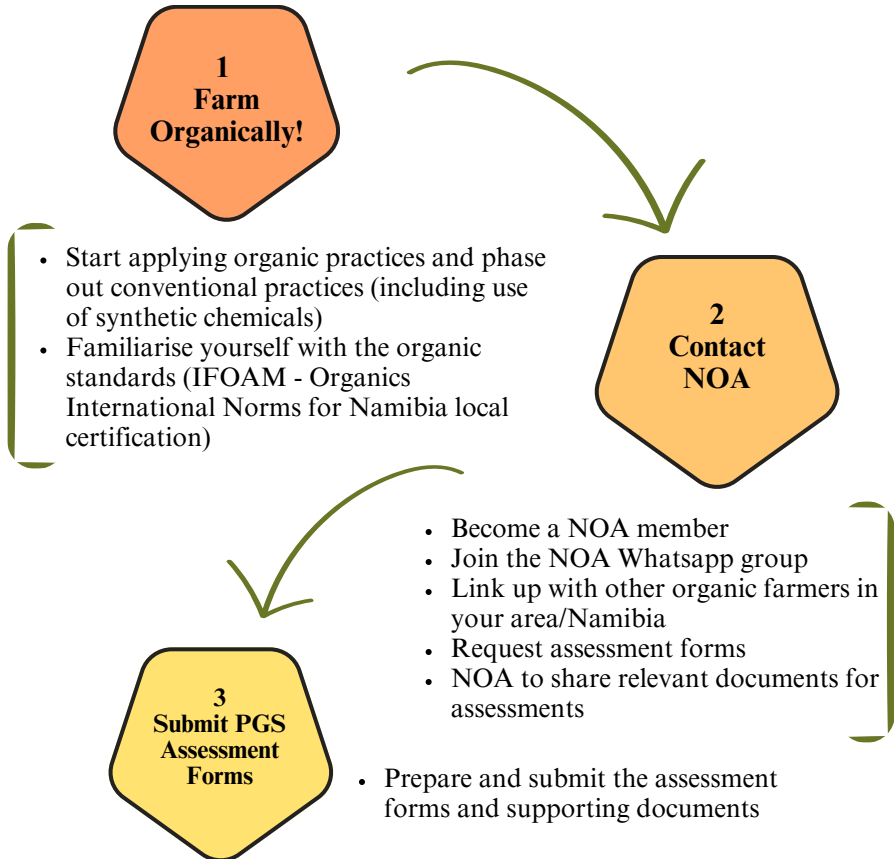


After 1 year of organic farming and an assessment according to the NOA standard, approved farmers can use the Organic in Conversion mark.



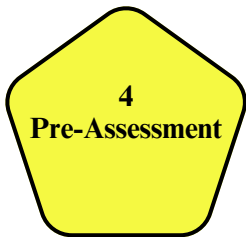
Certified processed products are labelled clearly showing which ingredients are from Namibian certified organic production. Processing is not certified.

## STEPS TO CERTIFICATION



### Supporting Documents

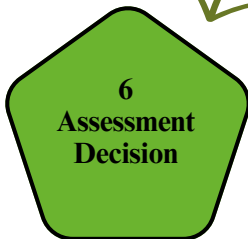
- Completed application form
- Soil tests (if applicable: required for the use of restricted inputs)
- Water tests (irrigation water tests for first assessment)
- Farm map (includes buildings, fields, water points, and farm borders)
- Road map - access to farm
- Samples of labels for processing, handling, and retailing
- Own risk assessment of the operation to be assessed
- Payment confirmation of the annual assessment fee



- The NOA certification assessment team conducts a pre-assessment based on the submitted documents
- If approved, the applicant pays the assessment fee
- Applicant and NOA assessors schedule the farm assessment
- NOA invites all NOA members to join the farm assessment



- NOA assessment team and members conduct the farm assessment
- The team is responsible for:
  - inspecting the gardens, storage facilities and processing areas (livestock & rangelands for organic livestock), and
  - reviewing records and other documentation



- NOA assessment team finalises the assessment
- Applicant is notified of the certification decision
- If any concerns raised, application needs to address concerns raised by the assessment team and members



- NOA shares certification certificate with the applicant
- NOA shares the NOA organic label with the applicant
- Applicant is now certified to place organic certified products on the market bearing NOA's organic labels
- Certificate is valid for 1 year, followed by another farm assessment.
- Based on a risk assessment, the NOA PGS is able to exempt low-risk, longstanding organic operations from annual assessments, giving these operations a 2-year validity on the certificate

# ORGANIC CROP PRODUCTION

**Compliant with Sections 4.1 - 4.8 of IFOAM Norms 2014**

*(updated June 2019)*

Crops cultivated in organic agricultural systems are selected for adaptability to the local soil and climatic conditions and tolerance to pests and diseases. All seeds and plant material are organic. However, exceptions to these requirements can be granted if it is proven that suitable organic varieties are not available, and conventional seeds are not treated with chemicals.

## **General Principle**

Organic agriculture is based on the precautionary principle and should prevent significant risks by adopting appropriate technologies and rejecting unpredictable ones. The deliberate use or the negligent introduction of genetically engineered organisms or their derivatives is prohibited.



## **Soil fertility management**

Organic farming returns microbial, plant, or animal material to the soil to increase its fertility and biological activity. Soil health and quality are the basis of soil management practices and are critical to successful pest, disease, and weed management.

Soil fertility is ensured by applying organic fertilizers of plant or animal origin, such as compost, green manure, or mulch. Organic operations must ensure the prevention of the accumulation of heavy metals or other pollutants. Mineral fertilizers must only be applied in their natural form and must not be chemically treated. All synthetic fertilizers, including urea, are prohibited.

Other inputs allowed in organic production are described in the organic standards. Crop rotations have to be established and must contain soil-improving plants such as legumes, green manure, and deep-rooting plants. In the production of perennial crops, soil cover of inter-row spaces is required.

### **Pest and disease management**

The organic production system shall include biological, cultural, and mechanical mechanisms to manage pests, weeds, and diseases.

These may include:

- crop rotations
- intercropping with pest-repellent plants (herbs),
- and encouraging/maintaining habitats for beneficial insects and other predatory species.

Only once these measures are implemented and prove not to be sufficient, pest, disease and weed management substances listed under Appendix 3 of the IFOAM International Organic Norms may be used.

Products not listed in the Appendix are not allowed in organic production.

### **Other considerations**

Hydroponic and aquaponic production is not regarded as organic production.

For mushroom production, substrates shall be made of products of organic agriculture, or other non-chemically treated natural products such as peat, wood, mineral products, or soil.

*Organic growing systems:*

- *are soil-based;*
- *care for the soil and surrounding ecosystems;*
- *provide support for a diversity of species;*
- *are based on nutrient recycling, and*
- *mitigate soil and nutrient losses.*

## Required buffer zone characteristics according to different drift risk categories

| Type and management of conventional neighbour field  | Minimum width of buffer zone with .... vegetation |  |
|--|---|--|
|  | Vegetation < 80cm                                 | Vegetation > 80cm  |
| Field or vegetable crop with manual knapsack sprayer   | 1 - 2 m   | Hedgerow or 3 rows of high growing annual plants (sunflower, maize) – must exist before spraying season  |
| Field or vegetable crops with tractor pulled field crop sprayer in good technical shape and adequately managed | 2 - 4 m   | Hedgerow or 6 rows of high growing annual plants (sunflower, maize) – must be established before spraying season                                       |
| Field or vegetable crop with poor equipment or poor handling for spraying                                      | 4 - 8 m   | Hedgerow or 6 rows of high growing annual plants (sunflower, maize) – must be established before spraying season                                       |
| Fruit orchards with high pressure motor sprayer  | 10 - 20 m   | 2 m wide, 2 m high dense hedgerow  |
| Aerial spraying  | 30 - 100 m  | At least 5 m high hedgerow plus 20 m wide space. Or 15 m high tress complemented by lower bushes, to form a high and dense hedgerow, at least 3 m wide |



# ORGANIC LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION

## Compliant with Sections 5.1 - 5.8 of IFOAM Norms 2014

*(updated June 2019)*

Organic livestock husbandry is based on the harmonious relationship between land, plants and livestock, respect for the physiological and behavioral needs of livestock and the feeding of good-quality organically grown feed.

### General Principle

Stocking rates for livestock should be appropriate for the region, taking into consideration the body size and weight of the breeds farmed, feed production capacity, livestock health factors, nutrient balance, and environmental impact.



### Livestock Management

The IFOAM Norms require appropriate management practices enabling the animal to express behavioral needs. This includes the environment, the facilities, stocking density, and flock/herd size.

Landless animal husbandry is prohibited. When animals are housed, the construction must ensure adequate temperatures according to the species' needs, and consumable bedding material must be organic. No closed cages are allowed for any species in which the animal has no space to move and express its natural behaviour. Animals can be kept in enclosures for some parts of the day or night to protect them from predators, but they need access to outdoors and sufficient space to move.

When welfare and health problems occur, appropriate management adjustments are implemented (e.g. reducing stocking density). Preventative measures against pests and diseases must be in place.

## **Feeding**

Animals must be fed organic feed. Exceptions can be granted to allow 10 % of the annual dry matter intake to be from conventional origin for ruminants and 15 % of the annual dry matter intake to be from conventional origin for non-ruminants. Animals shall be offered a balanced diet that provides all of the nutritional needs of the animals in a form that allows them to exhibit their natural feeding and digestive behavior. All ruminants shall have daily access to roughage. Ruminants must be grazed throughout the entire grazing season(s).

Young stock from mammals shall be provided maternal milk or organic milk from their own species and shall be weaned only after a minimum period:

- Calves and foals: 3 months
- Piglets: 6 weeks
- Lambs and kids: 7 weeks

The following substances are prohibited (further substances listed under IFOAM Norms Section 5.5.5):

- synthetic amino-acids and amino-acid isolates;
- urea and other synthetic nitrogen compounds;
- synthetic growth promoters or stimulants;
- genetically modified feed such as maize, cotton seed cake, or soya are prohibited.

Animals may be fed vitamins, trace elements, and supplements from natural sources.

## **Veterinary Care**

Organic management practices promote and maintain the health and well-being of animals through:

- balanced organic nutrition
- stress-free living conditions, and
- breed selection for resistance to diseases, parasites, and infections.

Disease prevention is of utmost importance. If an animal becomes sick natural medication is preferred. If allopathic medication is required it must be given to the animal to prevent suffering. A maximum amount of allopathic treatments is defined in the regulation. Vaccinations against locally occurring diseases or which are legally required are permitted.

## Animal origin and conversion periods

Organic animals are born and raised on organic holdings. Animal husbandry systems that change from conventional to organic production require a **conversion period**.



- Offspring may be considered organic if their mother has been organically managed throughout the pregnancy
- Milk may be considered organic only if the dairy animal has been organically managed throughout the pregnancy preceding lactation
- Eggs may be considered organic only if the poultry has been organically managed from 2 days old
- Chickens are considered organic if they are brought under organic management from the age of 2 days
- Animals for meat shall be raised organically from birth, and are born to a mother that has been organically managed throughout the pregnancy (IFOAM Norms Section 5.2.2).

## Transport and Slaughter

Organic animals must be subject to minimum stress during transport and slaughter. The use of electric prods and other such instruments is prohibited. The operator shall ensure adequate food and water supply during transport and at the slaughterhouse. Slaughterhouse journey times shall not exceed eight hours (exceptions may be granted). Each animal shall be effectively stunned before being bled to death. The equipment used for stunning shall be in good working order.

## Considerations for organic certification of livestock

Certification of organic livestock goes hand-in-hand with the certification of the land that the livestock lives on. This means that the farmer also needs to show the she/he is adhering to organic management principles for the land that the livestock live on. This includes showing the implementation of sustainable grazing practices under suitable rangeland management.

# ORGANIC PROCESSING

**Compliant with Sections 7.1 - 8.1 of IFOAM Norms 2014**  
(updated June 2019)

Organic processing and handling provide consumers with nutritious, high-quality supplies of organic products, and organic farmers with a market without compromising the organic integrity of their products.

## General Principle

Handlers and processors shall ensure traceability in the organic processing and handling chain. All organic products shall be identified as such and processed, stored, and transported in a way that prevents substitution by or contact with conventional products as well as any kind of contaminants throughout the entire process.



## Ingredients

Organic processed products are made from organic ingredients. Non-organic processing aids allowed in organic products are defined in Appendix 4 of the IFOAM Norms. Exceptions can be granted by the control body where organic raw material is not commercially available, labelling requirements defined in this document and in IFOAM Norms have to be adhered to.

Preparations of micro-organisms and enzymes commonly used in food processing may be used, with the exception of genetically engineered micro-organisms and their products.

## Processing Methods

Techniques used to process organic products shall be biological, physical, and mechanical in nature. Other processing aids must be listed in Appendix 4 of the IFOAM Norms or be organically produced. Irradiation is not permitted for any ingredient or the final product.

The following conditions of storage are permitted:

- controlled atmosphere;
- temperature control; drying; humidity regulation.

Intentional manufacture or use of nanomaterials in organic products is prohibited.

## Pest and Disease Control

Organic products must be protected from pests and diseases using good manufacturing practices that include proper cleaning, sanitation and hygiene, without the use of chemical pest control treatments or irradiation. Preventative methods such as disruption, elimination of habitat and access to facilities must be put in place. If not sufficient, physical, mechanical, and biological control measures must be used. Only if this is insufficient, products listed in the Appendixes of the IFOAM Norms may be used. Fumigation with ethylene oxide, methyl bromide, aluminium phosphide or other substances not contained in Appendix 4 is not allowed.

## Cleaning, Disinfecting, and Sanitising of Processing Facilities

Organic products must be safe, of high quality, and free of substances used to clean, disinfect, and sanitize the processing facilities. Operations using cleaners, sanitizers, and disinfectants must ensure these do not contaminate the product. The operator shall perform an intervening event between the use of any cleaner, sanitiser, or disinfectant and the contact of the organic product with that surface sufficient to prevent residual contamination of that organic product (e.g. by wiping surfaces with water).



# ORGANIC LABELLING & PACKAGING

Compliant with Sections 7.1 - 8.1 of IFOAM Norms 2014  
(updated June 2019)

## Labelling

Only products produced and processed according to the standard may be labelled as organic.

The following terminology may be used:

- Products with 95-100 % organic ingredients may be labelled as ‘organic’.
- Products with 70-95 % organic ingredients may be labelled as ‘made with organic ingredients’. It must be visible which ingredients are organically certified and which are not.
- Products with less than 70 % organic ingredients may not refer to organic on the front or a dominant location on the packaging but may specify organic ingredients as such on the ingredient list.
- ‘Organic-in-conversion’ labelling may only be used for single-ingredient plant products.

Water and salt are not included in the percentage calculations of organic ingredients.

Labels must also identify the following:

- The person or company legally responsible for the product
- The body that assures conformity to the applicable organic standard

## Packaging

Organic product packaging must have minimal adverse impacts on the product and on the environment. The product may not get contaminated from packaging e.g. by using re-used packaging (if re-using packaging the packaging must be appropriately cleaned).

Operators shall demonstrate efforts to minimize packaging and/or choose packaging materials with minimum environmental impact. Polyvinyl chloride (PVC) and aluminum should be avoided.

Packaging materials, and storage containers, or bins that contain a synthetic fungicide, preservative, fumigant, or nanomaterials are prohibited.

## FURTHER READING MATERIAL

International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements - Organics International Norms, Version 2.0. 2014 (updated 2019). IFOAM - Organics International.

PGS Guidelines. How to develop and manage Participatory Guarantee Systems for Organic Agriculture, 2019. IFOAM - Organics International.

NOA Manual on Organic Production in Namibia, 2019.

Organic Livestock Production Factsheet Series. 2021-2024.

The series of factsheets on organic livestock production (with a focus on beef and mutton) serves to inform interested farmers, consumers and other stakeholders on the various aspects of organic beef production with a focus on the following topics:

- Organic Meat Production
- Benefits of Organic (Grass-Fed) Beef
- Organic Slaughter and Processing
- Market Opportunities for Organic Beef
- Alternative Feed & Supplements for Organic Livestock
- Organic Crop Production for Animal Feed

NOA website: [www.noa.org.na](http://www.noa.org.na)

NOA Library (as a member you have full access to the NOA library of hard copy books situated at the NOA offices in Windhoek)

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **Where do I find detailed information on converting to organic farming?**

The website of the Namibian Organic Association has the organic standards and application forms available for download. NOA's standards are based on the IFOAM - Organics International Norms from 2014 with some conditions added for Namibia. A comprehensive Organic Production Manual is also available on the website.

### **What are the main differences between conventional and organic production?**

Organic farming relies on scientific principles and natural processes for sustainable production. Synthetic production aids and inputs are not allowed. For the land and veld, this includes artificial fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides. Any GMOs (genetically modified organisms) are prohibited. For livestock, synthetic inputs and GMO-derived feeds are prohibited. A farmer is expected to farm with animals that are well adapted to the circumstances and do not require regular veterinary intervention. Illnesses and ailments must be addressed with natural remedies. Nevertheless, under the Principle of Care, the farmer is required to treat a sick animal under the guidance of a veterinarian. Antibiotics are allowed and must be used when required, but repeated use of antibiotics will make an animal lose organic status. Preventative use of conventional drugs is, however, prohibited.

### **What are the risks of organic farming?**

Some farmers have difficulty in converting to organic as their production relies heavily on external inputs. For example, farming with the wrong breed may require continuous veterinary intervention or external feeding to keep individuals in production. Farms under continuous conventional management may no longer have critical natural processes in place. It can take considerable time to establish nutrient cycling or natural defenses against parasites, pests, and illnesses. Fellow organic farmers often have gone through similar challenges and will gladly share their experiences to cope with them.

### **What economic advantage does it have to farm organic?**

Many consumers demand healthy food and thus organic produce can get a price premium of anywhere from 5% to 30% or more. As organic production restricts the use of inputs, most organic farmers report a reduction in costs over time. With sustainable farming practices in place, a possible initial reduction in productivity is overcome over time as natural processes take over the "band-aids" of industrial agriculture.

### **Does NOA's PGS certification adhere to the EU organic standards?**

No, NOA's certification of organic produce adheres to the IFOAM - Organics International Norms, which align to EU and NOP Standards, but there are differences. The PGS is a local assurance system for certifying products for the local market. For international markets, producers need to go through accredited third-party certification bodies that assess production and processing according to the relevant organic standards (E.g. EU, NOP).

### **Can I keep a part of the operation non-organic?**

The organic standards allow for parallel and split production. In parallel production, the farmer can keep the same species under conventional and organic production, provided the separation of animals, space, and inputs such as feed or medicines is guaranteed and verified. In split production, individuals of a different species may be farmed conventionally as long as the management is done separately from the organic livestock, with no risk of contamination or co-mingling. The upkeep of records and systems is arduous and most organic producers convert their operation to fully organic, not only because of reduced workload, but also out of conviction.

### **Can I use commercial feeds and supplements? How about urea?**

Namibian Organic standards are quite strict and limit the use of most commercial feedstuffs. NPN (Non-Protein nitrogen-urea) is not allowed as it is a synthetic-derived substance that does not freely occur in nature. Most bagged feeds in Namibia containers may be contaminated with GMO substances, such as maize or soybean, therefore their use is usually not allowed. However, a farmer may feed non-organic products up to 20% of an animal's diet as long as these do not contain or are contaminated by GMOs or synthetic ingredients. Under severe circumstances, the Namibian Organic Association can grant a higher percentage of non-organic fodder for a limited time.

### **What about legally prescribed vaccination and branding?**

The farmer must comply with Namibian regulations, thus the legally required vaccinations and branding of animals are allowed under Namibian Organic standards.

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