



Rules for Organic Production in the Netherlands

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Procedures for certification

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Rules for Organic Production in the Netherlands

For all organic production methods the use of genetically modified organisms (gmo's) or gmo-derivates is forbidden. Underneath you find the most important items of plant production, animal production, processing and import of organic products. As EU Member State the Netherlands follow the EU Regulations 834/2007 and 889/2008 for organic production methods.

PLANT PRODUCTION

Soil and fertilising

The fertility and the biological activity of the soil should be maintained or increased by cultures of leguminous plants and deep-rooting crops, green manuring and an ample crop rotation scheme. Fertilising takes place with manure of organic origin, composted or not. In case the above mentioned means are insufficient for an adequate nutrition, one is allowed to use a restricted number of conventional types of manure and mineral fertilisers.

Crop protection

One should prevent the disturbance by parasites, diseases and weeds as much as possible by methods such as:

- an ample crop rotation scheme
- selection of cultivars
- mechanical methods
- protection and propagation of natural enemies.
- only in case of acute danger for the crop a restricted number of plant supporting and crop protection agents can be used.



Stock material

Stock material should be produced according to the organic production methods. In case a company cannot produce its own stock material, one can order this from propagation companies licensed by Skal. Plant and other vegetatively produced material and also seed material should – if possible – have an organic origin. For the use of conventional material one needs dispensation.

Parallel crops and parallel storage

The simultaneous culture of the same plants according to the organic and the conventional production method is not allowed. This also applies to the storage of plants or plant products. In case of perennial crops (e.g. fruit) and stock material there is the possibility of exemption provided sufficient separation can be guaranteed.

Apart from the culture of propagation material, the company should convert completely to the organic production method within five years.

Soil bound culture

Only crops that are not suitable for cultures in the soil can be grown out off the soil. These are mushrooms and plant material that is sold including the growing medium, such as potting plants. Mushroom compost should mainly consist of products originating from organic agriculture.

Conversion of plots

Before an agricultural product can carry the EKO Quality symbol or other indications mentioning the organic production method, the regarding plot has to be converted from a conventional to an organic plot. The starting point is that a plot should be managed in accordance with the organic production methods during two years at least (three years for perennial crops). The crop sown after that period (the crop harvested for perennials) can be called "from organic production" and can carry the EKO Quality symbol. After one year of organic management (two years for perennials) the crop harvested can be called "produced during conversion to organic agriculture", till the moment that it is organic.

ANIMAL PRODUCTION

Animal welfare

Farm animals should be kept in such a way that they can show their most important own behaviour. Production systems should be soil bound with sufficient run out, space, light and litter in the stable. For each animal a minimum indoor and outdoor room should be available. Surgical operations are not allowed.

Animal health care

Nutrition, care and housing should offer the animals an optimal natural resistance against diseases. Natural and homeopathic medicines have preference. In case these medicines are not sufficient, a restricted number of conventional medicines can be used. For these conventional medicines the double of the legal waiting period should be observed.



Registration

A number of issues regarding pasture land management, diseases and fertility of the animals should be registered. In the administration the purchase and sale of goods and means need special attention.

Foodstuffs

The foodstuffs should be organically produced. In special cases a restricted amount of non-organic inputs can be used. Furthermore a restricted number of additives is allowed. Crops indicated as "produced during conversion to organic agriculture" can be part of the food for organic animals.

Purchase of animals

Only in special cases one is allowed to buy animals from non-organic companies.

Conversion of animals

Before animals or their products can be marketed as "organically produced", the animals should be converted from conventional to organic production. The conversion period depends on the animal type and varies from 6 weeks for layers to 12 months for meat cattle.

PROCESSING & FOOD TECHNOLOGY

Certificate

In all cases of organic processing the company should have the disposal of a certificate. This can be an import certificate, a process certificate and/or a product certificate.

Administration

For the sake of inspection and certification each company should have an adequate overview of records, book keeping and administration. There should always be a separate administration of the organic inputs and the outgoing organic products. The total production process should be fully traceable.

Inputs inspection

This concerns the presence of indications and labels on inputs and ingredients that refer to the organic agriculture. The results of the inputs inspection should be administered.



Storage

The storage of organic products should always be separate and indicated as such.

Process

During the process contamination with non-organic products should not take place. Therefore the organic production system should always be cleaned beforehand.

Labelling

Irrespective of the type of organic product, the label should always mention:

- name and address of the processor responsible (with product certificate)
- name of the product and correct reference to the organic production method
- Skal and company (licensee) number
- a traceable code

Indications and EKO Quality symbol

Depending on the composition of the final product one can use indications such as "from organic production" possibly combined with the EKO Quality symbol. All materials and labels with indications referring to the organic production method and/or the EKO Quality symbol have to meet the requirements of Skal.



Ingredients

All agricultural ingredients should have the organic origin. In a number of exemptions certain legally provided non-organic agricultural ingredients can be added up to a maximum of 5% of the total of agricultural ingredients.

The EKO Quality symbol is allowed on products containing 95% or more organic ingredients.

Products containing less than 95% organic ingredients are not allowed to carry the EKO-symbol. In that case specific legislation exist for organic labelling.

IMPORT OF ORGANIC PRODUCTS

Anyone who wants to import products from third (non EU) countries and wants to market these (possibly after processing) with indications referring to the organic production method, should comply with the following:

- The importer should be registered by a recognised inspection body: for importers in the Netherlands this inspection body is Skal. Furthermore the importer should have the disposal of an import certificate mentioning the regarding products.
- In case you want to market imported products with indications referring to the organic production method, you also need a product certificate.



- When marketed, the imported products should carry the name and address of the importer, the product name, incl. a reference to the organic agriculture. Labelling is a processing activity and should take place at thereto certified companies.
- Furthermore you should have the disposal of an import authorisation before you can import and market the products concerned. For products imported in the Netherlands this authorisation should be provided by LASER, the executive body of the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature management and Fisheries.
- For some countries outside the EU the import authorisation is not needed.
- When the assignment will be actually imported, you should inform Skal. For that purpose you should use special forms, available at Skal. Using this import information the importer will be inspected on:
 - the presence of an import certificate and product certificate;
 - the presence of an import authorisation (if needed);
 - the right inspection certificate in relation to the import authorisation.

TRADE AND STORAGE COMPANIES

As from 1 July 2005 certification is obligatory for trade and storage companies. However, this obligation does not apply for companies that sell their organic products directly to the final consumer.

Costs of certification

All costs of inspection and certification are chargeable to the organic producers. They pay a composed fee consisting of:

- A registration fee (once only)
- A fixed yearly fee
- A variable yearly fee for processors and importers, depending on the sales value of the organic production concerned.
- Additional fees for specific services and activities.

The fees charged are obtainable at www.skal.nl ("Tarievenblad")

Application / registration procedure

Underneath you find the most important steps for application and final certification.

Step 1: Documentation

You contact Skal and ask for the necessary information. After reading this you can decide to an official application.

Step 2: Application

You return the completed application form with a copy of your registration at the Chamber of Commerce, and you pay the application fee.

Step 3: Registration as licensee

After receipt of the application form and the application fee Skal will send you a confirmation of the registration as licensee. As from that moment you are officially registered and you can start the conversion to the organic production method.

Note: you do not yet have the right to use indications referring to the organic production method. After being officially registered within five working days an appointment will be made for the first inspection of your company.

Step 4: Inspection

An inspector will visit your company and make a local survey. The inspector will see to it that the activity applied for does harmonise with the necessary conditions.

If necessary, the inspector will inform you about changes needed in order to comply with these conditions.

The result of the inspection will be registered in an inspection report.

Step 5: Judgement and certification

The inspection report will be judged at Skal office. Farmers will receive a letter mentioning the starting date of the conversion period and the expected date of first marketing of organic products. When your company complies with all necessary conditions the activity applied for will be certified by Skal.

Step 6: Rights resulting from certification

Only after certification you are allowed to perform the activities involved.

These activities are producing, processing, importing and marketing of products carrying the indication "from organic production" and / or the EKO Quality symbol or the indication "produced during conversion to organic agriculture".