

Regulations on the Im-
plementation of BIO
SUISSE Standards and
Basis for Decisions of the
BIO SUISSE Label-
Commission «Import»
**English translation (reliable is
the original german version)**

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Forword

This compilation of the regulations on the implementation and the basis for decisions has been made in accordance with the policy of transparency being followed by the BIO SUISSE label-commission «Import» concerning BIO SUISSE approval of imported organic produce.

The topics dealt with are those that constantly raise questions and cause confusion during discussions with BIO SUISSE/BUD producers and consumers.

Under each heading comes first the valid legal basis as stipulated in the relevant article in the standards, and then a description of how these standards are implemented in practice by the BIO SUISSE label-commission «Import».

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The present compilation is permanently being updated and published every year by the BIO SUISSE label commission “import”. It can be obtained at the BIO SUISSE office, Margarethensstr. 60, CH-4053 Basel (telephone ++41 61 385 96 10, fax ++41 61 385 96 11, e-mail bio@bio-suisse.ch) or download under www.bio-suisse.ch.

1. Management of spray drift

a) Basis:

BIO SUISSE Standards, article 2.3.4

b) Practical application in approval process

Any possible drift into areas at risk, for example by means of indicator strips, must be monitored. If the result is positive, the border strips or rows must be harvested separately and disposed of non-organically. In addition, it is imperative that residue analyses be made of the entire crop and the results attached to the inspection report.

Contamination must be prevented by means of using the natural features of the landscape. When pest inspection agents are applied from the air in the area of the organic farm, the product used must be listed in the inspection report, residue analyses carried out and the results attached to the inspection report.

2. Approval of farms undergoing step by step conversion

a) Basis:

BIO SUISSE directives "Farm-definition for BIO SUISSE approved farms", "step by step conversion" and "Newly cultivated land"

b) Practical application in approval process

Fundamentally the conversion of the complete farm must be guaranteed also abroad. A foreign farm operation can accordingly become a BIO SUISSE approved farm if:

1. the farm is converted completely at the time of its first approval. Yearly changes of plots of land will be dealt with according to the directive for "newly cultivated land".
2. the farm is not converted completely at the time of the first approval on the following conditions:
 - € step-by-step conversion includes only vineyards, fruit or ornamental plants and
 - € a binding conversion plan is submitted with a maximum of 5 years

3. Ground cover in perennial crops

a) Basis:

BIO SUISSE Standards, articles 2.5.3, 2.5.4 and 2.6.1.

b) Practical application in approval process

Where soil and climatic conditions are markedly different from those of Switzerland (for example arid areas), the ground cover can be limited to a period of at least four months during the period when most of the rainfall occurs. Where the natural cover by weeds is insufficient, a green manure crop must be sown.

4. Irrigation

a) Basis:

BIO SUISSE Standards, article 2.1.5.

b) Practical application in approval process

Irrigation water should not be brought across fields of neighbouring non-organically farmed fields before being used in organic crops. The irrigation water must, in case of doubt, be examined for residues of artificial fertilizers and pesticides and the results of the analysis enclosed with the inspection report. If contamination of the ground water table is suspected, the commission may call for an investigation and, if necessary, refuse approval.

5. Fertilization

a) Basis:

BIO SUISSE standards article 2.1.4 ff; appendix 1 to the standards

b) Practical application in approval process

Admitted products and measures: The list in the appendix 1 of BIO SUISSE standards applies. This list differs from the list of the EU-ordinance 2092/91 (appendix II, part A) in the following points (not BIO SUISSE admitted fertilizers): highly concentrated chlorinated potassium fertilizer; peat for soil improvement; meat meal, blood meal, bone meal, animal corpses meal.

The purchase of farmyard manure from non-organically reared animals is acceptable. Farmyard manure must not come from intensive animal husbandry (EU 2092/91). In case of doubt, the label-commission «Import» is entitled to require an analysis of the manure.

Maximum input (per ha/year)	N	P ₂ O ₅ (average over 3 years)
Vegetables	225 kg	80kg
Crops	180 kg	60 kg
Strawberries	160 kg	35 kg
Viniculture, fruit, berries	100 kg	30 kg

6. Areas set aside to enhance biodiversity

a) Basis

BIO SUISSE standards, art. 2.4.1

b) Practical application in approval process:

Definition of the areas set aside to enhance biodiversity (AEB) for farm operations outside of Switzerland

The following criterias must be met, so that the 7% AEB do not have to be proved inside the farmoperation`s own agriculturally usable surface (AS):

- a) The farm operation is situated in a untouched natural environment (forests, desert, steppe, directly adjacent to the operation along at least 30% of the operation`s boundaries.) Or

- b) To implement 7% AEB inside the AS would not essentially contribute to the diversification of the agricultural surface because the cultivation-system or the structure of the operation is by itself already diversified (eg. Agroforestry-systems and similar systems). *Or*
- c) The operation's surface includes large forests or surfaces as described under a) and b) *Or*
- d) The operations` surfaces are situated realigned within the boundaries of a cooperative of small farmers or of a project group that has applied for the BIO SUISSE-approval in corporate as ecological project and provides 7% AEB of the total amount of AS.

7. Crop rotation

a) Basis:

BIO SUISSE Standards, article 2.1.11.

b) Practical application in approval process

Requirements of a crop rotation in compliance with BIO SUISSE standards

3. At least 20% of the fields subject to crop rotation must show soil improving respectively nutrient accumulating crops. Examples of such crops:
 - € Grain leguminosae or grain leguminosae mixtures (e.g. soy beans, peas, crop beans, lupines, oat/peas)
 - € green manure (share in function of crop period)
 - € fallow or crop residues with naturally growing soil covering grass (share in function of crop period)
 - € artificial lawn or leguminose seeds (e.g. clover mixtures, alfalfa)
4. Except for rice, a cultivation break of at least a year must be observed between to main crops of the same species for annual crops.
5. Max. permitted share of each single crop in crop rotation (in function of the surface subject to crop rotation):
 - € Cereals/rice/grain leguminosae: 67%
 - € Wheat/maize: 50%
 - € In tropical areas, the share of rice may exceed 67% of crop rotation in well-founded cases.
6. As of 1/1/2005, at least 50% of the open field must be sufficiently covered with plants outside of vegetation period.
7. In well-founded cases, a deviation of the above mentioned rules is tolerated. The present crop rotation is in this case inspected as to its sustainability and compliance with BIO SUISSE standards according to the following criteria:
 - € Balanced humus management
 - € Prevention of erosion
 - € Prevention of nutrient losses (eluviation or drainage)
 - € Preventive crop protection
 - € Nutrient supply (accumulation and mobilisation)
 - € Enhancing of biodiversity (diversity of crop rotation)

8. Seedlings, seed and propagation material

a) Basis:

BIO SUISSE Standards, article 2.2.; BIO SUISSE directives on “strawberry seedlings” and “rearing of seedlings in organic vegetable and herb cultivation”

b) Practical application in approval process

The use of treated seed and non-organically grown seedlings generally leads to refusal of approval of the produce in question. The use of non-organic untreated seed or non-organic propagation material is only allowed, if organic seed or propagation material can be proved not to be available. In these cases, the fact must be stated in the inspection report and confirmed.

Seedlings for vegetable and herb growing must comply with the requirements of the IFOAM standards as a minimum. The seedling production operations must be monitored by a recognized inspection or certification body. The BIO SUISSE requirements of the growing media for the seedlings must all be fulfilled (maximum peat content 70%, no fertilization with synthetic chemical trace elements or other additional substances; manuring only with permitted materials).

In banana crops and the growing of ornamentals, propagation materials grown as meristem cultures are tolerated.

GMO-precaution regarding non-organic seed (applies for the time being to the produce maize, rape and soy in the following countries: USA, Canada and Argentina):

As of 1/1/2003, exclusively certified organic seed may be used.

9. Inspections (external and internal) on cooperatives, projects and groups of growers

a) Basis:

Criteria from Naturland, FVO, IFOAM

b) Practical application in approval process

In cases where it is impossible for well-founded reasons for an accredited inspection body to carry out at least one annual inspection of all the members, internal self-inspection programs can also be used.

Valid reasons are:

- € The number of members in the region exceeds 30
- € The distance between the farm operations does not permit an efficient external inspection
- € The respective fields are cultivated by small holders:
 - at least 50% of the farm operations are of max. 5 ha or less
 - at least 70% of the farm operations are of max. 10 ha or less

In doing this, the basic rule is that the external inspection body must check on each member farm every second year at least.

The internal inspections must be fully documented in the official inspection reports.

If a professional internal inspection body exists which complies with the requirements given

below, at least 20% of the member farms must be inspected each year by the external inspection body. Selection of the members is made on the basis of random sampling of the records submitted by all the farms and the official reports of the internal inspection visits. In case of well organized projects, a share of less than 20% may be accepted, but has to be justified by the responsible inspection body.

External inspections must always include the following areas:

- € newly joined members in both years of conversion;
- € farm operations of more than 25 ha;
- € the processing arrangements and the packaging plant;
- € the main crop-growing plots or areas at least every second year.

BIO SUISSE requirements for project-internal inspection systems

Internal regulatory requirements

Organisations of small farmers must define their own internal regulations on growing techniques for their members, which must comply with the requirements of the IFOAM standards as a minimum. The organisation has to be sure that the regulations are known and understood by all the member producers (for example by means of courses or through advice). The producers must commit themselves to the regulations in writing.

Internal inspection system

Each farm must receive an inspection at least once a year from an inspector within the organisation or within the framework of reciprocal inspections between individual groups or villages. The farms receive a inspection report. The appointed person within the organisation is charged with completing the necessary documents. The internal inspection system must also include the possibility of imposing sanctions, which also have to be documented.

Documents

The address of every supplier, the certified and non-certified production areas and crops (including maps) and the estimated yields must be collected and listed in a register of producers. The relevant measures, purchases and used plant agents and fertilizers must be recorded (including the two previous years). New admittances, conversion status and withdrawals (including the reasons, such as violation of the regulations) must be recorded. Official reports (standard questionnaires) on the inspection visits must be completed. Written records of the amounts of bulk purchases per producer must be kept (journal, delivery notes) Internal inspections must be fully recorded in the official documentation as a matter of principle.

Rules on contracts

The producers organisation signs a contract for carrying out inspections with the inspection/certification authorities on behalf of all the individual producers. The internal inspection system forms the basis for these contractual rules. The producers organisation commits its members to keeping its regulations and ensures that internal and external inspection officers have free access to all land producing crops, processing facilities etc.

10. Use of copper

a) Basis:

BIO SUISSE Standards, Appendix 2, point 2.

b) Practical application in approval process

Due to the fact that the use of copper-based products for treating plants is most often allowed without any upper limit in foreign organic-agriculture, the amount of copper applied per ha and year must be given in kg of elemental copper for BIO SUISSE approval. For the first approval, a maximum of 20% above the BIO SUISSE maximum is tolerated; for subsequent approvals, the BIO SUISSE maximum amounts apply according to appendix 2 of the standards

If, on the first approval of a farm, there is a crop growing for which no application for BIO SUISSE approval has been made, the amount of copper used can exceed the set limit by more than 20%, provided that the farm manager confirms in writing that the amount used will immediately be reduced to the maximum permitted level as a condition of approval.

The statements refer either to the 12 month preceding inspection or to the year preceding inspection

11. Parallel production

a) Basis

BIO SUISSE Standards, article 4.2.3.

b) Practical application in approval process

Parallel production on farms undergoing step by step conversion (the same crop using different methods of culture on the same farm) is basically forbidden. The simultaneous production or owning of the same cultures or livestock species according to BIO SUISSE and other, different organic/ecologic standards is dealt with as parallel production.

12. Crop protection

a) Basis:

BIO SUISSE Standards, article 2.3.

b) Practical application in approval process

Allowed agents and measures

The list in appendix 2 of the BIO SUISSE standards applies. It differs from the list of the EU-decree 2092/91 (appendix II, part B) in the following points (Not permitted plant protection agents): metaldehyde, synthetic pyrethroids in traps, organic herbicides, growth regulators

Burning

Systematic burning is forbidden by principle. Burning of trash after harvest must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis in discussion with local experts on organic agriculture. The burning of crop ready for harvesting (burning prior to harvest) or of crop residues (burning following harvest) in sugar cane production is forbidden

Government-imposed use of chemical-synthetic agents

In case of a government-imposed use of chemical-synthetic agents for plant protection on roadsides, the requirements of the spray-drift management must be met. An imposed use of

such agents on a crop results in the withdrawal of the approval for the respective crop. If the imposed use is carried out by the manager of the operation, the whole operation loses the approval.

13. Standards

a) Basis:

BIO SUISSE Standards, articles 1.1.3 and 1.1.4.

b) Practical application in approval process

The BIO SUISSE Standards must in principle be observed in full also in other countries. The label-commission «Import» can make appropriate interpretations of the relevant BIO SUISSE standards for agricultural production under exceptional soil and climatic conditions and for crops which are not grown in Switzerland.

Amendments of BIO SUISSE standards are announced to the foreign inspection- and certification bodies within half a year. Operations outside of Switzerland have to comply with the amendments two years at the latest after the coming into force of these in Switzerland.

As for the BIO SUISSE approval of vegetable products, the livestock of the producing farm operations must be kept in accordance with the EU-Ordinance 2092/91 in EU-countries, in the other countries at least in accordance with the IFOAM Basic Standards.

As for the BIO SUISSE approval of animal products, the animal husbandry of the producing farm operation must at least comply with BIO SUISSE standards.

14. Field maps

a) Basis:

Handbook of FiBL (Swiss Research Institute for Organic Agriculture)

b) Practical application in approval process

A suitable map must provide a survey of the structural lay out of the entire farm operation.

All plots should be numbered according to an accompanying list of plots.

The areas set aside to enhance biodiversity must be indicated in the field maps.

In cases where there is a risk of spray drift, the adjacent areas of neighbouring farms, including the crops being grown on them, plus the nature of the boundaries (hedges, paths, roads watercourses etc) must be marked.

15. Documents to be submitted for BIO SUISSE approval

For the assessment of compliance with BIO SUISSE standards, at least the following documents must be submitted to BIO SUISSE:

Single farms

€ BIO SUISSE checklist for individual producers (signed by the manager and the certifica-

tion body)

- € inspection report (as well as – for first approval – the inspection report of the previous year)
- € certificate

Cooperatives, producers' groups

- € synoptic inspection report of the whole project (as well as – for first approval – the inspection report of the previous year)
- € synoptic inspection report of the single farms subject to BIO SUISSE approval
- € certificate
- € BIO SUISSE approved farmers' list

Processing and trade operations

- € BIO SUISSE checklist “processing and trade”
- € Inspection report
- € Certificate

Pure trade companies / brokers

- € Written confirmation stating that the company does neither process nor condition, open store, redistribute and/or repackage the product.

BIO SUISSE may request more informations and documents at any time.

16. Jungle clearing: crop production in former jungle aereas

Clearing of virgin forests

BIO SUISSE does not support any clearing of virgin forests for agricultural exploitation. Approvals of organic projects on cleared areas of virgin forests (so called “high value conservation areas”) are therefore excluded.

Exception: If one of the following conditions are met, the application for an approval may be considered for examination:

- a) The clearing of the now agriculturally used area has been carried out before 1970.
- b) The clearing has not been carried out under the responsibility of the present owner or
- c) The clearing has not been carried out in conflict with the laws of the respective country.

Clearing of secondary forests

If a secondary forest has been cleared or is being cleared for the purpose of agricultural use of the area, the following informations must be submitted respectively the following regulations must be verified by means of an inspection carried out by the competent inspection and certification body (ICB):

1. A map of the area that is to be cleared, including a precise survey of the respective surfaces (max. scale: 1:50`000) and the indication of protection areas or “high value conservation areas”, must be presented.
2. An inventory of the tree population and a list of endangered species must be presented, including a detailed description of the neighbouring areas (use, inventory).
3. The previous uses of the area subject to clearing must be indicated.
4. The clearing must be carried out in compliance with the national laws of the respective country, and there must be a governmental authorization.

5. The right to exploit the forest can be delegated officially by the indigenous population.
6. Before the clearing is carried out, a conception for sustainability must be submitted. It includes:
 - a) total surface subject to clearing
 - b) max. surface that may be cleared per year
 - c) measures to protect the endangered species
 - d) creation of isles for endangered species and ensuring of their connectability
 - e) measures to protect the water resources
 - f) conservation and description of the retreat areas for indigenous species, wildlife strips or –isles, conservation strips along water surfaces
 - g) ensuring of the provision of firewood for the local population
 - h) strict prevention of erosion. To this end, exclusively the agricultural exploitation of the obtained land in the framework of agro-forestry-systems is permitted, since only such systems guarantee a sustainable use of the land.
7. Regulations for clearing works:
 - a) The use of pesticides and herbicides as well as of GMOs is strictly forbidden
 - b) The proficient disposal of substances that are harmful to the environment (waste oil, gasoline etc.) must be guaranteed
 - c) Slash-and-burn is not allowed

If all the requirements are met, BIO SUISSE can decide to consider the the examination of the application for approval. In order to assess the value of the area destined for clearing, BIO SUISSE confers with an expert and asks a recognized independent international organization, such as the World Ressource Institute (WRI) or the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), if the area is mapped out as “high value conservation area”.

17. Separation of the flow of goods and retraceability of BIO SUISSE products

a) Basis:

BIO SUISSE standards art. 7.3.2

b) Practical application in the approval process

Principle:

The complete retraceability of BIO SUISSE products back to the producer or producers'group must be ensured anytime until the consumption of the product. The products must therefore be provided with an accompanying document (delivery note, invoice, processing report etc.) from the harvest to the delivery to the client. Each operation involved in the chain of production, processing, trade and transport must therefore keep the accompanying documents according the following requirements.

The BIO SUISSE products must be labelled in a clearly visible manner and be stored separately in order to minimize the risk of confusion or mixing up with non-BIO SUISSE products.

Requirements concerning the retraceability and the accompanying documents of the goods

Production: On delivery to the collecting place, each packaged unity must be labelled with the name and/or code of the producer, the date of delivery respectively of harvest, the quality of the product and the weight respectively the quantity of the unity. Are considered as unities

single boxes, bags, barrels or other containers. If the single package unities are packed together in a larger unity (eg. bound to a pallet, single bags in a big bag etc.), the bigger container is considered as package unity.

Processing, packaging, transport: Each time when BIO SUISSE goods are packaged in a new container (eg. after sorting and packaging or after processing), the new container must be provided with a new label and a new accompanying document. At least the date of packaging respectively processing date, name of the producer (or lot number, if products of several producers are mixed) and the name respectively the quality of the product must be indicated on this document. The lot numbers must allow to check the composition and the origin of the product in the processing reports. In the same way as in collecting places, the handing over respectively the receipt of the product must be registered at each change of the container, and a copy of the accompanying document must accompany the goods into the next processing respectively trading step.

Filing and check of the accompanying documents

Filing: On delivery of the goods, a copy of the accompanying document remains with the supplier, a copy is filed by the consignee, and a copy is used to identify the goods during further transport- and processing steps. This procedure is repeated at each change of containers.

Prove of the integrity of the products: The inspection body must be allowed to look at the documentation of the flow of goods. On submitting the project to BIO SUISSE for approval, the inspection body must describe and confirm the separation of BIO SUISSE-and non-BIO SUISSE goods.

18. Collection of wild plants

a) Basis:

BIO SUISSE Standards, article 5.2.2.

b) Practical application in approval process

1. DEFINITIONS

Are regarded as wild plants edible plants and mushrooms as well as their parts which grow naturally in forests and on agricultural land and are not cultivated by agricultural methods and means. The collection of wild plants is meant to complete agricultural production.

Wild plants treated with agricultural methods and means are agricultural produce and not wild plants under the terms of this directive. For the approval of agricultural produce, the proceeding according to chapter 2, 3, 4 and 7 of BIO SUISSE standards applies.

2. CONVERSION PERIOD

There is no conversion period for the collection of wild plants, The products can be labelled with the BUD from the moment of its certification.

3. DECLARATION

Wildly collected end products must be declared under the designation, wild plants in composed products in the list of ingredients (e.g. certified wild collection)

4. INSPECTION

A complete description of the collection area (see chapter 5), of the collection activities (chapter 6), of storing and processing (chapter 7), as well as the prove of ecological harmlessness (stability of the habitat and biodiversity, chapter 8) must be presented on the occasion of the inspection. The documents mentioned in the cahpters 5-8 must be included in the inspection report.

The manager of the collection project may not be the manager of a non-organic agricultural operation at the same time.

Single pickers are not allowed to collect or to store the same plant variety at the same time in organic and non-organic quality.

5. COLLECTION AREA

The following data of the collection area must be known and be documented for the inspection procedure:

- € Topographic and pedoclimatic situation in the collection area
- € Property and exploitation rights in the collection area
- € Sources of emission/contamination in the respective area and in the neighbourhood:
Which and to what extent
- € Prove that no unauthorized auxiliary inputs for organic agriculture have been used for the three previous years. In normal cases, a plausible declaration is sufficient, together with an inspection of the respective land by the inspector. In case of doubt, a confirmation of the owner of the land must be presented, or a residue analysis may be requested.

These statements must be documented by parcelling plans, maps or cadaster plans in a scale not exceeding 1:50'000. The boundaries of the collection areas, any sources of emissions as well as the collection and store sites must be indicated.

6. COLLECTION ACTIVITY

The following details must be documented for inspection:

- € Proceeding of the collection from the gathering to the storing, processing and marketing
- € Reports of the gathering (collectors, quantity, date)
- € Qualification and instruction of the collectors (knowledge of valid regulations, boundaries of the collection area, gathering method, intensity of the exploitation, moment of the gathering etc.).
- € Identity of the main responsible persons for the collection
- € Trivial and botanic name of the collected wild plants

The following documents regarding the collection activity must be presented:

- € authorization for collection (if legally provided)
- € lists of collectors

The collectors must know about sustainable collection; the responsible person for the collection is held accountable for the respective instruction.

7. PROCESSING AND STORING

As to the processing and storing of wild plants, the directives of the LCPM in accordance with BIO SUISSE standards apply, in particular the product specific requirements 3: fruit, vegetables and herbs.

If the wild plants are processed by subcontracted operations, this operation must be inspected and certified in accordance with BIO SUISSE standards.

8. STABILITY OF THE HABITAT AND BIO DIVERSITY

The collection of wild plants must be ecologically harmless. This is the case as long as the stability of the habitat and biodiversity are not impaired.

The ecological harmlessness must be assessed in each single case. The following details must be known and documented for the inspection with regard to the ecological harmlessness:

- € Description of the habitat
- € Which items (parts) of wild plants are collected (whole plants, leaves, blossoms etc.)
- € The intensity of the exploitation in the collection area
- € Other collection activities in the same area

The inspector confirms the ecological harmlessness. An independent expert must be consulted if need be.